



Doncaster Council

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decision was taken on Wednesday, 16th November, 2022 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Wednesday, 16th November, 2022

End of the call-in period is **5.00 p.m. on Friday, 25th November 2022**. This decision will not be implemented until after this date and time.

Present:-

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy)
Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Business)

Cabinet Member for:

Councillor Lani-Mae Ball	Education, Skills and Young People
Councillor Nigel Ball	Public Health, Leisure, Culture and Planning
Councillor Joe Blackham	Highways, Infrastructure and Enforcement
Councillor Phil Cole	Finance and Trading Services
Councillor Mark Houlbrook	Sustainability and Waste
Councillor Andrea Robinson	Adult Social Care

Apologies:-

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rachael Blake and Councillor Jane Nightingale.

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

Public Questions and Statements

There were no public questions or statements submitted for the meeting.

Decision Record Forms from the meeting held on 2nd November, 2022 (previously circulated) were noted.

DECISION 1

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

6. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2022-2025.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet:-

- (1) agreed to new financial arrangements, including support for capital and revenue projects which will increase the effectiveness of provision within the borough. This includes accepting the allocation of £7,076,009.23 of High Needs Capital Grant, subject to the terms and conditions of the grant and agreeing an overall amount of £662,182 from the high needs block to create new Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) places;
- (2) agreed to delegate decisions around how to allocate the balance of capital funding within the terms and conditions of the grant, alongside other associated revenue decisions to the Director of Children, Young People and Families and the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education, Skills and Young People; and
- (3) approved the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy attached at Appendix 1, and to agree to receive an annual update report on progress against the strategy. The Strategy will be a 'live' document that will be amended following the diagnostic work, as detailed in the report and in response to expected national direction.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy had been refreshed and developed with key partners, including health agencies, social care and through the SEND Board, following a system-wide two year consultation from 2020 until September 2022 to ensure the services and provision can meet the needs of children and young people with SEND currently and respond to future need.

The proposed Strategy sets out the Council's approach to improve the outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families. The Strategy would deliver a stronger range of provisions and an early intervention to ensure that children and young people with special needs and disabilities are happy and successful in their lives and aimed to ensure a much stronger landscape of training and employment activities. The Strategy includes a vision, guiding principles, and priorities that will be Doncaster Council's focus for children and young people with SEND for the next three years.

The profile of need within Doncaster had changed since the start of the pandemic, where Doncaster had seen a significant increase in the overall number of young people identified as having special educational needs or disabilities. This increase has particularly affected the number of young people with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). This sudden rise in the number of assessments and plans has placed Council teams under significant pressure, which had slowed the timeliness of the production of plans within statutory timeframes. The rise in demand, alongside increasing financial pressures, had also placed challenges upon the wider workforce connected to those with special educational needs, including those in the health, care, and school sectors. The pandemic has impacted upon the number of young people who have been identified as having autistic spectrum related needs and those with social and emotional needs. These increases have placed strain upon local systems, which has resulted in an increasing number of young people being educated out of borough, as local specialist provision is unable to cater for the increase in need.

A new SEND Board and supporting work streams aligned to the priorities have been established to oversee the delivery and governance of the Strategy.

Demand for requests for Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) has increased significantly, affecting the timeliness of the delivery of new plans. This has also increased demand on special school places and high numbers of out of area placements, all of which impact greatly on the Dedicated School Grant High Needs Budgets.

Six key priorities which underpinned the Strategy would be delivered over the next three years. The priorities are centred on an early intervention model and one of joint accountability, ownership, and co-production across the partnership. These priorities will support the strengthening of our co-production work with parents, children, and young people, whilst also ensuring that core services are improved and that arrangements for funding and workforce development support high quality intervention at the earliest point.

The Strategy would be an evolving document and would be reviewed alongside key emerging documents to ensure that the priorities within the Strategy remained fit for purpose.

