

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Gibside School - New Build Special School

**REPORT OF:** Paul Dowling, Strategic Director - Communities & Environment / Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director - Care, Wellbeing and Learning

---

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report asks Cabinet to approve the scheme and estimate to create a new expanded school on a new site to replace the existing Gibside School.
2. To enable Service Director, Council Housing, Design & Technical Service to place orders through the Scape Major Works Framework in order to deliver the scheme within the restricted timescales and overall budget limit.

### **Background**

3. The Education Act 1996 as amended requires Local Authorities to adopt a strategic role, with a duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school provision. This is only possible when there are sufficient numbers of school places situated within the right location.
4. Gibside School is currently located at Burnthouse Lane, Wickham and meets the needs of pupils aged 3 – 11 with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It also meets the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and children with complex communication and medical needs.
5. The school has further developed its Early Years Foundation Stage provision off site at Blaydon/Winlaton Children's Centre.
6. At present there are 130 children on roll however, despite recently extending the school, the demand for this school from within Gateshead has exceeded the accommodation available. In addition, there are significant transport issues due to the constraints of the Burnthouse Lane site. There is also insufficient space within Blaydon/Winlaton Children's Centre.

### **Proposal**

7. The proposal is to transfer Gibside school to a new site on the former Shipcote Playing Field (see site boundary attached) and expand its numbers to develop a new build special educational needs school for 170 pupils.

8. The bespoke facility will include hydrotherapy facilities and will cater for the needs of children from the age of 3 – 11 with profound and multiple learning disabilities as well as those with other complex communication and medical needs.
9. The proposal to expand Gibside School from Autumn 2020 will involve a separate statutory consultation process in line with School Organisation legislation.
10. The Council's Development and Public Protection Service will also carry out a consultation exercise relating to the proposed new build school as part of the Planning Permission Application process.
11. There is a total project budget of £11.6 m which is made up of funding available to the Council and accounted for across the financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20.
12. Cabinet agreed in November 2016 that the Council's responsibilities for construction work were transferred to The Gateshead Housing Company. The Service Director of Council Housing, Design and Technical Services has consulted with the Managing Director of The Gateshead Housing Company who has advised that the proposals contained within this report will enable TGHC to focus delivery on the housing repairs and maintenance contract, the housing capital programme, new build council housing as well as other non housing work.
13. In order to deliver the requisite additional pupil places by Autumn 2020 it is proposed to deliver the scheme through the Scape Major Works framework.

## **Recommendations**

14. It is recommended that Cabinet:
  - (i) Approves the scheme and estimate.
  - (ii) Authorise the Service Director of Council Housing, Design and Technical Services to place an order through the SCAPE Major Works Framework within the agreed overall budget limit.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to ensure a match between the predicted demand for school places and the number of schools and places maintained, and to ensure efficient use of resources.
- (ii) To meet the required timescale for delivery of the additional school places.

### Policy Context

1. The proposals in this report are consistent with these statutory duties and with the council's vision for children and young people in Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives, the Council's Accessibility Strategy 2015-2020 and the Sustainable Community Strategy, Vision 2030.

### Background

2. The Education Act 1996 as amended requires Local Authorities to adopt a strategic role, with a duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school provision. This is only possible when there are sufficient numbers of school places situated within the right location.
3. The requirement to provide additional school places is called Basic Need. The Council will determine that there is Basic Need at a school if the forecast number on roll exceeds the top of the net capacity range and there are no suitable alternative places at schools within a reasonable distance.
4. Gibside School meets the needs of pupils aged 3 – 11 with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It also meets the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and children with severe learning difficulties.
5. The school is located at Burnthouse Lane, Whickham and has further developed its Early Years Foundation Stage provision off site at Blaydon/Winlaton Children's Centre.
6. At present there are 130 children on roll across the two sites however, despite recently extending the school at Burnthouse Lane, the demand for this school from within Gateshead has exceeded the accommodation available across the two sites. In addition, there are significant transport issues due to the constraints of both sites.

### Proposal

7. The proposal is to transfer Gibside school to a new site and expand its numbers for pupils aged 3 through to 11 years. The bespoke facility will include hydrotherapy facilities and will cater for the needs of children with profound and multiple learning disabilities as well as those with other complex communication and medical needs.
8. The proposed expansion of Gibside School would from Autumn 2020, provide a new build school for 170 pupils on a new site geographically central serving the whole of the Gateshead Borough. The school currently accommodates 130 children across a split site.

9. In order to meet the statutory need to provide additional places in Gateshead from Autumn 2020, subject to the above statutory consultation, it is proposed that Cabinet approves the development of a new build special school. The Council's Development, Transport and Public Protection Service will also carry out a consultation exercise relating to the proposed new school as part of the Planning Application process.
10. The proposal to expand Gibside School from 130 to 170 places from Autumn 2020 will involve a separate informal and statutory process in line with School Organisation legislation. The consultation process will include a four-week informal consultation period, followed by a subsequent four-week statutory representation period in line with the School Organisation Regulations which came into force from 28 January 2014. The consultation process will enable officers to prepare a report for submission so that a decision on the proposals to expand Gibside School can be determined by a future Cabinet decision.
11. Any authority wishing to make changes to SEN provision must demonstrate that the proposals for new provision meet the requirement of the SEN Improvement Test which include:
  - Improved Access to education and associated services including the curriculum, wider school activities, facilities and equipment with reference to the LA's Accessibility Strategy
  - Improved Access to Specialist Staff, both education and other professionals, including external support and outreach services
  - Improved Access to Suitable Accommodation
  - Improved Supply of Suitable Places
12. Early engagement has taken place with the school who confirm that the site of the former Shipcote Playing Fields is geographically central with excellent transport links throughout the borough. We have also prepared a brief and feasibility study to determine that the scheme will fit within the proposed site and is affordable within the finances available (see Appendix 3).
13. Cabinet has approved the proposed new policy MSGP43 in the Council's draft Making Spaces for Growing Places (land allocations and development management policies document), which was subject to public consultation in autumn 2017. This proposes to allocate the land identified off Shipcote Lane for "educational purposes", specifically the proposal for the new-build Gibside School. Policy MSGP43 is also referenced in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).
14. The total project budget of £11.6 m is made up of funding available to the Council and accounted for across the financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20. Cabinet approval will enable the Service Director of Council Housing, Design and Technical Services to seek tenders and place orders in line with the indicative programme for the necessary works to be complete within the required timescales.

## Capital Funding

	£'000
Expected Scheme Cost	11,600
Funding Available:	
Basic Need	(11,000)
Schools capital maintenance grant	(100)
SEN Capital Grant	(500)

15. The Department for Education allocates Basic Need funding each year to local authorities to ensure there are sufficient school places in areas of need. Local authorities are able to use this funding to expand existing schools, including maintained and non-maintained, academies and Free Schools in areas of need. In 2018/19 Gateshead were allocated £11m of basic need funding.
16. The estimated build cost of the new build special school is subject to change following the outcome of site investigations. It is hoped that this cost will reduce following greater certainty around the site constraints.
17. Pupil Numbers increased from the originally proposed 150 to 170 due to the revised projection during design engagement. To deliver the number of places needed, it has been agreed that £500k of SEN capital will be utilised to supplement the Basic Need funding.
18. In order to achieve the timescales to deliver a new school by Autumn 2020, £100k was allocated from Schools Capital Maintenance from 2017/18 to commence early design engagement and site investigations.

## Procurement

19. Cabinet agreed in November 2016 that the Council's responsibilities for housing related construction work and other construction work were transferred from Construction Services in C&E to The Gateshead Housing Company. The council retained the commissioning of construction capital work. As part of the commissioning process the Service Director of Council Housing, Design and Technical Services would ensure all work was effectively commissioned with THGC or alternative providers on the basis that it would not impact on housing related construction work.
20. The Service Director of Council Housing, Design and Technical Services has consulted with the Managing Director of The Gateshead Housing Company who has advised that the proposals contained within this report will enable TGHC to focus delivery on the housing repairs and maintenance contract, the housing capital programme, new build council housing as well as other non housing work.
21. Based on the project's objectives and in consideration of the available budget and strict timeline, different procurement options were explored. The use of an OJEU compliant framework was chosen over traditional procurement as more efficient, cost effective and faster route to market.

22. The NEPO framework would accommodate a number of methods for call offs including mini-competitions on prices and/or quality. SCAPE is a single-source framework, pre-tendered on a framework value with highly competitive and fixed rate and is the fastest route to market available in the public sector compared to traditional procurement.
23. In order to deliver the requisite additional pupil places by Autumn 2020, within the budget available it is therefore proposed to deliver the scheme through the SCAPE Major Works framework.

### **Consultation**

24. Consultation has taken place with the Special Education Headteachers, Ward Councillors, Learning and Children Portfolio, Spatial Planning, Transport Planning and Development Management, The Gateshead Housing Company, Education and Skills Funding Agency.

### **Alternative Options**

25. The Council could decide not to increase the number of school places at Gibside School. There is currently no surplus capacity at either of the Gibside and Blaydon/Winlaton sites. The forecasted numbers on roll indicates that if there is no increase in capacity the Local Authority will have to send Gateshead children out of the borough for their educational and welfare needs at a cost of £38k per autistic child and £46K per child with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
26. Consideration could be given to extend the school on its existing site at Burnthouse Lane, Whickham to provide the additional places. However, it is unlikely that such proposals would be supported on transport grounds as a consequence of the increase in vehicles generated by the additional pupil numbers, which would not be sustainable on an already congested site adjacent to residential streets and located next to a secondary and primary school.
27. Consideration could be given to extend the school at the Blaydon/Winlaton Surestart Centre. The building is currently an operational children's centre built for the purpose of delivering integrated services for families who have children under 5 years of age. At present, there is a short-term arrangement where Gibside School operate within a defined area of the building due to the increased pupil numbers. This arrangement restricts the area used by children's centre services which impacts on delivery of services to the community. Access and availability of suitable drop off/pick up areas off Shibdon Bank for parents and guardians is an existing concern and would be compounded by increasing numbers.
28. Gibside School is not bound to a specific catchment as its specialist facilities serve the entire borough therefore, the school could be developed on an alternative site elsewhere in Gateshead. Various option appraisals were carried out on alternative sites of the appropriate size. These included the sites of the former Windmill Hills School, the former Hookergate School and the former Lindisfarne Primary School as well as land off Whickham Highway and

Askew Road. These sites were subsequently ruled out due to site restrictions/high levels of abnormals, planning and transport implications or the designation for strategic housing. The site off Shipcote Lane is a relatively flat site with fewer site abnormals which will reduce the capital costs relating to ground conditions. It is also in a geographically central area which will serve to reduce the home to school travel costs.

## **Implications of Recommended Option**

### **24. Resources:**

- a) Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that the cost of the required works can be met from the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Capital Programme.
  - b) Human Resources Implications** – Staff and trade unions will be formally consulted on the proposal to expand Gibside School and their views and comments will be taken into consideration.
  - c) Property Implications** - The new school will replace the existing Gibside School on Burnthouse Lane, Whickham which will become surplus to requirements. The enlarged school will accommodate additional pupils. The school will also vacate the premises at Blaydon/Winlaton Surestart which is shared with other council and public health services.
- 25. Risk Management Implications** - There is a risk that there will be insufficient pupil places for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and children with severe learning difficulties if the scheme is not progressed. There is a risk that the capital cost of the scheme may rise due to unforeseen ground conditions. Further site investigations are in place to reduce the uncertainty and the project will be scoped to match the funding available.
- 26. Equality and Diversity Implications** - The scope of works considers Equality works to improve access to the existing School buildings. New build elements will be fully compliant in meeting Equality Act 2010 obligations as identified in the Accessibility Strategy for Schools. The proposal would have a positive impact in opportunities for children with SEN/Disability.
- 27. Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no Crime and Disorder Implications arising directly from this report.
- 28. Health Implications** – There are no Health and Safety Implications arising directly from this report.
- 29. Sustainability Implications** – The Council’s Construction Sustainability Policy has been considered and applied where applicable throughout the scheme. In place of a conventional gas boiler plant, it is proposed the new school will be supplied with heat from the new Gateshead District Energy Scheme. Heat pipes have been installed up to the site boundary, in readiness, and the school have accepted the proposal on the basis they will be supplied with lower cost heat, with lower carbon emissions. Other benefits include that the development

can be built without gas infrastructure, which reduces cost and risk plant requires less floorspace, freeing up space for other use.

30. **Human Rights Implications** – The implications of the Human Rights Act must be considered in any decision that involves a change of policy, function or a service change. The Council has considered the implications of the Human Rights Act in arriving at this stage of the proposal. The convention rights provide that no one can be denied the right to education but this does not mean that any person has the right to be educated at a particular institution. Whilst there is a right for parents to ensure education and teaching is in conformity with their religious/philosophical convictions, this does not impose a duty on the Local Authority to provide specific types of schools. Any such provision is provided only so far as it is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.
31. **Area and Ward Implications** - This proposal will direct impact on Saltwell, Whickham North and Blaydon Wards. However, the new school will serve pupils from throughout the Borough.

#### **Background Information;**

32. The School Organisation regulations (prescribed alterations to maintained schools (England) regulations 2014).  
Policy MSGP43 in the Council's draft Making Spaces for Growing Places



**Proposed Site for the Development of the new enlarged Gibside School**



Proposed Site Layout of new school

