

Item 7

TITLE OF REPORT: Growth Fund Allocation

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Schools Forum that there has been an application for Growth Funding which does not satisfy all of the Growth Fund criteria approved by Schools Forum, and that there has been a request from the school for Schools Forum to consider a request for funding outside the criteria.

Background

2. In December 2014 Schools Forum approved the creation and the criteria of a Growth Fund for mainstream schools. Schools Forum agreed to centrally hold £100K of the Dedicated Schools Grant for a Growth Fund as a permitted centrally retained service in accordance with Schools and Early Years Finance Regulations and the Education Funding Agency Schools Revenue Funding 2015 -16 Operational Guide.
3. The criteria for the Growth Fund have been checked and passed for compliance by the Department for Education.

Ravensworth Terrace Primary School

4. Ravensworth Terrace Primary School has made an application to the Growth Fund for funding for pupil growth from September 2015.
5. In order to accommodate the number of pupils within the Birtley area requiring places Ravensworth Terrace School was identified for expansion.
6. In July 2013, the Government confirmed that Gateshead Council was successful in obtaining £1.76m of capital funding from the Targeted Basic Needs Programme to expand Ravensworth Terrace Primary School from 193 places to 420 places on its existing site.
7. In February 2014, Cabinet approved the consultation process in relation to the proposal to expand Ravensworth Terrace Primary School from September 2015. This involved a separate informal and statutory process in line with School Organisation legislation. However planning permission to be able to proceed with the proposal to expand Ravensworth Terrace Primary School on its existing site was refused by the Council's Planning and Development Committee on 4th June 2014.

8. In July 2014, Cabinet approved the development of a new proposal and consultation to expand Ravensworth Terrace Primary School on a new site. As a consequence the Education Funding Agency approved the transfer of the £1.76m to contribute to a new build Ravensworth Terrace Primary School.
9. Following Cabinet's decision, an informal consultation process took place from the 6th February 2015 to 6th March 2015 and subsequently a statutory notice and proposal were published on the 15th May 2015. The statutory publication process allows a four week period for representations to be made on the proposals, during which time any person may make comments on or objections to the proposal.
10. The response was very low with only 6 replies from residents who were broadly concerned about the impact the larger school on a different site would have on the area in relation to increased noise and traffic. There were also concerns raised around the lack of school places in the area. Both the governing bodies of Portobello Primary School and St Joseph's Infant School felt that the increase in numbers at Ravensworth Terrace Primary School, despite broadly acknowledging the need for additional places in the Birtley area, would potentially impact on the future viability of other schools in the Birtley.
11. The formal consultation to expand the school places at Ravensworth Terrace Primary School took place over a four week period from the 15th of May until the 15th of June 2015. As part of the formal consultation process information was provided to all Headteachers of neighbouring schools, notices were placed at and around Ravensworth Terrace Primary School and a notice was published in the local newspaper. There were no representations made during the statutory period.
12. The new school is now in construction phase, but due to site issues the original estimated completion date of September 2016 does not look achievable.
13. Early in 2015 it became apparent that there would not be enough reception places in Birtley to cope with demand. Several options were considered, including increasing places at Ravensworth Terrace before the completion of the new build and increasing numbers at Birtley East. The decision was taken to increase places at Birtley East as the school had capacity to take an extra year group, and the PAN for 1 year for reception was increased to 50. This increased number will follow the children through the school.
14. Due to all the circumstances outlined above, in the admissions booklet for September 2015, Ravensworth Terrace had a provisional PAN of 60 places, dependant on the creation of additional space at the school. Ravensworth Terrace School is a very popular, outstanding school with high demand for places. For September 2015 the school had applications over the 30 available places. The school made the decision to accept all applications and admit 41 pupils in September 2015, as the school stated that they had the space available and the PAN of 60 had been published.
15. The school does meet some of the criteria for growth funding. The school has been allocated basic need funding to increase places in the area, however the new school is not yet available.
16. The school had a published PAN of 60, although this increase was linked with the completion of the new school which has not yet completed.

17. The LA in conjunction with other schools in the area did increase capacity in another school for one year group to increase capacity in the area.
18. Numbers in the school have increased from 208 in October 2014 to 221 in October 2015, this is an increase of 13 pupils with a total of 41 pupils being in reception, however this is only an increase of 6% on October 2014 pupil numbers and is below the 10% threshold in the Growth Fund Procedure.
19. The school has a projected deficit at the end of the financial year.
20. If Schools Forum agreed that Growth Funding was applicable under these circumstances the below would be the calculation.

In accordance with the Growth Funding criteria, the allocation is calculated as
AWPU * pupil numbers * 7/12

$£2,905 * 13 \text{ pupils} * 7/12 = £22,030.$

Proposal

21. That Schools Forum considers the application for Growth Funding by Ravensworth Terrace School and decides if Growth Funding is applicable in this situation.

Recommendations

22. That Schools Forum decides if Growth Funding is applicable in this situation.

For the following reasons:-

- The Growth Funding application does not meet all the criteria agreed by Schools Forum and as such any application for funding must be brought to Schools Forum for a decision.

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