

**THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Cabinet Meeting
<b>Subject:</b>	Creating additional specialist school provision and school places for growing numbers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
<b>Report by:</b>	Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director Children, Families & Education
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All

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**1. Requested by**

- 1.1 Councillor Gerald Vernon Jackson - Leader, Portsmouth City Council

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The recent SEND Strategic Accommodation Review and the refreshed SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) pupil forecasts confirmed that:
- Forecasting shows rapidly increasing numbers of SEND pupils in the city across a range of SEND needs (similar to other Local Authorities)
  - Accommodation for SEND pupils is not sufficient to meet future demand
  - Demand for alternative provision is also growing and the city is approaching capacity
  - Place costs (revenue funding) are creating a significant pressure on the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant
  - Capital funding from central government is very limited and is insufficient to address pressures on accommodation for pupils with SEND / SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health)
  - There is an urgent need to find a financially viable solution which re-focuses provision for pupils with SEND and SEMH in line with the vision for an inclusive city. This will enable the council to meet its statutory duty to place resident children in suitable educational provision.
- 2.2 A five year programme of capital works has now been developed which will meet the future demand for places and ensure an inclusive approach involving both mainstream and special schools, providing places across the city and reducing the need for out of city placements. Details of the programme are set out in the attached report.

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- 2.3 The programme has been carefully phased. In addition to the funding that is already available, the £3.485m capital uplift will ensure the funding and delivery of all identified projects until 2023.

### **3. Implications of not providing the capital uplift**

- 3.1 The implications of not providing this capital uplift are as follows:
- The Council will be unable to meet its statutory duty of providing children with SEND an appropriate school place
  - The Council will have to consider funding out of city places (if available) which are more expensive and not in the best interests of the child unless it is for very specialist provision. This will put increasing pressure on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the Council's home to school transport budget.
  - There will be an increasing likelihood of appeals to the first tier SEN tribunal where children have been offered a place that is not in line with parental preference
  - There will be an increasing likelihood of placement breakdowns where children are placed in settings that are not able to meet all of their needs.
- 3.2 **Without funding, there will be a detrimental impact on children and young people's life chances in terms of not being able to:**
- Some children with specialist needs will have very long car journeys to get to independent special schools out of the city, which will be tiring for them
  - Provision for children in mainstream and special schools in the city will not be as good as it could be because we have to meet the high costs of out of city places for other children
  - Care placements for some looked after children could break down because we don't have good school placements locally
- 3.3 It is also important to note that the five year capital programme that has been developed
- Is based on several years of reviews and feasibility work which has the full buy in of all key partners
  - Offers an inclusive approach involving both mainstream and special schools across the city
  - Offers the most cost effective solution both in terms of capital and revenue terms.