

Item 4

TITLE OF REPORT: Use of DSG Reserves

Purpose of the Report

To request that Schools Forum agree to the use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves to fund additional special school places for Gibside early years pupils.

Background

The Council has a statutory duty to provide suitable education for Gateshead Children with Special Educational Needs. With a growing population, earlier identification and increased complexity there is increased pressure on all our special school places.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team have identified a need for additional early years and reception places for children with ASD and Cognition and Learning.

It is the LA's view that the most appropriate provision for these identified children, (to prevent out of borough placements which may not be suitable for these very young children) would be for places to be found at Gibside School.

Gibside School has already increased provision on the Gibside site by building 3 additional classrooms, and room for expansion on the site has been exhausted.

Gibside currently have an early years unit within the Blaydon Children's Centre and the proposal is to increase early years capacity on this site.

Meetings have taken place with the school, officers and children centre staff, and an agreement has been reached to convert further accommodation for approximately an additional 15 children on the site and move some children's centre activities to other parts of the building.

Estimates have been provided for the required alterations to the Atrium, Rooms 2 and 2A, rooms 3, 4, 5 and alterations to some external fencing and doors.

At the present time there is no capital funding to finance this expansion, the school does not have the capital or revenue funds to finance the work and there is no children's centre funding available either as this has significantly reduced over recent years.

Being able to provide local places for these young vulnerable children will reduce the cost of educating these children as they will be educated within Gateshead, and not in more costly out of borough provision.

Officers and the school have worked together to reduce cost of the work to be undertaken, and Gibside School will finance the outfitting of the spaces once converted.

The total cost of the work is estimated at £37,200

Local Environmental Services has agreed to "match fund" the project as the school buys into this service and will contribute £18,600 which is 50% of the cost of the scheme. The school will contribute the cost of the external fencing work totalling £2,292 and outfit all the spaces once converted. This leaves a balance of £16,308 required for the work to be undertaken.

Proposal

Recommendations

Schools Forum approves the proposal to fund £16,308 from DSG reserves for the work to be undertaken at Blaydon Children's centre for the additional early years children.

For the following reasons:-

- To ensure the Council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient places for children with Special Educational Needs.
- To enable approval to be sought from the Secretary of State to approve an application for the use of DSG reserves for capital purposes.
- Other options will have a detrimental impact on Gateshead's DSG High Needs Block

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