



Meeting: Policy Development and Decision Group (Joint Commissioning Team)

Date: 14 December 2017

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Brunel Academy Relocations Options Appraisal

Is the decision a key decision? Yes

When does the decision need to be implemented?

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1. Proposal and Introduction

1. Brunel Academy (formerly known as Torbay School) is a 60 place Special School for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMH). In February 2015 Council determined that Brunel Academy needed to be relocated for the benefit of the school and its pupils. The decision acknowledged the limitations of the existing site in meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable pupils in Torbay.
2. It had previously been proposed to relocate Brunel Academy to the Parkfield site, however, the decision of Council not to approve the relevant planning application means this cannot now take place. As a consequence, further work is needed to explore what options are available in addressing the deficiencies of the current site in Paignton. Following a meeting with the Academy Sponsor, Catch 22, and representatives from school leadership, this paper also encompasses the Hillside and Polsham sites to ensure all site elements within the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) offer are considered within a co-ordinated strategy.

2. Reason for Proposal

- 2.1 Brunel Academy is currently located on Torquay Road, Paignton. The site area of the school is 4,332m² against a DfE recommended size of 10,160m² for a school of this size and character. The lack of space, particularly outdoors, creates significant difficulties for school leadership in meeting the needs of its pupils, particularly the vocational needs of older children.

- 2.2 In 2015, the Council purchased land at Brookfield Close adjacent to Brunel Academy with the original aim of providing a larger site for the new single form entry primary, for which funding has been agreed by the DfE. The recent planning decision for Parkfield rules out the relocation of Brunel to that site requiring other options to be considered.
- 2.3 Attached at Appendix 1 is a summary of options that have been explored in identifying an alternative solution for Brunel, including, where relevant, the additional capital that would be required. This acknowledges that the £2.3m available from Schools Capital Funding would be insufficient to relocate and rebuild the facility currently on Torquay Road in a manner that would address its current deficiencies.
- 2.4 Following the planning decision in May, the school leadership has been working with the local authority and educational providers to explore how pupils' needs can be met in the interim. This includes the use of facilities at Parkfield and access to the use of mainstream and special school facilities by Brunel pupils which is gradually developing into an expansive programme of activity. Whilst this activity cannot provide a complete solution to Brunel's needs it could form part of the wider strategy for SEMH pupils alongside any proposals for investment in the current premises or a relocation/rebuild.
- 2.5 The Director of Children's Services and Head of Education, Learning and Skills, recently met with Catch 22 and the Trust Chief Executive in order to review the current position. Whilst welcoming the Council's intention to explore options for Torquay Road, their strong view is that any emerging plan should encompass the sites at Polsham and Hillside which also form part of the SEMH Multi Academy Trust. Their assessment is that the problems on these sites are as significant, if not more so, than Torquay Road and that investment in the latter, in isolation, would not provide a sustainable solution that meets the longer term needs of SEMH pupils in Torbay. A more comprehensive piece of work could also encompass the work that has now commenced with SEMH pupils accessing parts of their curriculum 'off site' thereby offsetting some of additional premises capacity that would otherwise be required.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

That the Deputy Mayor be recommended:

- 3.1 That the options appraisal for Brunel Academy is extended to encompass the Polsham Key Stage 3 and Hillside Key Stage 4 alternative provision sites in order to develop an holistic response that makes best use of the resources available, whilst maximising outcomes for SEMH pupils. This work to be completed early February 2018 with the outcome to be presented to a future meeting of the Policy Development and Decision Group.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Brunel Academy Site Options Appraisal October 2017 (exempt)

Background Documents

Council Report & Decision Review of School Places 26/2/15

<http://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=370>