Doncaster Council has been allocated £7,076,009.23 of High Needs Capital Grant which would support the project. Given the established need to increase capacity around in-borough specialist provision, the Council will use £1million of the grant funding to deliver 30 places for young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs by summer 2023, supported by £662,182 of funding. As of October 2022, the Council are undertaking diagnostic work with the Department for Education (DfE) through the 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' project during October and November 2022.

The report also outlined the national and local context of the Strategy and the key issues and challenges faced by the Council, including a programme of measures, which would create a new SEND system.

Councillor Lani-Mae Ball, in presenting the report highlighted that, like most local authorities, Doncaster had seen significant challenges to its local support system for those with SEND, since both the launch of the 2014 Code of Practice and more recently since the impacts of the pandemic continued to be felt. She was pleased to note that the Council had been recognised regionally and nationally for some of the Council's work with the Department for Education (DfE) who had praised the Council's local system of alternative provision and the impacts of its work in reducing expulsions from schools and improving young people's mental health. Cabinet was informed that some of this work had been incorporated into the new government Green Paper on Special Needs. The Council's local Strategy aimed to build on the Council's successes and respond to and pre-empt some of the changes that the Green Paper would bring.

Councillor Ball outlined that the Council was currently refreshing its consultation on the Special Needs Strategy, whilst also working with the DfE on its 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' project. During November, the Council would be working

with all of its local stakeholders, whilst also doing an evidence led deep dive into the local trajectories and characteristics, which have created some of the Council's challenges. The work so far in this area had clearly affirmed both the principles and priorities outlined in the Strategy. On completion of the analysis by the DFE, the Council would produce an implementation plan which would show how the Council can bring about more sustainable local solutions to meeting children's needs. It was anticipated that the Strategy was to be launched in December 2022 following consultation and diagnostic activity.

Councillor Ball outlined the challenges locally, where an 18% increase had been seen in the overall number of young people with SEND and an 84% increase in demand for Education, Health and Care Plans. There had also been a significant increase in the volume and cost of young people being educated away from Doncaster in independent special schools.

The report before Cabinet provides details of the scale of costs and actions which would ensure an improved local response. Cabinet's approval was sought to release capital and revenue funding to support the project which would allow for development of local provision, stopping young people from having to access education elsewhere.

Cabinet was asked to note the priorities of the Strategy, which included:-

- To ensure that all young people can access high quality education as close to home as possible. To do this we must improve funding and advice to mainstream schools alongside strengthened accountability for special needs spending.
- To build, in the short term, local specialist provision, which is located on mainstream sites, so that children can be educated with their friends in communities. Whilst doing this we will create a longer term plan so that we have the right special school and post 16 opportunities for our local young people.
- To improve transitions for young people with SEND.
- To improve the timeliness of our pathways for diagnosis for Autism.

To conclude, Councillor Ball sought Cabinet's approval of the report and advised that Cabinet would receive a report in the Summer of 2023 to update Members on progress.

Cabinet welcomed the Strategy, however, highlighted that the priorities in relation to early identification, reducing out of Authority Placements and improving transition were not new to Doncaster, as these had been pursued over the past 20 years. It was acknowledged that the current pressures regarding SEND were not solely an issue for Doncaster but were a national issue. Cabinet emphasised the importance of delivering the outcomes, but were aware of the pressures placed upon the Council and schools, particularly financial pressure. Cabinet referred to the 3% inflationary element in the budget when the current cost of inflation is 11% and the Mayor would be lobbying the Government for further funding and awaited the announcement regarding the SEND Green Paper, which was expected imminently.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Make no changes to the current Special Educational Needs and Disabilities system.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

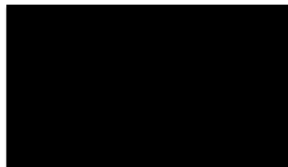
There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt.

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Riana Nelson, Director of Children, Young People, and Families.



Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker