

From: **Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

**Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education**

To: **Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 8 March 2023**

Subject: Additional funding required to complete the satellite provision of The Beacon Folkestone at the former Walmer Science College.

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:**

This report informs members of a significant increase in the capital costs of the proposal to add a 240 place satellite provision of The Beacon Folkestone at the former Walmer Science College.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Children's, Young People and Education Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposal to:

- (i). Release a further £15,924,438 of capital funding from the Children's, Young People and Education Capital Budget to enable the delivery of the satellite to be completed;
- (ii). Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the General Counsel to enter into any necessary contracts / agreements on behalf of the County Council; and
- (iii). Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

**1. Background**

1.1 The Beacon Folkestone is a special school for pupils with Profound Severe and Complex Needs (PSCN). There is no PSCN special school in Dover district, provision has hitherto been made through Specialist Resourced Provision at Whitfield Aspen School (primary) and Dover Christ Church Academy (secondary), together with pupils travelling to special schools in Canterbury, Thanet and Folkestone. In March 2020 this Committee considered a proposal to expand The Beacon School via a satellite site at the former Walmer Science College, Dover, following which the proposal was approved by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

- 1.2 The report of March 2020 stated that the estimated cost of delivering the satellite, at that point 168 places, had been estimated at £4m, with the first phase costing £1.6m. This Committee recommended the proposal be amended to deliver 240 places, rather than 168, to enable the satellite to deliver two forms of entry throughout the age structure. It was recognised this would increase the cost. This recommendation was endorsed in the final decision.
- 1.3 The costs of delivering this satellite have increased significantly. The first phase of the satellite opened in April 2021, following the upgrading of a detached block at the College. This provides up to 80 places for pupils aged 4-8 years at a cost of £3.1m. The full scheme is now expected to cost £19,924,438. Details as to why are set out later in this report.
- 1.4 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available, including specialist provision. We are also responsible for maintaining Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for children and young people between the ages of 0-25 years. Since the expansion of the Beacon was agreed the number of children and young people EHCPs in Kent has increased, resulting in more being supported in Local Authority (LA) maintained special and independent special schools.
- 1.5 Commissioned places at Whitfield Aspen Primary School have grown from 58 in 2014 to over 150 in 2022, and at Dover Christ Church from 40 to 63 over the same period. This growth is not sustainable. It was expected that the opening of The Beacon Satellite, would over time, add places and reduce the pressure on the two SRPs and increase the offer available to families. We continue to see pressures for provision which will support the needs of pupils with combined Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) or Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). The buildings at the former Walmer Science College would be more suited to these need types.

## **2. Cost Pressures**

- 2.1 Prior to the March 2020 paper, a basic feasibility study had been undertaken to estimate the cost of refurbishing the buildings to provide a 168 place special school (1FE primary and 2FE secondary places). Given that the building was only vacated in 2013, the feasibility study estimated that £4m would be required to bring the facility back into use and only redecoration and a light refurbishment would be required.
- 2.2 The process in 2020 was that a high level feasibility was completed and taken to CYPECC before detailed design and the planning application were progressed. It was noted that, on many occasions, costs increased once a project was progressed through to a full planning application. In order to try and reduce the risk of this happening, the process changed such that the funding allocation is now agreed after planning approval.
- 2.3 The planning permission for phases 2 and 3 was approved in February 2023. No concerns have been raised which would involve a material change in the plans and increased costs from those outlined in this paper.

- 2.4 It has always been acknowledged that the decision to add 240, rather than 168 places, would increase costs. However, this is not the sole or indeed primary cause of the cost increase.
- 2.5 Once the refurbishment of Phase 1 commenced in April 2020 it became clear that there were significant issues with the school buildings that had not been foreseen and would need to be addressed. Much was to do with a historic lack of maintenance of the buildings and their infrastructure.
- 2.6 Phase 1 (the refurbishment of the Compass Centre) costs increased due to the need to replace heating, electrical infrastructure and the data cabling. In addition, the fenestration and doors had to be replaced. Consequently, the cost of Phase 1 rose from an estimated £1.6m to £3.1m.
- 2.5 In light of the issues identified in Phase 1, a full review of all the buildings has been undertaken. This has identified:
- The 2004 building could be retained and remodelled.
  - The layout and quality of the 1960s building does not lend this to remodelling to provide high quality accommodation which meets the needs of a special school. Demolition and rebuilding of the 1960's building seems to be the most efficient option.
  - As the current proposal includes demolition and rebuild of a significant part of the building there would be a significant impact on existing M&E systems, much of which is not compliant with current regulations.
  - The data cabling will need to be replaced to ensure compliance with current/KCC standards.

### **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1 The proposed scheme for the Walmer site is:

Phase 2: Refurbishment of the 2004 building including upgrades to the mechanical and engineering systems. This will provide for KS2 and KS3 pupils. The adaptation of the current facilities will provide 18 classrooms for general and specialist teaching (science/drama/music/IT and so on). In addition, we will see intervention rooms provided for play therapy, speech and language, soft play and medical facilities. The hall will be split to provide for PE and dining facilities, a separate gym is available and will be a staff room and offices.

In addition we will see the demolition of the 1960s buildings, provision of all the car parking and drop-off area - cost £9,760,996.

Phase 3: The construction of a new block for KS4 and KS5, comprising of a further 10 classrooms, a life skills room, intervention rooms, soft play, offices and parent meeting rooms- cost £6,163,442

- 3.2 This will bring the total cost of the expansion to £19,924,438. The cost per place will be in the region of £83,018 which is at the lower end of the AECOM benchmark summary for a special school refurbishment or

expansion - £83,938 20th centile. To ensure that the current costs are accurate, the programme has been continued through to a full planning application proposal with consent granted in February 2023.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

##### 4.1 Alternative options include:

- Seek an alternative location for the satellite and dispose of the Walmer Science College site.
- The closure of the satellite and a reduction of the designated number of The Beacon accordingly. Dispose of Walmer Science College site.
- No further development of the Walmer buildings, thus limiting the satellite to the current capacity, with a reduction of the designated number of The Beacon accordingly. Dispose of part of the Walmer Science College site.
- Reduce the size of the satellite to fit within Phases 1 and 2. Some disposal may be possible

4.2 Choosing to cease development on the site, or to deliver phase 2 but not phase 3, would reduce costs but will not deliver the places as expected. Each page is expected to deliver c80 places. Phase 1 has been delivered and the cost for phase 2 is forecast to be £9,760,996. Phase 2 can be delivered independent of phase 3. However, the school has been designed to deliver two forms of entry throughout the age groups, in line with recommendation of CYPCC and the original decision. Reducing to 160 places (Phases 1 and 2 only) will not deliver this structure, it would need to revert to a one FE primary and two FE secondary structure. This would change the nature of the spaces required in the phase 1 and 2 buildings and some of the spaces in the phase 3 build would be needed in phase 2. There would need to be some revisiting and alteration of the overall scheme. This will incur further design costs, may require a planning amendment, and will delay the scheme, which with the current inflation rate (c10%) will drive up costs.

4.3 Phase 3 is estimated at £6,163,442. Essentially the cost per place for this element of the build is cheaper, at £77k per place, compared to phase 2 which is £122k per place. This is because the infrastructure costs, such as dining, kitchen, hall, are incorporated in phase 2 and the costs of these do not scale according to pupil numbers.

4.4 Any decision that reduces the designated number of The Beacon would need to be formally consulted on and be subject to a statutory proposal. The Governing Body would need to be the promoter, as the LA does not have the power to promote such a change. The LA, would however, be the decision maker. The proposal would need to demonstrate how alternative arrangements are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for pupils with SEND, and access to associated services. In addition this would need to be taken on the understanding that:

- The pressure for additional specialist places across the County has increased since the original decision to expand on to the Walmer site was taken.

- The decision will lead to fewer places, or no places being available at a PSCN special school for pupils in Dover District. The lack of a Special School for PSCN pupils was one of the reasons for the original decision.
  - Members have committed to retain the site for educational purposes and there are no current or future alternative education plans for the site.
- 4.5 Disposal of the site would be subject to approval by the Secretary of State for Education, and to realise the value, planning approval for an alternative use. It would also need the Dover and Thanet pupil referral unit (The ELA) to be relocated for buildings it occupies on site.
- 4.6 Consideration would need to be given to financial impact of such a decision. It would be reasonably expected that alternative provision would be required for the pupils presently on roll and for a proportion of those who may have been future pupils. The paper on ‘Non-Maintained and Independent Special School (NMISS) Commissioning Strategy’ presented to CYPECC on 30 June 2021 reported that the placing of pupils into a non-maintained independent special school costs an average of £36,999 per place per annum and a maintained special school cost £25,399. This equates to an uplift of £11,600 per place per annum or just under £3m per annum for the 240 places that the satellite would provide. Although this would be a revenue cost rather than capital, it is still £3m pa that the Council would need to fund from the High Needs Funding block, which is already in deficit.

