



Meeting: Council

Date: 26 February 2015

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Review of School Places in Torbay

Is the decision a key decision? Yes

When does the decision need to be implemented? From September 2015 onwards

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1. Purpose and Introduction

- 1.1 The report provides an update on pupil forecasts and a requested change to capital funding priorities for Children's Services. It recommends the allocation of existing and future capital funding for the relocation of Torbay School and the development of a new primary school site in Paignton. Also funding required for additional secondary school places in Torquay and a 3rd phase of capital investment for Furzeham Primary School in Brixham.

2. Proposed Decision

Council Decisions:

- 2.1 That £750,000 identified from savings within the Children's Services Capital Programme be allocated to the Brookfield House acquisition and associated development.
- 2.2 That the proposed capital projects at St Margaret's Academy and Roselands Primary be cancelled.
- 2.3 That the £3m already allocated to Children's Services for primary provision be allocated to the relocation of Torbay School.
- 2.4 That the Schools Capital & Planning Manager commence discussions and consultation with providers, stakeholders and the Department for Education regarding the competition for a new primary school in Paignton.
- 2.5 That the Council notes that future Basic Need funding will be needed for the new primary school in Paignton and for any additional secondary provision required. A

further report to Council will follow once funding allocations are known and there is feedback from the consultation process.

- 2.6 That an additional £400,000 from the 2015/16 Local Authority Capital Maintenance Fund be allocated to a third phase of improvements at Furzeham Primary School.

Mayoral Decision:

- 2.7 That, subject to 2.1 above, the Mayor be recommended to acquire Brookfield House to improve the facilities at Torbay School.

3.2 Reason for Decision

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient and appropriate school places. This proposal will ensure that the Council is meeting the increasing demand for school places as well as enhancing existing service delivery for children and families in Torbay.
- 3.2 The proposal will benefit the children and families attending Torbay School as well as offering good quality school places for future generations of Torbay.

Supporting Information

4. Position

- 4.1 The Council has a statutory duty to manage the supply of school places within Torbay and currently within the Council's Capital Plan there is a commitment of £3m for 2 primary expansion projects; St Margarets (£2m) and Roselands (£1m), which were both to start in 2016. However, initial estimates show that the £3m will not be enough and more funding will be required to deliver these two projects. The latest pupil number projections show that the birth rate is not increasing as quickly as anticipated 2 years ago. As a result there is not such an immediate need to provide the additional primary places. This provides the Council and Children's Services opportunity to consider if there is a better alternative method for providing the additional places that will be needed from 2018/19.
- 4.2 A more pressing issue for Children Services (CS) is the problematic site of Torbay School. The school currently occupies a split site with the main school being on Torbay Road, Paignton and its alternative provision being sited at Hillside, Torquay. The main school in Paignton is keen to relocate for several reasons; the existing site is cramped and has limited outdoor space, it is completely surrounded by residential housing and the school has a history of difficult relations with neighbours which is getting progressively worse.

