

**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

20 OCTOBER 2026

**REPORT OF HEAD OF
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Call In – SEND Reform Programme – Education White Paper and Local Area Reform Plan Update

Detail

The decisions of Cabinet taken on 17 September 2026 in relation to SEND Reform Programme – Education White Paper and Local Area Reform Plan Updated have been subject to a valid call in. The call in applies decisions 5 – 13 of the following decisions:

CABINET RESOLVED

- 1) The closure of the national SEND Reform consultation and the submission of the Local Area Reform Plan to the Department for Education, be noted.
- 2) It be noted that Council and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board were awaiting the outcome of the assessment process, expected in October 2026.
- 3) The significant financial implications of approval of the Local Area Reform Plan, including the potential write-off of approximately 90% of the cumulative DSG High Needs deficit, be noted
- 4) The continued delivery of the SEND Reform Programme and associated transformation activity set out within the Local Area Reform Plan be endorsed.
- 5) The investment of up to £2m of capital funding, to create a new 50 place SEMH school, be agreed. This was to undertake necessary building work to adapt and expand an older building to create the required places.
- 6) The investment of £1.4m of capital funding to expand the existing Early Support Nursery to create up to 10 extra spaces, be agreed. This was to undertake necessary building work to adapt the existing provision to create the required places.
- 7) The investment of £3.75m of capital funding to expand the Ash Trees Academy Special School in building onto the Sandown Road site to create up to 40 additional specialist primary spaces, be agreed. This was to undertake necessary building work to adapt the existing provision to create the required places.

- 8) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to take all necessary steps to deliver the projects within the approved budgets.
 - 9) Delegated authority to the transfer of budget caused by cost variations within the approved programme be given to the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
 - 10) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the S151 officer and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to allocate the contingency of £860,000 if required within the three schemes, within the approved programme.
 - 11) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Director or Corporate Services to award the construction contract to deliver recommendation 1 to a value of £1.7m including variation, annual inflationary uplifts (where allowed in the contract terms and conditions) and extension decision.
 - 12) The Director of Children's Services be appointed as the Council's authorised representative for the purposes of exercising the Council's rights as a Member of Spark of Genius LLP in relation to the SEMH Special School project and associated matters, including attendance at, participation in and voting at Members' meetings of the LLP.
 - 13) Authority be delegated to the relevant Director or Assistant Director to make the specific contract award decision and any subsequent contract variation, annual inflationary uplifts (where allowed in the contract terms and conditions) and extension decision in respect of all contracts required to deliver the SEMH Special School project approved by the report.
1. The reasons for the validation of the call in relate to the following principles of decision-making:
 - a) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice;
 - b) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes, insofar as this relates to the erroneous
 - c) cross-reference within the relevant contractual resolution;
 - d) Explanation of options and reasons; and
 - e) Clarity and explanation of information provided.
 2. The following Members and Officers have been requested to be present at the meeting:
 - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Regeneration (Councillor Paul Rowling)
 - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Councillor Clare Besford)
 - Majella McCarthy, Director of Children's Services
 - Clare Harper, Chief Financial Officer
 - Ged Morton, Director of Corporate Services (Monitoring Officer)

3. The documents detailed below are attached for consideration by Executive Scrutiny Committee:

Call in Form	Appendix 1
Cabinet Report	Appendix 2
Decision Record	Appendix 3
Report of Monitoring Officer	Appendix 4

Background Papers

None

Name of Contact Officer: Jonathan Nertney

Post Title: Head of Democratic Services

Telephone number: 01642 526312

Email address: jonathan.nertney@stockton.gov.uk