

# Children's Services

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report subject	<b>Linwood Special School SEND Post 16 Provision at Ted Webster</b>
Meeting date	26 November 2024
Status	Public Report with Exempt Appendix 1
Executive summary	<p>The council has experienced a significant increase in the number of children requiring and Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) over the last 3 years. Sustained growth has resulted in a greater use of independent specialist school places and a shortage of specialist provision locally. This has increased unit costs of provision and intensified budget pressures in the dedicated schools grant high needs funding block. As part of the council's response to growth and improvement in the system, the council has developed a draft Sufficiency Strategy. The Sufficiency Strategy is a key part of the council's work to deliver a sustainable system, working collaboratively with our partners to ensure that the needs of children and young people are met without escalating costs, and supporting delivery of the DSG Recovery Plan. A key area of focus for the strategy is to develop and expand our Post 16 offer locally. In delivering the priorities identified in the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, additional Post 16 specialist provision is being planned and commissioned working with Linwood Special School.</p> <p>This report contains a proposal to expand Linwood Special School on a satellite site hosted at the former Ted Webster Children's Centre. The project will provide a total of 60 specialist post-16 places with a focus on supporting young people transition into an independent, healthy adulthood. Capital investment is required to refurbish and remodel the existing buildings to deliver a high quality, accessible teaching and learning space. The new facility will open in September 2025. By increasing the availability of local specialist Post 16 places, the council estimates a cost avoidance in the region of £38K - £50k per place, per annum.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that</b></p> <p><b>(a) Cabinet approves the scheme to develop a satellite of Linwood School hosted at the former Ted Webster Children's Centre providing a total of 60 Post 16 places including the associated capital investment necessary to develop the scheme.</b></p>
Reason for recommendations	In accordance with the council's improvement agenda and priority action to reduce high needs expenditure, this project increases the availability of local SEND places and achieves cost avoidance in the high need budget.
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Wards	Parkstone
Classification	Public

## Background

1. The local area has reported a significant increase in the number of children requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) over the last 3 years. Currently there are c. 4,300 children with an EHCP. Over the next 4 years, the number of children with an EHCP is projected to increase by 11% in each year (equivalent to an additional 400 EHCPs per annum). By 2026/27 the number of EHCPs is expected to exceed 5,000. Sustained growth has resulted in a greater use of independent specialist school places and a shortage of specialist provision locally. This has increased unit costs of provision and intensified budget pressures in the dedicated schools grant high needs funding block.
2. As part of the council's response to delivering improvement in the council's SEND service, the council has developed a Sufficiency Strategy. The Sufficiency Strategy is a key part of the council's work to deliver a sustainable system to ensure that the needs of children and young people are met without escalating costs and supporting delivery of the DSG Recovery Plan. The strategy combines a range of measures to increase the availability of cost-effective places locally in order to reduce the council's reliance on costly independent placements.
3. A key area of focus for the strategy is to develop and expand our Post 16 offer locally. The council's EHCP penetration profile shows that BCP's use of post 16 placements is higher than national averages ( 4% of this cohort access specialist provision compared to 1.6% nationally). This reflects the limited options available at Post 16 and a lack of local provision pathways for learners ageing through the system. This means that there is a reliance on out of area provision driving increased expenditure. As a result, the Sufficiency Strategy includes actions to:
  - Increase the number of young people having their needs met locally accessing local mainstream and specialist provision alongside their peers
  - reviewing the offer for all young people and stimulate and develop the local market to provide courses that meet demand in settings locally thereby reducing costs and the need for travel out of area
  - identify appropriate pathways to employment and/or higher education for current students Post 14 onwards.
  - Ensure young people are on Pathways that best support Preparation for Adulthood outcomes and are engaged with services to support appropriate transitions out of Education
  - Review Post 16 EHCPs and take appropriate action to step-down support where young people are meeting their outcomes and transition Post 16 learners to local settings to achieve the most efficient use of resources.

## Issues

4. In delivering the priorities identified in the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, additional Post 16 specialist provision is being planned and commissioned working with Linwood Special School. Linwood Special School is a local authority maintained special school for children with a range of complex needs aged 4-19.
5. The Post 16 accommodation on the main Linwood School campus previously occupied the basement of an adjacent former youth club. The accommodation was previously adapted by the school and in 2023 buildings were flooded during heavy rainfall causing an upsurge of sewage. Following an inspection by the council's Facilities Management (FM) team, the accommodation was deemed to be unfit for purpose and all post 16 learners were relocated to the adjacent main school building as an interim measure. Issues of compliance means that adaptations and remedial works to the space were unviable Since this time, Linwood School have provided a limited number of Post 16 places and the council has been working collaboratively to find a permanent solution.
6. **Feasibility Study – Ted Webster Centre:** In seeking a permanent solution to Linwood School's accommodation shortfall, the council considered alternative site/building by reviewing corporately owned buildings identified as surplus to requirements. In 2023, Children's Services declared the Ted Webster Family Centre to be surplus to its' estate requirements. The Ted Webster Centre building had been utilised as a children's centre and then a family hub. The building was vacated in

