Report to CABINET

Proposed development of replacement Saddleworth School – Allocation of resources [Saddleworth North]

Portfolio Holder: Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council

Officer Contact: Elaine Mclean, Executive Director of Economy and Skills

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Reason for Decision

The purpose of the report is to approve a financial contribution to enable further improvements to the proposed, replacement Saddleworth School in line with the requests made by the School and the School Technical Group and to approve the funding of an archaeological survey of the W H Pallets site prior to demolition.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council approves:-

1. The provision of £253,224 to fund additional works to the new Saddleworth School

2. The funding of an archaeological survey of the WH pallets site costing £12,375
Proposed development of replacement Saddleworth School – Allocation of financial resources [Saddleworth North]

1 Background

1.1 In July 2014, the Council agreed to acquire the area of land to the rear of the former WH Shaw Pallet Works site in Diggle in order to support the development of a replacement Saddleworth School. It was further agreed that the acquisition of the subject area of land was due to be funded by way of a land swap, utilising the existing Saddleworth School site in Uppermill, in exchange.

1.2 Due to the difference in value, it was proposed that, in addition to acquiring the required area of land in Diggle, the Council would receive a capital receipt. It was envisaged that, this capital receipt would help fund a series of improvements on the proposed School site and a series of highway improvement works that would improve pedestrian safety in Diggle and also seek to improve traffic flow and mitigate against the impact of increased traffic travelling in and out of the village.

1.3 The Council signed a S.151 letter with the Education Funding Agency which, agreed to financially contribute to the agreed works.

2 Current Position

2.1 As set out in the report dated November 2014, it was anticipated that the Council would be have total funds of £2.056m available to support the relocation of Saddleworth School. After commitments to highways and on site works, £666k was expected to be available to support further improvements to the school. They are as follows:-

- Retractable seating to the main hall. This would allow the leisure space to be more intensively used, particularly around lunch time. The estimated cost of this work is £70,000.
- Semi-automated folding acoustic partition. This would similarly allow spaces in the building to be more intensively used. The estimated cost of this work is £16,575.
- Floor upgrade to the main hall and dance/drama area. The installation of a wooden floor, as opposed to vinyl on concrete, would reduce future maintenance costs and, as this type of construction would have a longer usable life, it would reduce future capital costs for the School / Education Authority. The cost of this work is £19,399.
- Resource walls. In order to support the ‘home base’ idea, where teachers travel around the site as opposed to pupils, resource walls are seen as an essential tool to support this process. The cost of this work is £92,000.
- There are a series of lower level flat roofs which are non-lead bearing. The School would however, like to see these areas strengthened, so
that they could support outside teaching, better maintenance and potential, future expansion space. The cost of this work is £55,250.

2.3 In order to provide an instruction to Interserve, the EFA would need the Council to provide further comfort that, if developed; the Council would be in a position to fund these works. As a consequence, the EFA have asked the Council to provide a further S.151 letter. The EFA letter requesting that we provide a section 151 letter will contain the confirmed figure for the above list of works.

2.4 The Council has undertaken to pay the cost of demolition works at the W H Pallet site and, through the planning process, the need to carry out an archaeological survey of some of the industrial buildings has arisen which will cost an estimated £12,375 prior to any approved demolition.

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 The Council could choose a range of options, which can be summarised as follows;

Do Nothing

3.2 The Council could choose to do nothing and not contribute any further financial resources to the School nor carry out the archaeological survey.

Fund the additional works and the archaeological survey

3.3 The Council is aware that an archaeological survey will be a requirement of the Planning Authority.

3.4 The School Technical Committee has identified that these additional works will make a significant difference in how they can use the space within the school and also will enable the curriculum offer to be enhanced. The cost of making these changes during construction is likely to be significantly less than making changes at a later date.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 It is considered preferable for the Council to fund the additional works for the school and the survey.

4.2 The works to the school would be carried out by Interserve as part of their main contract and, in order to allow this additional work to be included within the contract, the Council would be obliged to sign a further S.151 letter, confirming that sufficient finance would be available to fund the works.

5 Consultation
5.1 The School and the School Technical Group have been consulted throughout on the design of the proposed new school.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 Capital

6.1.1 The Cabinet Report of November 2014 detailed the capital commitment for the Council with total resources available of £2.056m, estimated costs of £1.388m leaving uncommitted resources of £666k. These costs are included within the Capital Programme across financial years 2015/16 and 2016/17 with the majority of the spend (£1,295k) in 2015/16.

6.1.2 The as yet uncommitted resources available to the scheme will finance the archaeological survey and the additional school equipment.

6.3 Revenue

6.3.1 There are no revenue implications for the Council as a result of this report.

6.4 Section 151 Assurance

6.4.1 The Council has previously provided an assurance to the EFA that it had the commitment and funding in place to support the school development and had to provide an indemnity to the Secretary of State for Education. This letter of indemnity was signed on behalf of the Council by the S151 Officer. The additional costs will require the same assurance to be given.

(Sam Smith, Senior Finance Manager)

7 Legal Services Comments

7.1 It is within the Council's powers to agree to the recommendation. Cabinet must consider whether it is a reasonable use of those powers in deciding the preferred option.

8 Co-operative Agenda

8.1 The Council are seeking to work co-operatively with the School, the School Technical Group – which includes members of the local community, the EFA and Interserve in order to deliver the best educational facility possible.

9 IT Implications

9.1 None.

10 Property Implications

10.1 None.
11 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications
11.1 None.

12 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications
12.1 None.

13 Equality Impact Assessment Completed?
13.1 No.

14 Key Decision
14.1 Yes

15 Key Decision Reference
15.1 EDS-06-15

16 Background Papers
16.1 None.

17 Appendices
17.1 None