Emergency Powers Decision Report

Oldham College – Specialist Provision

Decision Maker: Chief Executive

Service Area: Education and Early Years
Directorate: Children's Services
Report Author: Victoria Caldwell
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Date of Decision:

1. **Power to make the decision**
The decision is being taken under the authorisation contained in Section 9C – Delegations to Specific Officers of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council Constitution for the Chief Executive to take any emergency decisions in respect of the Council's executive functions which cannot be delayed until the next Cabinet meeting.

2. **Decision Sought**
This report seeks approval to allocate capital funding of **£849,192** which will be funded from the Basic Need/HNPCA grants and resource funding of £203k of required revenue funding per annum from the High Needs Block.

3. **Reason for urgency**
The decision is required urgently to enable the planned expansion of specialist provision at Oldham College to progress in time for 12 additional places to be available from September 2027. Demand for specialist placements continues to increase across the Borough. Any delay in confirming the capital and associated revenue funding will risk the specialist provision not being delivered in time, reducing the Local Authority's ability to meet local demand for children and young people with SEND who require specialist provision.

Risk(s) of not taking the decision
Failure to approve the proposal now will prevent the creation of 12 additional specialist places at Oldham College, reducing the Local Authority's ability to meet growing demand for specialist provision. This would place further pressure on existing local capacity and may lead to increased reliance on higher-cost independent and out-of-borough placements. Any delay in approving the funding risks the modular accommodation not being delivered on time for September 2027, resulting in a missed opportunity to increase local specialist capacity and support delivery of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy and Local SEND Reform Plan.

5. **Financial impact if decision is not taken forward**
Failure to proceed with the proposal is likely to result in continued or increased expenditure on higher-cost independent and out-of-borough placements where

children and young people cannot be accommodated within local specialist provision. This would reduce the Local Authority's ability to manage demand within existing High Needs Block resources and may result in higher overall costs than investing in additional local capacity. The proposal also supports the creation of 12 additional specialist places within Oldham, helping to reduce future pressure on specialist placement budgets.

6. Statutory Officer clearances

a. Section 151 Officer
Name Lee Walsh
Date 17 September 2026

Comments

This report seeks approval to allocate £850k capital funding to increase in-borough specialist education capacity through the creation of 12 additional places at Oldham College. The scheme will be funded from the Council's Basic Need and High Needs Provision Capital Allocation. Works will be commissioned by the College and funded through a Grant Funding Agreement, with payments linked to verified expenditure and scheme of delivery.

The report also seeks approval to allocate £203k per annum of revenue funding from the High Needs Block to support the additional specialist provision. While this will increase High Needs' expenditure, the cost is expected to be partially offset by reduced demand for alternative specialist placements currently funded elsewhere within the High Needs Block.

b. Monitoring Officer
Name Alex Bougatef (Monitoring Officer)
Date 17.09.26

Comments

The exercise of emergency powers should be undertaken in consultation with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council. However, the Council has not yet appointed a Leader or Deputy Leader for the current municipal year, so it is not possible to consult them. In addition, there is no certainty about when a Leader or Deputy Leader will be appointed, as the Council has failed at three successive meetings to do so. For the reasons given in the report an urgent decision relating to the report is required and it cannot await the appointment of a Leader and Deputy Leader at some undetermined future date.