

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	28 November 2011
Report of:	Lorraine Butcher Strategic Director Children, Families and Adults
Subject/Title:	Outline Proposal for a Special School for Children with Autism Spectrum Condition
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 In 2010, Cheshire East Children and Families Services began the process of reviewing its arrangements for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- 1.2 One of the priority recommendations emerging from the SEND review was the identified need to develop local specialist provision for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) between the ages of 4 to 19.
- 1.3 The review's working groups has an aspiration to develop an outstanding/excellent ASC-specific Special School and Service for children with ASC as close to their local community as possible, underpinned by our vision that 'no child, or young person is left behind', enabling every child and young person to achieve the best possible outcomes
- 1.4 This report seeks the approval in principle the development/feasibility of specialist provision for children and young people with ASC between the ages of 4 to 19 on the Church Lawton Primary School site.
- 1.5 An outline business case for the development of a Special School for children and young people on the autistic spectrum between the ages of 4 to 19 within Cheshire East is enclosed as an additional document.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The SEND review has six key strategic priorities, which are supported by wider working groups which provide access and analysis to the networks represented by the members of that group.
- 2.2 The six key strategic priorities and remits are outlined below:

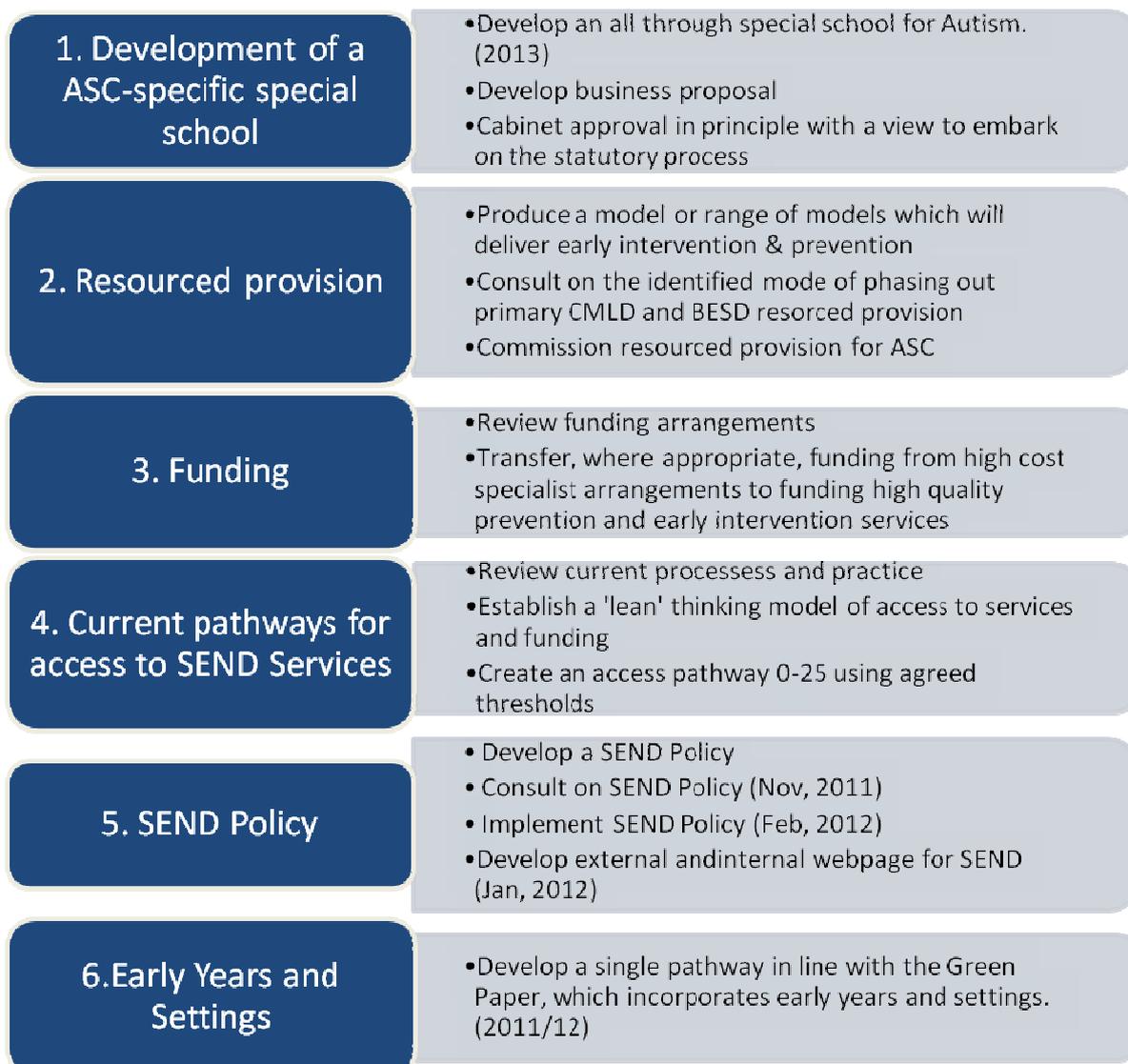


Figure 1 - Six key strategic priorities

2.3 This paper focuses on Strategic priority 1, specialist provision for ASC.

3.0 Decision Requested

3.1 Cabinet approve in principle the further development of the feasibility study to establish a specialist provision for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Condition between the ages of 4 to 19 on the Church Lawton Primary School site.

