



Date of Meeting	19 th November 2020
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Report Author	Fay Davies
Public/Private Document	Public

Littleborough Primary School Project

Executive Summary

1. At time of writing we are awaiting an announcement from the Department for Education regarding the Government Spending Review which is expected to be on 25th November 2020. The DfE are looking for “shovel ready” construction projects that can be delivered immediately. To this end the Council have been working closely with the DfE team drawing up options for a Littleborough Primary School re-build project. In the event that the project is funded in the Spending Review the Council needs to make a decision on the Littleborough Children’s Centre building which falls within potential new school footprint.

Recommendation

- 2.1 Approval of Littleborough Primary School’s inclusion in the Department for Education new re-build project if announced on the 25th November 2020.
- 2.2 Approval for Option 2 detailed in this report, which would see the Littleborough Children’s Centre re-provided in what is currently the Primary school infant block that is discussed here as the “traditional build” block.
- 2.3 Approval for the expenditure on Option 2 of £500,000 to re-provide Children’s Centre spaces, parking and outside play areas, and the £3,000 remedial works expected to be needed to make good leisure centre spaces.
- 2.4 Approval to delegate additional expenditure of no more that £249,000 to the Director of Children’s Services on Option 2 on the understanding that a full accounting will be reported through the annual schools capital budget report, in the event that the demolition and rebuilding of the school, and re-provision of the Children’s Centre project budget is exceeded as full feasibility on the new school is completed.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 Following a statement on a new school re-building programme from the Prime Minister in June, the Department for Education, DfE have been communicating with the Head Teacher at Littleborough Primary School and Rochdale Council, and conducting a full site survey and feasibility assessment with the potential of the school being included on the list of possible schemes. The Littleborough Primary school is still not definitely on the approved list and the re-building programme has not yet been funded.
- 3.2 The DfE requires that the Littleborough Primary School project is “shovel ready” to be included.
- 3.3 The Littleborough Campus includes the Link4Life Leisure centre, the Littleborough Children’s Centre and the Primary school and all these elements are affected by the inclusion of the school on the rebuild list.
- 3.4 For several years the Littleborough Campus has had significant and costly ongoing maintenance issues. Covering the rising costs of maintenance is increasingly challenging under the current financial constraints.
- 3.5 In the report below three options on how a new school could be delivered on the site are detailed. Option 2 is recommended for approval as it allows sufficient site space for the new school to be able to function effectively while re-providing Children’s Centre accommodation to allow continuation of associated services.
- 3.6 While some loss of Leisure Centre spaces will be unavoidable (the dance studio/small sports hall) Link4Life will have potential access to the new Primary school sports hall and have already had discussions with the Star Academies Trust about community access to the new Secondary school sports provision that is to be delivered in the area.

Key Points for Consideration

- 4.1 Last year construction work was started on Littleborough Primary School to repair and reinforce the building structure. This work has continued through this year, at a cost of approximately £330,000, to allow the school to continue to be used as required.
- 4.2 The Prime Minister announced on the 29th June 2020 that a school rebuilding programme will be funded (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-announces-transformative-school-rebuilding-programme>) and as part of the spending review, the DfE is currently setting up a series of school projects that can be “shovel ready”. Projects will be announced in the November spending review with construction starting September 2021.
- 4.3 DfE have notified the Council that Littleborough Primary School is on the list of possible rebuilds. The reason given is that survey work has shown

Littleborough Campus, including parts of the Link4Life Leisure Centre, the Children's Centre and the school are of Laingspan Construction.

- 4.4 A nationwide survey has shown that a particular phase of Laingspan-type construction elements are now getting towards the end of their potential lifespan. The remedial works carried out at Littleborough Primary School over the last 2 years have put in place mitigation works to allow the school to continue to be used. Ongoing survey work will continue to ensure that the school building will remain safe, but potential costs going forward are a significant financial risk. Both the costs to the school, of using the building, and the costs to the Council, in condition works, have significantly increased over the last few years.
- 4.5 Consequently the council has been investigating, with the DfE, the scenarios by which community and school use of all the facilities on the Littleborough Campus can continue to be provided. Under the DfE school re-building project only the costs of the new school will be paid by the government.
- 4.6 The elements of the Littleborough Campus that are of concern are most blocks currently used by the school, the leisure centre dance studio (small sports hall), and the office and entrance frontage of the Children's Centre that is connected to the school. These elements are the full extent of the Laingspan construction which will need to be removed. There is one school block, (labelled "traditional build block" in appendix 1) that is not Laingspan construction and therefore does not need to be removed.
- 4.7 With regards to the Link4Life Leisure Centre the majority of community facilities will continue to be provided within the (non-Laingspan) existing building. Link4Life are committed to working with the Primary school and Star Academies Trust to re-provide or improve leisure services currently being provided in the dance studio (small sports hall), as the new schools and their respective sports facilities are built.
- 4.8 The proposed Littleborough Primary school rebuild project would deliver a brand new school with 14 new classrooms, new sports/assembly hall, nursery, and all necessary ancillary spaces for a 420 place school (60 places in each year group) with a 26 places nursery.
- 4.9 With regards to the current Children's Centre building and services, there are three options open to the Council
- 1) Retain existing portion of the old Children's Centre and rebuild the offices and entrance frontage.
 - 2) Re-provide the Children's Centre in a retained school block (the "traditional build" block), which is not of Laingspan construction (see appendix 1), and remove all of the existing Children's Centre building.
 - 3) Re-provide the Children's Centre in a new build block in the north of the Littleborough Campus site, and remove all of the existing Children's Centre building.