2023 and Children's Services Property Board recommended use by Education and Skills. A feasibility study was commissioned in 2023 and identified that:

- The footprint of the building is suitable to meet the DfE Building Bulletin area guidelines for the provision of 60 Post 16 specialist places.
  - Investment to maintain the building has been limited in previous years
  - Non-compliance with current building Fire Safety Regulations requiring capital investment to replace fire doors and areas of compartmentalisation is required to meet Building Regulations approval (Fire Risk Assessment, 2024)
  - Mechanical and electrical systems, insulation, roof lights, external windows and doors are beyond their economic life and require full replacement which will also improve energy efficiency and achieve carbon reduction.
7. The outcome of the feasibility was reported to the Children's Services Senior Leadership team and endorsed by Corporate Property Group. A formal capital project was initiated to progress the scheme through to detailed design and the procurement of the works contractor (aligned to RIBA Stages 2-4) to provide permanent accommodation for Linwood's Post 16 learners.
8. **The Proposed Scheme:** The proposed new provision at the Ted Webster site will provide a satellite facility offering a total of 60 permanent Post 16 places. The satellite will provide a *Link Skills Centre*. The focus within the Skills Centre is to develop skills and qualities that prepare students for adulthood. Students will be supported to develop their employability and independence skills using the Employability Skills Framework and Skills for My Future framework. The curriculum will provide students with pathways to flourish in both the workplace and in their daily lives. It is expected 30 students will progress to the Skills Centre from Linwood's existing school population (thereby replacing the capacity previously lost) and an additional 30 new post-16 places will be offered as new Post 16 places.
9. **Capital Works:** Capital works and associated investment in the Ted Webster building is necessary to achieve a high-quality learning environment suitable for the delivery of a Post 16 curriculum. It is proposed that the work comprises:
- Refurbishment including alterations, the replacement of facades and renewal of internal fittings and finishes
  - Mechanical and Electrical Works necessary to achieve compliance to current Building Regulation standards
  - Remodelled general and specialist classroom bases to provide extended general and specialist classroom bases to deliver the curriculum
  - Focused acoustic measures, and provide full accessibility to all internal and external spaces
  - Improvements to provide focused acoustic measures and full accessibility to all internal and external spaces
  - Urgent and essential condition works, including fire safety H&S works, replacement windows and external doors and increased insulation
  - Works overall are expected to extend the building economic life by up to 25 years and significantly improve the buildings' energy performance.
10. The scheme has been fully scoped in consultation and engagement with Children's Services and Linwood Special School stakeholders.
11. A fully developed set of client requirements and building condition surveys have been issued to and priced by the contractor. A cost estimate is set out in an exempt appendix (see separate document - **Appendix 1**). The cost per place has been tested against benchmark data for similar refurbishment projects to deliver specialist places. Details of the comparative costs per place are contained in **Appendix 1**.
12. **Programme:** The scheme programme with key project milestones is set out in **Table 1** below. It shows an anticipated handover ready for opening in time for the new academic year 2025/26.

**Table 1: Scheme Programme: Key dates/ milestones**

Activity	Date
Design Stage 4 sign-off by Linwood Special School	26 September 2024
Contractor Offer	October 2024
Appointment of Principal Designer	18 November 2024
CS Overview & Scrutiny Committee	26 November 2024
Cabinet Approval	10 December 2024
Full Council	10 December 2024
Standdown Period	17 December 2024
Appointment of Principal Contractor	December 2024
Start of Site (27 weeks)	January 2025
Issue of O&Ms	July 2025
School Set Up (ICT/ FFE)	30 June,2025- 11 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
Client Signatory- Building Regulations (Building Safety Act 23)	August 2025
Practical Completion	August 2025
New facility Open	3 September 2025

## Options Appraisal

13. The options considered are set out in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Options Considered**

Option	Delivery	Impact
Do nothing	<p>No new or re-provided Post 16 specialist places are delivered</p> <p>Do not invest children's services building condition and H&amp;S compliance items.</p>	<p>No DSG savings achieved.</p> <p>Lack of sufficiency of places locally</p> <p>Limited number of Post 16 places offered by Linwood School.</p> <p>Post 16 learners continue to be placed interim accommodation designed for younger children at Linwood.</p> <p>Building cannot be occupied without key Health and Safety works being addressed.</p> <p>Building will fall into further state of dilapidation. Will require greater capital investment to bring back into use at a later date.</p>
Light refurbishment only	<p>Deliver a reduced number of Post 15 specialist places.</p> <p>Deliver minimum sufficiency capital investment works (dry/ warm building/ toilet pans)</p>	<p>Building would fail to meet building regulations (H&amp;S/ Fire doors/ insulation levels)</p> <p>Failure to deliver building condition survey items D1- C1 would result in heating failures and leaking from failed roof lights likely to result in building closure.</p>
<p>Progress in-line with recommendation</p> <p><b>Quality learning provision</b></p>	<p>Provide new 30 places and 30 re-provided pupil places at Linwood main school site.</p> <p>Invest in council asset and bring back into use for new 25 year life cycle</p>	<p>Deliver on council's SEND Sufficiency Strategy in the delivery of new pupil places</p> <p>Deliver against council's Estate Asset Rationalisation Strategy</p> <p>Deliver against council's Schools Condition Improvement Programme</p> <p>Deliver against council's Climate Emergency commitment</p>

