

Parkfield Decision: Impact Assessment

This Impact Assessment has been prepared to provide interested parties with a full appreciation of the implications of not moving forward with the decision to relocate the existing Torbay School to the Parkfield site.

Youth Provision

The current plan for youth provision envisaged the Parkfield site transferring to the TDA from April 2017 in order to commence preparation for the site alterations necessary to relocate Torbay School. Premises' costs would no longer be met from the Youth Services budget from that date thereby making a significant contribution towards the efficiencies that have enabled the service to reduce its annual revenue budget from £476k to £330k. This is within the context of the £1.5M in savings for children's services set out in the Council's 2017/18 revenue budget.

Should the decision not progress, the premises' costs for Parkfield of circa £100K would continue to be met from within the reduced Youth Services budget. Given the costs (£110K) and current demand pressures within the Young Carers service there is little or no scope for this element to be reduced. This would leave around £120K to meet youth service staffing costs, support delivery activity and provide grants to voluntary sector youth providers. A further pressure would arise from the loss of revenue from the Gymnastics club, currently £31K, who are required to relocate elsewhere in order to ensure Parkfield's grant funding conditions can be met.

It is likely that the Youth Trust would not be viable as a vehicle for the future delivery of youth services on the proposed 2017/18 budget of £330K if it were required to continue to meet Parkfield's premises' costs. In essence, the Parkfield site could remain open for youth provision but would lack any appreciable capacity for delivery.

Torbay SEMH School

The Torbay School would be required to continue on its existing site which the Council had previously identified as not being fit for purpose for Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) provision for some of our most vulnerable pupils, in February 2015. At this stage, there is no credible and affordable, alternative option for the development of new SEMH provision. It should be noted that the school is currently judged inadequate by Ofsted and a new sponsored academy has been brokered on the understanding that alternative premises will be brought forward as an integral part of the improvement journey.

Pupil Place Planning

The new primary school planned for the vacated Torbay School would not progress with provision from September 2018 onwards, as originally envisaged. The projected increases in pupil numbers in this area of the borough would require to be met by dispersing pupils to existing schools with spare places. There is no guarantee, however, that this would be sufficient to meet projected needs and it is also the case that the local authority is not able

to direct academies or free schools to accept pupils. Transport costs are also likely to be incurred for any pupils where there are no available places at nearby schools.

The current plan for a new primary school at the vacated site forms part of the Wave 12 applications which are now being considered by the DfE and Education Funding Agency within the context of regional and national demand for school places. Although the decision is yet to be confirmed, conversations with the DfE indicate that our proposals are being considered favourably. The decision is likely to be confirmed during April. Should we be unable to bring forward the school in Wave 12, there is a risk that Torbay will lose the opportunity for a new school.

Any new or subsequent (delayed but treated as new) application would be considered within Wave 13 for which the criteria have yet to be published. Indications from DfE officials suggest that future bids for free schools will be directed towards the delivery of selective and special school places, in line with the recent change in policy direction. Wave 13 will also be much smaller in scope, with 110 projects nationally compared to 500 currently. Selection is already a feature of the Torbay offer which may limit our opportunities when compared with bids from other areas seeking to develop new selective provision where none currently exists. The demand pressures within Torbay are also predominantly within Primary phase at this stage.

The Wave 12 bids currently under consideration have been brought forward by two of our local multi academy trusts (MATs), with the support and engagement of the local authority. The bid process involves market testing, including engagement with local parents as part of the underpinning evidence base. As such, there is a public awareness of the proposals which will need to be addressed should the applications be approved but be unable to progress because the Torbay SEMH school cannot relocate. There are therefore considerable reputational implications for Torbay Council with parents, the MATs involved and other educational partners, and the DfE. It will also undermine confidence in our ability to develop similar proposals in future which is of significance given that the current arrangements for developing capacity require this type of collaborative approach, albeit that the DfE/EFA will take any final decision.