

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

29 July 2020

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and was an online remote meeting in compliance with the Council Procedure Rules Relating to the holding of Remote Meetings and the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor: Leisa Smith (In the Chair)

Councillors: Lesley Hamilton, Brenda Harrison, John Lauderdale, Jim Lindridge, Sue Little and Shane Moore

Also Present: Councillor Lee Cartwright

Officers: Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children's and Families
Julie Reed, Schools Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager
Tony Hanson, Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative and David Turner, Primary Head Representative.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2020

Received.

3. **Replacement Hydrotherapy Pool and Remodelling – Springwell School** (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek approval for additional funding to replace the hydrotherapy pool at Springwell Special School as detailed in confidential **APPENDIX A**, in order to progress works during the summer holiday period. **This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

Issue(s) for consideration

The Schools Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager reported on the background to the decision taken to replace the hydrotherapy pool and undertake remodelling works at Springwell School. Following a feasibility and costing exercise that included a higher specification pool, and a recent mechanical engineering survey, it had become apparent that there would be a shortfall in funding. It was also noted that the existing air handling unit (AHU) may not have sufficient functionality to serve a larger pool and area which had added to the shortfall in funding, details of which were provided as set out in the report. The benefits of a larger pool were also outlined.

The Committee was advised that if the additional funding, as detailed in the confidential appendix (**This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely (para 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**) was approved, additional funding could be sourced from the schools' Special Provision Capital Fund (SPCF).

At this point in the meeting the Chair sought any declarations of interest from Members. No interests were declared.

In the discussion that followed the Schools Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager responded to issues raised arising from the report. Members spoke in support of the proposals and welcomed the benefits of facilities of this type. The Committee indicated their wish to further pursue information contained within the confidential appendix. In view of this, it was agreed that the meeting move into closed session.

4. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during part of the discussions on the previous item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Minute 3 – (Replacement Hydrotherapy Pool and Remodelling – Springwell School) – This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

3. Replacement Hydrotherapy Pool and Remodelling – Springwell School (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*) This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Further to discussions in the open session of the meeting, a number of queries were raised in relation to the breakdown of estimated costs as set out in the confidential appendix attached to the report. Comments were raised in terms of the responsibilities for maintaining the hydrotherapy pool and Members sought assurances that maintenance costs would be fully met by the school. The Committee was advised that the school would be responsible for all maintenance costs.

3. Replacement Hydrotherapy Pool and Remodelling – Springwell School (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Issue(s) for consideration

Further to discussions in the closed section of the meeting, details of which were set out above, the meeting returned to open session whereupon the Chair sought any further views on the recommendations.

The Committee agreed the following recommendation with no dissent.

Decision

The Committee approved the additional funding for the replacement hydrotherapy pool and associated works as summarised in confidential **Appendix A (These items contain exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)** subject to the school agreeing to increase their 10% standard schools contribution to 10% of the Local Authority funding.

5. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

6. Any Other Business – Home to School Transport

In response to clarification sought in relation to the transport support arrangements in place for children from September, the Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhood Services outlined the local authorities statutory obligations under the Education Act 1996 to provide home to school travel assistance free of charge to all eligible students as set out in the eligibility criteria, details of which were provided. Members were advised that historically, when there had been spare seats on buses, the Council, for a fee, made those seats available to students who were not eligible for assistance. However, concessionary seats were not always available and were not guaranteed. Given the current implications of the current pandemic and Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR), the Council had taken the opportunity to inform parents of the need to explore alternative methods of transporting children to school.

In the lengthy discussion that followed the Assistant Director responded to a number of queries raised in relation to the home to school transport arrangements. In response to some concerns raised that the Council were unable to provide transport for non-eligible students and the need to consider provision for all children experiencing difficulties with travel arrangements, the Assistant Director provided clarification in relation to the transport eligibility criteria and indicated that whilst transport would continue to be provided for students meeting this criteria, it was uncertain whether concessionary travel permits would be available for other students, the reasons for which were reiterated. It was highlighted that the position would

continue to be monitored and the Council would continue to explore options with schools and keep parents updated in this regard.

At this point in the meeting Councillor Little advised that her partner had a transport business and would therefore be unable to speak on this item when considered at Full Council.

Decision

That the information given and comments of Members be noted.

7. Any Other Business – Holiday Hunger

The Chair provided details of arrangements for food hampers to be prepared for families in need on Saturday 1 August between 10.00 am and 5.00 pm in readiness for collection by voluntary sector organisations on Monday 3 August. Volunteers were sought to assist with the preparations.

8. Any Other Business – School Attendance Levels

In response to a query regarding the impact of the current pandemic on school attendance thresholds, the Committee was advised that a report in this regard would be submitted to a future meeting.

The meeting concluded at 2.50 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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