

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**15 May 2019**

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**Update of the SEND School Provision Task Group**

**Purpose of the report**

1. To present the update of the task group to the committee.

**Background**

2. The task group was originally established at the 5th September Children's Select Meeting where the committee resolved to establish a task group to look at the plans for the future provision of SEND schools and school places in Wiltshire.
3. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2019 the task group met with officers and the portfolio holder responsible for SEND to receive updates on the following:
  - a. SEND Schools Consultation
  - b. Wiltshire Council's successful bid for free school funding

**Terms of reference**

4. The following terms of reference for the task group were endorsed by the Children's Select Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017:
  - 1) To consider the future provision of SEND education for Wiltshire's children and young people in the context of the challenges outlined in the "Wood Report"/WASSPP report (May 2017).
  - 2) To receive evidence from:
    - a. Wiltshire Council officers;
    - b. Wiltshire schools;
    - c. Parents/guardians of children with SEND.

**Membership**

5. The task group comprises of the following membership:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)  
Cllr James Sheppard  
Mr John Hawkins (Children's Select Committee Teacher Representative)  
Ms Jen Jones (Wiltshire College Representative)

## Methodology

6. The task group received evidence from the following witnesses:

Wiltshire Council witnesses:

Cllr Jane Davies	Portfolio Holder for Disabled Children and Adults
Judith Westcott	Acting Head of Commissioning & Joint Planning
David Paice	Interim Head of Special Schools Transformation

## Evidence

### Special Schools Consultation

7. Wiltshire Council had extended their consultation period for proposals on special school provision in the north of the county until 6<sup>th</sup> May 2019. The proposals were in response to meeting the need to provide an additional 123 SEND school places in the north of the county by 2026 (including 50 for complex needs).
8. Online responses to the original pre-publication consultation had resulted in a total of 45% in favour of Wiltshire Council's proposals and 55% against the proposals.
9. The extension also included three extra face-to-face meetings at the following locations:
- Chippenham
  - Trowbridge
  - Devizes
10. The process of engagement at the three additional public meetings included a clearer demonstration on how the Wiltshire Council proposal was reached by taking those in attendance through the range of options which had been considered and the process of their consideration. The meetings also provided attendees the chance to critique and offer suggestions and potential alternatives. Members of the task group were provided with a copy of the presentation used at the face-to-face meetings.
11. The task group was informed that Virgin Healthcare had stated that improvements to their operation could not take place within the current funding across the current split sites. However, they noted that they could implement an improvement at a single site. Potential improvements might include always having at least 1 person available on site and operating out of an onsite "base" for their staff. The single site option could also afford an integrated education, health and care provision with joint working at all stages.

12. Transport modelling had been undertaken based from known growth, including future military and housing growth, and the current transport situation. The system used to produce the models also generated figures for funding that model. Pickup times and congestion were also included, and officers informed that task group that officers from the transport team had driven a number of routes to set the calculations in real time.
13. Task group members were informed that the system had produced figures that demonstrated an overall improvement in travel times for the majority under the Council's proposed model. It was noted that two pupils would experience up to 60minute travel times, but that this was a reduction from the current number of children travelling that time.
14. The task group requested that transport figures be provided for all options, including maintaining transport to the existing sites, in order to present proper comparisons.
15. The report to Cabinet was to include the options presented alongside the scoring criteria outlined in the presentations at the face-to-face public meetings.

#### Wiltshire Council's successful bid for free school funding

16. Officers explained that they had successfully bid in February 2019 for £12mil funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to build a 150-pupil Free School for 4-19yr olds with SEND.
17. The school will cover autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) and be located in the south of the county. Currently a potential site had been identified in Salisbury, but nothing definite had been agreed.
18. The DfE would be allocating a project lead for the process. It was expected that this officer would be introduced at the end of May 2019.

#### Wiltshire Council SEND Strategy

19. Members of the task group were informed that Wiltshire Council were currently working in consultation with a consultancy (ISOS) to develop our SEND Strategy. This was part of wider work to ensure that children with SEND who would benefit from education in mainstream schools were attending mainstream schools. It was explained that difficulties were being experienced when trying to make this happen, and that a growth in children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) attending SEND schools was being experienced as a result.
20. The task group requested that they be involved as part of the process for the draft strategy.

#### **Proposal**

21. That the Children's Select Committee notes the update from the SEND School Provision Task Group.
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**Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the SEND School Provision Task Group**

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**Appendices**

None

**Background documents**

None