3.2 Delegate to Portfolio Holder for Children and Families to make the decision, subject to the outcome of the feasibility study to undertake the statutory consultation process.

4.0 Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The SEND review has highlighted a gap in provision for ASC at Key stages 1 to 4/5, in Cheshire East.

- 4.2 The Children and Young Peoples Database (CYPD) figures for 2010/11 indicate 85 children and young people were placed in ASC-specific out of borough placements, at a cost of £2.5 million, with an additional travel cost for these pupils of £0.4 million. The cost for these out of borough placements for ASC-specific provision funded by Education was £2.9 million. In addition, Health contributed £59,000 and Social Services contributed a further £0.5 million. The overall sum for ASC-specific out of borough placement for 2010/11 was £3.4 million.
- 4.3 The cost of these children and young people's placement to date in this financial year is £1,711,901, with the most expensive placement being £179,746 per annum.
- 4.4 The lack of specialist provision has further resulted in increased numbers of tribunals, which are time consuming and costly.
- 4.4 In addition, parents, carers and families of children and young people with ASC are dissatisfied with the lack of local specialist provision for ASC. To demonstrate their discontent, a group of parents undertook a media campaign to highlight this, resulting in TV stories articulating the lack of specialist provision for ASC.
- 4.5 Before the former County Council disaggregated there were 14 specials schools 3 of which catered for the needs of youngster with ASC. Cheshire East takes a number of places in Greenbank and Rosebank schools in Northwich. However future access to these Cheshire West and Chester specials schools remains unclear, the authority is suggesting the closure of Rosebank in the near future which will add to the demand for places.
- 4.6 Historically, children and young people with ASC and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) have been successfully educated within Park Lane and Springfield Special Schools. The proposal is that these schools continue to educate this cohort of children and young people.
- 4.7 There are currently 4 primary and 2 Secondary mainstream schools with ASC provision school that successfully meet the needs of children and young people of average ability but with ASC

5.0 Wards Affected

- 5.1 All

6.0 Local Ward Members

- 6.1 All

7.0 Policy Implications

- 7.1 The draft Special Educational Needs and Disability policy will have to be amended to include the description of this provision should it be established.
- 7.2 The schools funding formula will need to be changed in negotiation with Schools Forum to accommodate the establishment of the school and the ongoing costs

8.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 8.1 The capital cost for the refurbishment of Church Lawton Primary School has been estimated through an externally commissioned feasibility to be £1,617,276. These costs would be funded from the current Children and Families capital programme which has a budget of £4,708,000 allocated to the implementation of the SEN review. The revenue costs of £1,669,915 per annum, once the school is fully populated.
- 8.2 An analysis has been prepared which outlines the associated revenue costs and savings that will emerge from the set up of an ASC school within Cheshire East. Full details are included in Appendix A to this report.
- 8.3 Three scenarios which have been explored are summarised below. A representation of the expected timeframes for realising savings and for recovering initial costs is also provided.

Scenario Number	Description	Year when revenue savings are first expected to be made	Year when revenue costs are expected to be recovered
1	Majority of children earmarked to join the school are supported currently within a mainstream setting.	2022/23	2035/36
2	School is initially populated with a mixture of children within any education setting (mixture of out of borough and CEC maintained schools)	2017/18	2018/19
3	School is initially populated with children currently educated in independent or mainstream schools in other Local Authorities (mainly high cost out of borough children)	2013/14	2014/15

- 8.4 Scenario 3, which shows the financial implications if the school is initially populated with children currently educated in independent or mainstream schools in other LAs, is the most financially viable. Each scenario assumes that in future years, the school is filled with similar children in terms of need and current placement.
- 8.5 The three scenarios together demonstrate that the children selected to enter the ASC school will be key to the financial viability of the school. This will need

to be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that the financial viability is sustained

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 9.1 Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on LAs to secure that there are sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary school education and requires them in particular to have regard to the need to secure that special educational provision is made for pupils with special educational needs; section 315 requires LAs to keep their arrangements for SEN provision under review.
- 9.2 That Act further requires local authorities and funding authorities to have regard to the general principle that children are educated in accordance with their parents' wishes (so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient education and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure) and to consider and respond to parental representations when carrying out their planning duty in respect of educational provision in their area.
- 9.3 Cabinet is being requested to give permission for a feasibility study as to the setting up of a specialist ASC provision in the area. In everything that it does the Local Authority is subject to an equality duty and therefore an equality impact assessment (EIA) needs to be carried out in respect of plans for the provision of services being considered by the Local Authority. I understand that in this case the EIA has already been done. Officers should be mindful of the outcome of that assessment in the feasibility study that is to be undertaken.
- 9.4 The Legal Department has not been involved in the formulation of the business case that is submitted with this report.

10.0 Risk Management

- 10.1 The risks include the LA not being able to provide a sufficient level of SEN provision locally.
- 10.2 The cost of placing children and young people out of borough continue to rise and this gives rise to concerns regarding the value for money in such placements.

11.0 Access to Information

- 11.1 The outline business case relating to this report is enclosed and can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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