- 4.10 The expectation is that DfE will opt for a programme that provides a brand new school building prior to demolition of the existing school, so that no expensive or disruptive temporary school accommodation is needed. The “shovel ready” requirements from the DfE would enable the building of the new school to commence in September 2021.
- 4.11 The cost of the three options are shown in Appendix 2 and the layout-plan view of the options are shown in appendix 3. The cost to the council is to be funded from Basic Need Allocations. If none of the options below are agreed then there is a risk that the school will be selected for the rebuild programme which would then impact school places in future years, as well as incurring additional significant costs of upkeep to the school building.
- 4.12 Option 1 layout in appendix 3 shows that the new rebuild school would likely be re-provided in the south/western corner of the site with car parking and outdoor play areas provided diagonally across the site and sandwiched between the leisure centre and existing Children’s Centre.
Cost to Council: £86,000
Cost to DfE: £358,000
- 4.13 Option 2 layout would move the Children’s Centre into the existing “traditional build” school block. Car parking and outdoor play space for the Children’s Centre would be re-provided.
Cost to Council: £500,000
Cost to DfE: £221,000
- 4.14 Option 3 layout would rebuild a new Children’s Centre in the area of the site to the north. Car parking and outdoor play areas would be re-provided.
Cost to Council: £1,564,000
Cost to DfE: £225,000
- 4.15 Remedial work to the leisure centre would be required to re-provide utilities and heating, refurbish inside space and exterior brick work. Estimated costs of those elements is £185,000, which includes a new boiler and housing for it. Because the current boiler is in the central Laingspan portion of the school site, the expectation is that DfE will cover its replacement. An estimated further additional cost to the Council of £3,000 will be needed to cover minor remedial works.
- 4.16 The current costing for Option 2 includes the refurbishment and redesign of the current infant block in the school ground floor to ensure Children’s Centre services can continue to be provided. To bring the whole block up to standard would require a further £335,000 to install a lift and refit the first floor spaces to potentially be used for other Council services. Project costs for the first floor spaces will be provided through a separate scheme and approval sought at a later date.
- 4.17 Of the three options open to the Council the cheapest would be to keep the existing Children’s Centre. The plan view shows that because of the current position of the Children’s Centre along with the current school parking in the

bottom/right corner, a large amount of potential site area would be blocked off from use. This would constrain any potential new school building into a corner plot and would mean that directly accessible dedicated outdoor spaces for nursery and infant classes would not be possible. If this new Primary school is to be funded through the central government scheme the Council would expect it to deliver a school that was fit for 21st Century learning experiences including outdoor learning opportunities for the youngest. Children's Services does not see Option 1 delivering that aim.

- 4.18 Option 3 would deliver a purpose built new Children's Centre with parking and outdoor spaces. Unfortunately the costs of this new scheme are too expensive considering current financial constraints.
- 4.19 Option 2 would deliver a good school site and enable the Primary school to deliver its curriculum both inside and out, and would also deliver a scheme where sufficient building space can be provided in a timely and cost effective way. The cost effectiveness for the Department for Education does impact on the deliverability of the scheme. A new school is definitely the best outcome for young families in the area. The costs of Option 2 to re-provide the Children's Centre does include costs to the Council, as detailed above, but could be considered a good investment given both the ongoing and past costs of maintaining the old school building (of more that £1.3m in the last 7 years) while maintaining the campus nature of the site with leisure and Children's Centre provision still being provided.
- 4.20 Option 2 would also give the council the opportunity to increase SEND provision which is a critical need within the borough, by utilising the additional space within the children's centre building.

Alternatives Considered

- 4.21 Options for keeping the existing Children's Centre and completely replacing it as Option 1 and Option 3 above.

Costs and Budget Summary

- 5.1 Cost for Option 2 are summarised in 4.12 and appendix 2 and detailed in Appendix 4.
- 5.2 Ongoing costs associated with maintaining Littleborough Primary School in its existing building have been significant over preceding years and have knock on impacts on both, funding available for condition works across the boroughs schools estate and the ability of the school to manage its building and finances.
- 5.3 Delivery of a centrally funded new build Primary school is considered to be in the best interest of families in the area and Children's Services. Costs of £500,000 is estimated to re-purpose the school infant/ "traditional build" block to provide a new Children's Centre so that services can continue to be

provided. A further sum of £249,000 is prudent in order to manage any additional expenses related to the fact that this is a complex site and large project.

- 5.4 Approval is required of spend of up to £749,000 from DfE Basic Need allocations to meet the requirements to enable delivery of the new 420 place Primary school by the Department for Education is requested.
- 5.5 Additional space within the repurposed building could be used to offer increased SEND provision which is a critical need within the borough.
- 5.6 Littleborough Primary School has been negotiating with the Department for Education with regards to the new school and the Council will work with the school to manage use of the Direct Schools Grant to facilitate the possible move into any new building.

Risk and Policy Implications

- 6.1 The building at Littleborough campus is the old high school that was extended multiple times to provide additional accommodation for the school, the Children's Centre and the Link4Life leisure centre. The existing site has ongoing maintenance and risk issues that have needed continual, high value financing over the last few years.
- 6.2 A new project that is centrally delivered, and as discussed in 4.9, delivered prior to demolition of the old school building, has only low risk to the Council with regards to statutory provision of school places.
- 6.3 Risks associated with the new Secondary school are also under consideration and the Council is working closely with both groups from the Department for Education to make sure the two schemes are managed well and with due consideration to each other.

Consultation

- 7. The aim is for Littleborough Primary school to get a like for like replacement with no change to the annual admissions number to the school.

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
--------------------------	----------------------------

8.	
----	--

For Further Information Contact:	Fay Davies, , fay.davies@rochdale.gov.uk
---	---