## Summary of financial implications

14. **Capital:** The cost estimate of this scheme is identified at Exempt Appendix 1. At this stage, a client held 10% contingency is included in the budget to cover unavoidable, not reasonably pre ascertainable abnormal additional costs.
15. **Capital Funding Identified:** It is proposed that the project is funded by a mixture of High Needs Capital Grant and Schools Condition Capital Grant already received and earmarked to support the Children's Services Capital Programme. Officers are satisfied this project meets grant funding criteria.
16. **Revenue Costs:** Revenue costs will be met through a combination of guaranteed place funding through agreed commissioned place numbers and top-up funding (to be informed by the outcome of school banding workshops) paid by the placing local authority. In the case of children placed in BCP whom are resident in neighbouring local authority areas, the home authority will contribute to the funding of places in accordance with school funding regulations.

The Council estimates a cost avoidance in the region of £38K - £50k per place, per annum. The new Ted Webster Post 16 satellite provision could therefore achieve targeted revenue cost avoidance of between £1.14m - £1.5m p/a based on 30 new places. Note: The remaining 30 places are re-provided and are not 'new' and therefore must be excluded from this calculation.

## Summary of legal implications

17. **Sufficiency Places Duty:** Under sections 13 and 14 of the Education Act 1996, a local education authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places available to meet the needs of the population in its area and to consider the needs to secure provision for children with special educational needs aged 0-25.
18. Where additional places are needed, the local authority can propose an enlargement of the capacity of premises. The prescribed alterations' statutory process must be followed to enlarge premises as set out in the Prescribed Alterations Regulations (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. In seeking to expand Linwood School on a satellite site the LA must take steps if:
  - the proposed enlargement is permanent (longer than 3 years) and would increase the capacity of the school by: more than 30 pupils; and 25% or 200 pupils (whichever is the lesser).
  - the proposal involves making permanent any temporary enlargement (which was intended to be in place for no more than 3 years) that meets the above threshold.
19. In this case, the expansion provides 30 new places and this represents less than 25% of the total number of children on roll. This means that there is no requirement for the council to follow the statutory process to enlarge the school premises.
20. **Procurement:** The Principal Designer role and design development for the project has been undertaken by Footprint Architects, who were appointed to undertake feasibility following a competitive tender, with an additional direct award PDR being signed to enable them to continue delivering these services for RIBA Stages 5-7. The construction works will be delivered directly by the Council's construction works team. An order will be placed by way of entering into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Seascope South Ltd.

## Summary of human resources implications

21. There are no human resource implications for the Council in respect of these proposals. There are implications for Linwood School, and these relate to the requirement to appoint new members of staff. Decisions about the recruitment of suitably qualified teaching and support staff is the responsibility of Linwood Special School. Summary of sustainability impact.

## **Summary of sustainability impact**

22. The works will be delivered in accordance with currently Building Regulations. Increased levels of insulation, replacement of end-of-life windows and external doors and replacement of mechanical and electrical systems, will greatly improve the building energy efficiency.

## **Summary of public health**

23. The expansion of places at Linwood School promotes the health and wellbeing of children with complex needs. It will improve access to quality local specialist places and provide continuity of provision for young people transitioning to post 16 education. Future outcomes and Preparation for Adulthood are a key focus at Post 16. As well as the academic curriculum all students within post 16 will participate in a wellbeing programme. This covers health and wellbeing, British Values, e-safety and relationships and sex education.

## **Summary of equality implications**

24. An Equalities Impact Assessment screening document has been completed and is scheduled to be considered by the Panel during November 2024. A copy of the impact assessment summary is provided at the link below.

## **Summary of risk assessment**

25. Change of Use planning consent will not be required as the new facility would form class D1 to the new classification of F1. The scheme will be developed utilising Permitted Development Rights, and a certificate of lawfulness provided. This is a great advantage to the programme of project delivery.
26. A RAID log has been maintained throughout the process to ensure governance for the management of risks/ actions/ issues/ decisions are formally recorded.
27. There is a limited risk that construction costs will increase as this scheme has been fully developed and costed. A 10% client held contingency has nonetheless been applied to the cost model, to account for any unforeseen risks at this stage.

## **Background papers**

Draft Sufficiency Strategy 2024 – 2026

Feasibility Study Linwood Satellite expansion – Ted Webster

Report to Children's Services SLT June 2024

 [Form 1 EIA Conversation Screening Tool Linwood at Ted Webster Oct 2024.docx](#)

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Exempt Appendix - Cost Plan Estimate of Scheme for Approval