## 5. The current position of SEND Provision across the County

- 5.1 Figure 1 shows that, as of January 2022, there were 17,733 children and young people in Kent with an EHCP. This is an increase of 2,452 since January 2021, an increase of 16% compared to 9.9% in England.
- 5.2 Figure 1 also shows that Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) remains the most common primary need type with 42.4% of children and young people with an EHCP (0-25 years) having ASD identified as their primary need. This is a decrease from 42.7% in January 2021. The second highest in Kent is Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) at 20.2% an increase from 19% in January 2021.

**Figure 1: EHCPs by age group and need type January 2022**

SEN Need Type	Under 5	Aged 5-10	Aged 11-15	Aged 16-19	Aged 20-25	Total	%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	241	2429	2630	1438	773	7511	42.4%
Hearing Impairment	9	66	62	47	29	213	1.2%
Moderate Learning Difficulty	26	314	365	233	163	1101	6.2%
Multi-Sensory Impairment	4	5	7	3	1	20	0.1%
Physical Disability	39	201	196	153	74	663	3.7%
Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty	22	162	112	62	31	389	2.2%
Severe Learning Difficulty	29	232	318	182	162	923	5.2%
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	13	725	1520	950	374	3582	20.2%
Specific Learning Difficulty	1	46	155	83	38	323	1.8%

Speech, Language and Communication Needs	267	1219	772	399	248	2905	16.4%
Visual Impairment	10	30	27	18	18	103	0.6%
<b>Kent Total</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>5429</b>	<b>6164</b>	<b>3568</b>	<b>1911</b>	<b>17733</b>	

**Source: SEN2 Return January 2022**

5.3 Figure 2 outlines the forecast increase in EHCPs for Years R to Year 11 across all districts/boroughs. The number of new EHCPs forecasted is population driven. It is produced by calculating the rates of new EHCPs by key population age groups, based on the 2021 EHCP figures. These rates are applied to the Kent population forecast figures to estimate the number of new EHCPs for the next eight years. The forecasts would suggest an increase in ECHPs for all need types except SLD/PLMD. The places at The Beacon Walmer will support the forecast increase in EHCPs particularly for pupils with ASD and MLD/SPLD/SLD.

Figure 2: Forecast increase in EHCPs for Years R to Year 11 across all districts/boroughs

Need	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>ASD</b>	4,600	5,285	5,568	5,774	5,949	6,040	6,074	6,045	6,033	5,996
<b>SEMH</b>	1,810	2,256	2,456	2,610	2,726	2,807	2,836	2,814	2,764	2,751
<b>SLCN</b>	1,787	2,240	2,572	2,873	3,137	3,379	3,556	3,691	3,821	3,887
<b>MLD/ SPLD</b>	762	901	1,007	1,081	1,134	1,190	1,210	1,212	1,208	1,209
<b>SLD/ MLD</b>	870	869	832	795	764	729	702	681	641	614
<b>Other</b>	609	638	661	659	684	692	698	714	717	717
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,438</b>	<b>12,189</b>	<b>13,096</b>	<b>13,791</b>	<b>14,393</b>	<b>14,837</b>	<b>15,076</b>	<b>15,156</b>	<b>15,185</b>	<b>15,173</b>

## 6. Financial Implications

### 6.1 Capital:

The cost of this proposal is now estimated at £19,924,438. The capital cost will be fully covered from the Government's High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA). The Council's approved capital programme includes the HNPCA allocations for 2022/23 and 2023/24, which together total just under £41.5m. This means the increased cost for this scheme, will not impact on the main Basic Need Capital Programme.

The proposal has been presented to Education Asset Board and agreed, in KCP 2020-24.

### 6.2 Revenue:

£8,000 per classroom for fixtures and resources will be allocated to the school as the phases are occupied. The total cost being c£240,000.

Split site funding of £42,810 was allocated for the financial year 2022-23. Split site funding will be allocated in future years as agreed in the schools funding policy.

## **7. View of the Local Members**

### **7.1 Derek Murphy (Deal and Walmer)**

Firstly, I need to declare an interest as I am a Governor of The Beacon School and the Dover District Councillor for Walmer with the Cabinet Member portfolio for Skills and Education.

I fully support the expansion of the school in Walmer. This is a much welcomed proposal and fully supports our pledge to promote the site for Educational purposes as well as providing a much needed SEND facility in the area.

It provides local employment opportunities. It will cut down on subsidy for Home to School transportation for the pupils in the area as well as being beneficial to the environmental issues associated with extended road journeys to and from school.

### **7.2 Dylan Jeffrey (Folkestone West)**

I would like to confirm my wholehearted support for the expansion of the school.

The increase in numbers from the original proposal makes complete sense. It should deliver significant savings over a period of years compared to the increased outlay in initial expansion costs, as we become less reliant on independent schools or others, coupled with any possible reduced transport costs as a consequence of one purpose-built facility. The Beacon is a proven outstanding facility delivering quality needs alongside an effective multi-agency approach that is able to help families, carers and the children in a really great way, so to reiterate, I fully support the proposal.

## **8. View of the Headteacher, Ady Young**

8.1 We currently have 40 children placed at our Walmer satellite provision. With two more pupils in the consultation process, we will be at maximum physical capacity in the current setting. The original intention was to create specialist provision for the more cognitively able pupils with severe and/or complex needs from the surrounding district. However, to support pupils in the Deal and Dover area we introduced an additional sensory needs class for pupils who have demonstrated more complex and severe need in their learning profiles, who experience greater difficulty communicating and are experiencing greater global delay.

8.2 Prior to the opening of the satellite provision, these pupils, and others whom we have on roll, would have been steered toward Aspen SRP, would have faced an excessively long journey to a PSCN specialist provision requiring a minimum journey time of an hour and half round trip every day or may have remained in a mainstream provision if no alternative could be found. The opening of a provision for local pupils, enabling them to access a school within their own community, has been welcomed by parents, carers, schools

and broadly across the community. The overwhelming response of developing a provision where pupils and their family units are thriving in their own locality has built a relationship and sense of community responsibility. The local community recognises the school's role and can see how the pupils can thrive and make a positive impact for others.

- 8.3 The initial stages of this can be seen through the curriculum based work with local businesses and services who have identified the prospects of employability and the positive contribution to society our pupils will be able to make. They have formed a relationship to support families and wherever possible reduce dependencies, increasing the prospect of independence wherever we can. The need for community partnership and community/corporate responsibility is greater than ever and satellites such as Walmer play a pivotal role in helping develop and sustaining a community. Walmer provides networking and excellent learning and developmental provision putting our young people in the best possible position to add value to their community in their life after school.
- 8.4 Most families currently accessing the Walmer satellite are disadvantaged. The wrap around support directly provided by the School or facilitated for the family units and children within them has meant that they are feeling supported.
- 8.5 In addition to supporting our families, the staff at Walmer provided training and support for the local community particularly in Attention Autism and Imagining Autism. We have the facility and experience at Walmer to promote immersive learning experiences for the children on roll alongside their mainstream peers forging positive relationships.

## **9. Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 9.1 The original EqIA has been reviewed and no changes are required. This found that the proposal has an overall positive impact as it increases the number of outstanding special school places available for pupils who require the specialist support the school can offer. It will also release capacity in The Beacon Folkestone and other PSCN provisions for other need types.
- 9.2 Analysis continues to show that girls will be less likely to benefit from this proposal than boys. As of May 2022, there were 2,460 boys and 1,115 girls on roll in the ten PSCN special schools across the County. In addition, the most physically disabled may be indirectly discriminated against as the satellite building will support the more ambulant pupils. Therefore, some Dover residents may still need to travel out of the district to attend a suitable provision.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 The initial belief that buildings of the Walmer Science College could be utilised for The Beacon Satellite with minimal investment has proved to have been widely optimistic. The need for the provision remains. The option to find an alternative site and build a new provision at a lower cost is equally optimistic. The most realistic and cost effective solution is to proceed with the proposal, as per the planning application.



## 12. Recommendation(s)

The Children's, Young People and Education Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposal to:

- (i). Release a further £15,924,438 of capital funding from the Children's, Young People and Education Capital Budget to enable the delivery of the satellite to be completed;
- (ii). Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the General Counsel to enter into any necessary contracts / agreements on behalf of the County Council; and
- (iii). Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

## 12. Background Documents (plus links to document)

- 12.1 Report to CYPE Cabinet Committee 20 March 2020  
[https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s96306/Item%2013%20-%20REPORT%20The\\_Beacon\\_Folkestone\\_Satellite.pdf](https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s96306/Item%2013%20-%20REPORT%20The_Beacon_Folkestone_Satellite.pdf)
- 12.2 Record of Decision 20/0001  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s96642/Signed%20RoD.pdf>
- 12.3 The 'Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2023-27.  
[Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-in-Kent-2022-to-2026.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/13323/Strategy-for-children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities.pdf)
- 12.4 The SEND Strategy 2021-24 -  
[https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/13323/Strategy-for-children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/13323/Strategy-for-children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities.pdf)
- 12.5 Equality Impact Assessment

## 13. Contact details

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