- 4.3 The recommendation is to relocate all of Torbay School's provision to the Hillside site. This will require significant investment for improvements and new build. It is estimated that the expansion and modernisation of the Hillside site for Torbay School is likely to cost £3m. The existing school site in Paignton could then be used as a primary school with some changes needed.
- 4.4 Whether Torbay school relocate or not, additional land is required for the site to provide a much needed playing field and to improve the access. This would benefit the existing Torbay School as well as any possible future primary school located on that site.
- 4.5 Negotiations are underway with Sanctuary Housing to acquire Brookfield House which is adjacent to Torbay School. This land would significantly improve the provision at the site by enabling the development of a much needed play area. It would also provide a new entrance to the site which would alleviate some of the difficulties that the school has regarding poor access and difficult relations with neighbours.
- 4.6 Sanctuary Housing has indicated that they will consider a cash purchase. In addition to the land acquisition, there would be 3 key elements to this project; demolition of existing building; security/fencing & new entrance; and a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and hard playspace. The total cost of acquiring and developing the Brookfield site would be £750,000. This could be funded from savings on existing Children's Services Capital projects. No "new" resources are required.
- 4.7 The latest secondary pupil number projections for Torbay indicate a pressure in Torquay from September 2018 onwards. Torquay Academy currently offers the best option in Torquay to offer additional secondary places as it has sufficient site area to accommodate expansion and this year's first preferences show that it is popular with parents. However, there is a complication that they have recently opened a 6th Form and have indicated that they may wish to reduce 11-15 numbers so that they can accommodate post 16 within their existing buildings. If they reduce their PAN to 210 from September 2015 then there is likely to be a shortage of secondary places in Torquay as early as September 2016. In order to facilitate an agreement with the school, the Local Authority (LA) will need to provide additional accommodation for 11-15 and post 16. As an Academy, Torquay Academy is highly unlikely to accept mobile/temporary accommodation as a cheap solution. However, they have indicated that they will keep their PAN at 240 and will be inclined to take additional pupils in future if the LA helps fund the post 16 accommodation that they need now. It is estimated that this would cost approximately £1m, possibly more. Further feasibility work would be required to establish an accurate project cost.
- 4.8 In February 2014, the Council approved £500,000 for major repairs at Furzeham Primary School. Significant improvements have already been made and a second phase of works is scheduled to start early 2015. However, parts of the school are still in a very poor condition. The most recent condition survey identified that there is still a considerable amount of investment needed to bring the school up to an acceptable

level. A third phase of works starting in 2016 would ensure that the improvements being made reach throughout the school and would address significant outstanding problems with the ancillary accommodation. An estimated £400,000 would be required for phase 3. The Department for Education (DfE) will shortly be announcing the LA Capital Maintenance funding for 2015/16. This funding could be used to fund the next phase of work at Furzeham Primary.

5. Possibilities and Options

- 5.1 The alternative would be to keep Torbay School on its current site and continue with the existing proposals for St Margaret's and Roselands. This would not be a cost effective option for providing the additional places needed and expanding existing schools on difficult sites would result in a less satisfactory service outcome than a new primary school. Furthermore, the current difficulties experienced by Torbay School with site constraints and neighbours would continue to escalate.
- 5.2 A new primary school, a new site for Torbay School, and a new access and playing field for the proposed primary site will provide a cost effective solution that meets numerous service needs.
- 5.3 As part of the proposals, Officers have considered alternative sites for both a new primary school and for the relocation of Torbay School. The site at Occombe House/ Fairwinds and the forthcoming closure of Stoodley Knowle have been considered. Neither site would be in the right location for a new primary school but both sites are still options for other education needs. A report will follow once further investigation work is done.

6. Fair Decision Making

- 6.1 A consultation paper was sent to those parties most affected by these proposals i.e. the staff, governors and parents/carers of all pupils attending Torbay School. The paper outlined the proposal, the reasons behind it and the process which would follow. It included a response form for the consultees to complete and return by the closing date. A copy of the consultation paper is attached to the Equality Impact Assessment accompanying this report.
- 6.2 There will be a further opportunity for interested parties to comment and inform the decision making during the statutory process. The relocation of a school is a prescribed change and as such must follow a statutory process as prescribed by the Secretary of State. Part of this involves a further consultation with interested parties and any responses received will be used to inform the Council's final decision on whether to proceed with the proposals or not.
- 6.3 The setting up of a new school also has to follow a statutory process and will be established through competition. As part of the competitive process, a formal

consultation with all interested parties, stakeholders and potential providers will be undertaken. This consultation will inform all future recommendations to Council and the Secretary of State.

7. Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

7.1 The proposals will require procurement of major capital projects, including consultants and contractors. This will be done in accordance with advice from the Council's procurement team and in accordance with the Council's financial regulations and standing orders.

8. Risks

8.1 If the proposed decisions are not implemented then there is a significant risk that the difficulties experienced by Torbay School will escalate, increasing poor community relations between the school and its neighbours. There is also a risk that the Council would not meet demand for additional school places or would not be ensuring value for money by expanding existing schools.

8.2 Risks if the decision is made include; future basic need allocations being lower than expected; pupil numbers being higher or lower than expected or demand for places increasing quicker or significantly slower than forecast.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 Torbay School Parents, Staff & Governors Consultation Document