

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting7th September 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Review of provision for children with complex needs:Proposal to enlarge Abbey Hill School

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet was informed that Section 315 of the Education Act 1996 required that local authorities with responsibility for education kept under review their arrangements for special education provision. The establishment of a Children's Trust in Stockton-on-Tees and the publication of the first Children and Young People's Plan had drawn further attention to the need to ensure that services in the Borough supported the five Every Child Matters outcomes for all children. Members were provided with a summary of the outcome of a review of provision for children with complex needs, carried out in consultation with the headteachers and governing bodies of the four special schools and three other specialist settings maintained by the Authority.

The review had concluded that some changes to the pattern of special needs provision across the Borough was necessary to secure improved educational outcomes for some groups of pupils. One objective was to ensure that pupils with complex needs were educated in the most appropriate setting, in particular that children with emotional, social and behavioural difficulty (BESD) should not be educated in the same setting as those with learning difficulty or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). It was explained that this could be achieved if all secondary-age pupils with ASD were accommodated at Abbey Hill School and Technology College, a school whose ASD provision had earned accreditation from the National Autistic Society. The Authority would then cease to provide for pupils with ASD at Westlands School.

A capital grant of £800,000 had been secured from Government to fund the enlargement of Abbey Hill for this purpose. The proposed work included the addition of five flexible teaching spaces, an ICT suite, meeting hall, staffroom and seminar room with associated storage and toilet facilities. This would increase the planned capacity of the school from 230 to 270 places and allow all secondary-age pupils with ASD to be accommodated in one centre. This change constituted a "prescribed

alteration” under Section 31 of the School Standards and Frameworks Act 1998. The Act required that the Authority first consulted all those likely to be affected by the proposed change and then publish a Statutory Notice of its proposal.

RESOLVED that

1. consultation take place with interested parties on a proposal to enlarge Abbey Hill School to provide an additional 40 places for pupils aged 11-19 so that all secondary-age pupils with ASD may be accommodated at that site;

2. subject to the outcome of the statutory decision-making process, the enlargement scheme be added to the 2006-07 education capital building programme approved by Cabinet on 20 April 2006, and the Corporate Director for Children, Education and Social Care be authorised to approve the financial appraisals in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Sections 28 to 31 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (modified in some details by the Education Act 2002) provided a statutory procedure that must be followed when any change to school organisation was being considered. Before deciding whether to publish a proposal for change (by means of a Statutory Notice), the Authority had to first consult those persons most likely to be affected by the change. All views expressed during consultation had to be taken into account.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal, prejudicial interest in this item as he was a Governor of Abbey Hill School. Councillor Cunningham left the meeting room during consideration of this item.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday 15th September 2006.

Proper Officer
11 September 2006