RELOCATION OF DARLINGTON'S PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT (PRU) AND EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL SERVICES (EOTAS) TO THE FORMER RISE CARR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Chris McEwan, Children's Services Portfolio

Responsible Director(s) - Margaret Asquith, Director of Children's Services

Purpose of Report

- 1. To inform Members of progress on the development of an integrated Pupil Referral Centre through the refurbishment of the former Rise Carr Primary School.
- 2. To gain agreement to the allocation of an additional £400,000 from Children's Services' capital allocation to support increased costs associated with the project.
- 3. To gain agreement for the change in facilities from the provision of a Multi-Use-Games area to a large multi-purpose hall.

Background

- 4. In April 2005 Children's Services commissioned a feasibility study into the refurbishment of the former Rise Carr Primary School building to provide accommodation for relocating the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) services.
- 5. The proposal received the support of Council funding of £1.9m was identified to undertake the proposed works.
- 6. Initial cost information was obtained but, following an early meeting to discuss the proposals with community representatives, a request for an additional 'play space' was made. Council agreed that the total costs for the scheme should increase from £1.9 to £2m, to allow the inclusion of £100k to develop a Multi Use Games Ares (MUGA) Council 15th September 2005.

Information & Analysis

7. The scheme has now completed a thorough feasibility investigation which included further development of the design ensuring the project fully meets the needs of staff

- and pupils by delivering suitable and sufficient accommodation. In addition, more detailed consultation with local residents has taken place to deliver the extended use of the premises by the local community.
- 8. Concurrently, detailed site investigations took place into the current condition of the building which, following the closure of Rise Carr Primary School and despite an increase in security measures, has suffered from ongoing vandalism.

Design Development

9. Design development has been undertaken to develop the new design for the PRU which has been constrained to some extent by the existing structure and the restrictions placed upon altering a listed building.

Multi-Use Games Area

- 10. When the scheme was first commissioned in April 2005, the community were keen to access a sports provision. Council agreed to increase the funding from £1.9m to £2million to allow the sports facilities to include a multi-use games area.
- 11. However, as the plans for the scheme were developing, it became apparent that the costs could only allow for an extremely small school hall (75m²) which would have to provide for PE and recreation, and could also double up as a dining area. As further consultation was undertaken with community groups, an alternative scheme has been discussed and agreed to provide better pupil and community facilities which would provide a much larger hall in place of the provision of a multi-use games area.
- 12. This revised proposal would provide changing rooms with shower facilities, a hall large enough to accommodate a full size badminton court, storage facilities dedicated for community use, and a multi-agency office/meeting room with hot-desking facilities. This affords both the school and local community greater scope for use than the original external tarmac MUGA and it is recommended the scheme be revised and the funding identified for the MUGA be used to create a larger school hall, supplemented by other capital funding available within the Children's Services' budget.

Financial Implications

13. On 18th July 2006 a revised brief was agreed and issued. Costs have now been produced and it is estimated that the construction costs will be £1,800,000. The following table identifies all known costs associated with the project (figures remain informed estimates at this stage and can only be confirmed on receipt of tenders):

Funding approved	£2,000,000
Construction	£1,800,000
Fees	£200,000

Furniture, Equipment and ICT	£400,000
Sub Total	£2,400,000
Shortfall	- £400,000

- 14. The key contributing factors resulting in an increase in project costs are:
 - (a) the length of time required for the construction programme and subsequent anticipated effect of tender price inflation; and
 - (b) repairs and maintenance to the school following vandalism.
- 15. As a result a current shortfall in funding of £400,000 has arisen. However, this shortfall can be met from a surplus of unallocated Devolved Formula Capital funding, held in Children's Services.
- 16. Children's Services is requesting that £400,000 of unallocated Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) funding be allocated to this project. DFC is funding received by the Authority but allocated by formula to all schools to undertake small-scale capital improvements to school buildings. In many cases this funding is added to other available funding streams as a contribution to larger capital works in schools.
- 17. The Authority has continued to receive DFC funding from the Department for Education and Skills for schools which are new or have been rebuilt and are not therefore entitled to receive an allocation of DFC for the three years following their opening. In addition, funding was received for schools for the year following their closure.
- 18. This unallocated DFC has not yet been utilised to support any particular capital works in schools and it is considered that the development of a high quality PRU / EOTAS school represents the highest priority needs within the Borough's schools and therefore should be supported from the unallocated DFC funding stream, as a priority.

Programme & Spending Profile

- 19. The following milestone dates and events have been agreed:
 - (a) November 2006 Submission of planning application
 - (b) January 2007 Issue of Tenders
 - (c) March 2007 Anticipated start on site
 - (d) December 2007 completion of work
 - (e) January 2008 School opens to pupils
- 20. To achieve this programme the anticipated spend profile will be:
 - (a) 2006/07 £150,000

- (b) 2007/08 £2,150,000
- (c) 2008/09 £100,000

Outcome of Consultation

- 21. There has already been considerable consultation with the North Road Community Partnership and also wider with the surrounding local community and their comments have been taken into consideration as the scheme develops. The main issues raised through these early consultations are appreciation of community use, and a refurbishment of the building with added security. The main areas of concern have been parking which will be addressed on site, and concerns about children leaving the school during school hours which will be addressed by the school staff.
- 22. Once final designs have been developed the scheme will be submitted to Planning for consideration before the end of November 2006, enabling construction to commence on the scheme in Spring 2007 with completion and the opening expected in January 2008.
- 23. Working groups will be established with staff and community representatives to develop areas such as ICT and furniture requirements within the defined budget. Groups will also look at developing plans for community use of the facilities and extended services. The Children's Services Project Manager will put in place robust cost controls ensuring the scheme is delivered within the agreed budget and programme.
- 24. A handling plan for the project is currently being developed. This will ensure that all necessary parties are engaged with the process as and when necessary.

Legal Implications

25. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

26. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

27. The issues contained within this report are required to be considered by Council.

Conclusion

28. The development of a single setting for the Pupil Referral Unit remains a major priority for Children's Services. The proposed design changes and resulting cost increases are necessary to ensure a facility is created that meets the full needs of all end users and affords the same level of opportunity for some of our most challenging young people as that currently enjoyed by other Darlington schools, and also serves the wishes of the local community.

Recommendations

- 29. Members are requested to :-
 - (a) Support the proposed design change and resulting cost increases; and
 - (b) Recommend that the additional costs are met from Children's Services' capital allocation.

Reasons

- 30. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) Without additional funding the scheme would have to be further reviewed resulting in significant delay and a lower specification solution, which would not best meet the needs of the Authority's most vulnerable and challenging pupils; and
 - (b) Similarly, would not meet the aspirations and wishes of the local community.

Margaret Asquith Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

Council Meeting - 15th September 2005 Comments Form on Public Consultation

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