

STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION

Report of the Head of Education and Learning

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Committee notes the progress and initial findings of the Strategic Review/Plan.

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#### 1. **Background**

The Council is undertaking a strategic level review of educational provision for those children and young people (aged 0-25 years) with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The need to undertake this review arises from:

- i) The SEND Strategy Improvement Plan (priority 2 Inclusive Education)
- ii) The Department of Education requiring local authorities to undertake such reviews of provision for children with complex needs and provides guidance on how such reviews should be undertaken.

The Department has made a capital fund available for the three years commencing 2018/19 and provided guidance on how the plans for this are to be determined and published. The investment of these monies will be directly linked to recommendations in the Strategic Review. This is expected to be £749k a year and ringfenced.

For the purposes of the Review, complex needs are defined as those children/young people for whom the Council has responsibility, specifically those with a Statement of SEN or an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).

The Strategic Review and its recommendations will be considered by the Council's Cabinet of the 14 March 2018 prior to submission to the DfE and will include the latest SEN Annual Report.

#### 2. **Progress to Date**

During the Autumn of 2017 the Project has:

- i) Undertaken a desktop analysis of available data, updated where possible including home to school transport;
- ii) Commissioned a detailed Asset Management Review of Devon's Special Schools;
- iii) Supported the review of Support Centres in mainstream schools;

- iv) Commissioned an external demographic review of Devon's SEND future needs;
- v) Reviewed Out of County Placements and learners in Alternative Provision
- vi) Undertaken surveys of children/young people with complex SEN, their parents and providers of education (mainstream, special and independent)

## **Initial Findings**

The projected rising population as an outcome of housebuilding and demographic change will result in an increase in numbers of learners with SEND, in particular in areas of significant growth. The current pattern of SEN provision does not neatly align with growth areas. There will therefore be a need to increase capacity to support learners with SEND through a combination of strengthening mainstream offer as well as increased specialist provision.

The increase in SEN primary need of learners is predominately Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) followed by Speech & Language/communication (S&L)/Autistic Spectrum Condition.

Permanent & fixed term exclusions of pupils with SEN are significantly higher than national comparators. Reintegrating these learners back into mainstream education remains challenging and as such many are in Alternative Provision for long periods.

A review of 100 recent placements to the independent sector highlights that the need of learners aligns with need highlighted above. A number of the placements made to independent settings are due to schools not being able to meet educational need or a lack of special school capacity which is a key consideration. A high proportion are post 19 placements.

The Asset Management Plan work is still being assessed but initial findings suggest that significant expansion of existing special schools is not possible due to site constraints and/or location. The reports will highlight opportunities to improve the educational offer and address suitability issues currently impacting on schools.

The review of school transport highlights that there are a number of areas where a significant number of SEN learners need to travel from their home to their provision in particular from Tiverton, Newton Abbot and Bideford.

There were a total of 304 responses to the consultation which took place in December 2017, 130 from children & young people, 101 from parents & carers and 73 from providers. At the time of writing this report, the responses were still being assessed but can be verbally reported to the Scrutiny Committee.

A report of the findings of the engagement will be published in due course on the SEND Local Website <https://new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-local-offer>

## **Financial Considerations**

The Department for Education will provide capital funding for each of the three years commencing 2018/19 (£749k per year) and in order to access it the Council must submit to the DfE and publish details of how this money will be spent. The asset reviews and existing capital proposals described above and opportunities to promote the achievement of the Councils SEND Strategy will inform the recommendations to be considered by Cabinet on the 14 March.

The committee has previously received a briefing on the wider funding issues relating to SEND provision and clearly any future proposals will need to take into account the financial pressures on the High Needs Block.

### **Other Implications**

The assessment of the equality, environmental and economic impacts will be completed once the recommendations are concluded.

### **Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations of this report.

### **Risk Management Considerations**

The timescales for delivering the project remain challenging and the DfE have determined that proposals must be published in March.

### **Summary**

The Strategic Review and Plan is in the process of being formulated prior to the March Cabinet after which it will need to be formally published. The Plan will be reviewed annually.

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#### **Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Skills: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Children's Services: Jo Olsson

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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| <u>BACKGROUND PAPER</u> | <u>DATE</u> | <u>FILE REFERENCE</u> |
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*[List specific documents or sources ..... or say Nil*

*Only need to list documents that – in the opinion of the author - contain information/facts which were used/referred/relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report. It does not need to include/refer to documents that are already 'published' (i.e. previous DCC Committee Reports!).*