

Delegated Decisions report



8 June 2021

PHASE THREE OF CAPITAL WORKS TO THE WALNUTS SCHOOL, BLETCHLEY

Name of Cabinet Member **Councillor Zoe Nolan**
(Cabinet member for Children and Families)

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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	5.6 To increase the number of high-quality local placements for children and young people
Wards affected	Bletchley West

Executive Summary

This report is seeking resource and spend approval for a capital project at The Walnuts School, Bletchley. This project will involve adaptations to the now vacant Bridge side of the site, allowing The Walnuts to expand and increase their intake to assist with meeting the high demand for special school places in Milton Keynes.

1. Decision to be Made

- 1.1 That the resource allocation and spend approval in 2021/22 capital programme for £150,000, funded from the Special Provision Fund (Grant funding from Central Government), to undertake capital works at The Walnuts School, Bletchley, be approved.

2. Why is the Decision Needed?

- 2.1 The purpose of this decision is to allow a capital project to commence to create additional accommodation The Walnuts School, Bletchley. This will allow them to increase their intake to assist with a high demand for special school places.
- 2.2 The capital works need to be complete for September 2021 to meet the demand for pupil places by providing an additional 8 places.
- 2.3 These additional places will be created by expansion into the now vacant part of the school site, previously occupied by The Bridge Academy. This part of the site requires external adaptations to meet the needs of The Walnuts pupils.
- 2.4 The need for this proposed project at The Walnuts (Bletchley) was set out in the paper entitled: *Short Term Place Planning Priorities for Pupils with EHCP's* which has been approved at Children's Services Infrastructure Board (CSIB), Strategic Property Board (SPB) and CLT and forms part of the overall Asset Rationalisation Programme.

3. Implications of the Decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	N
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	Y
Communication	N	Procurement	Y
Energy Efficiency	N	Workforce	N

(a) Financial Implications

Resource and spend approval for £150k is being requested via this Delegated Decision. This budget resource is to cover the construction costs, contingency and all professional fees and surveys. The funding source is the Special Provision Fund, which is grant funding allocated to the Council directly from Central Government.

The escalation of this project, which has come about due to the Asset Rationalisation Programme, means that the funding is not yet set aside in the 2021/22 capital programme. In light of this, budget approval is sought via this Delegated Decision to ensure the programme of delivery can be met and the additional pupil places can be made available for September 2021.

(b) Legal Implications

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in Milton Keynes. This report requests approval to use funding from the Special Provision (SP) Fund to undertake the capital works which shall enable the provision of additional special school places at The Walnuts School.

The Department for Education's (DfE's) Special Provision Capital Fund guidance confirms local authorities are permitted to use the SP funding for capital transactions which create new additional places at a good or outstanding provision and/or improves facilities or develops new facilities. Local authorities are also permitted to combine the SP funding with other capital funding. The Walnut School has a good Ofsted rating.

In contrast, Local authorities are not permitted to use the SP funding:

- to expand provision to create additional places for pupils who do not have education, health and care plans;
- to make reasonable adjustments that schools are required to fund as part of accessibility requirements (e.g. ramps or widening doorways);
- for revenue expenditure such as training or staff costs; and / or
- for maintenance work.

The DfE's Special Provision Capital Fund guidance also stipulates local authorities are required to plan how they invest their allocation of the SP funding which includes consulting with parents and carers, schools, FE colleges and other institutions which offer special educational provision.

Any contracts for completion of the capital works shall need to be procured in compliance with procurement rules and legislation.

4. Alternatives

- 4.1 **Do Nothing** - there will not be sufficient special school places available to meet the increasing need for specialist school provision in Milton Keynes.
- 4.2 **Approval at Cabinet** - there will not be sufficient time to procure and undertake the works ready for pupil intake in September 2021.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 Budget Approval - June 2021
- 5.2 Contract awarded and works undertaken - July - August 2021
- 5.3 Operational - September 2021

List of Annexes and Background Papers

None.