

Urgent Decision Taken on Behalf of Cabinet

Report to the Leader of the County Council and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools

Report submitted by: Head of Service – Asset Management

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Preston South West;

Temporary Increase in Pupil Places at Ashton Community Science College (Appendix 'A' refers)

Contacts for further information:

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Executive Summary

Lancashire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that a primary or secondary school place is available for every child of statutory school age living in Lancashire who requests one. As a result of high intake rates and additional housing impact, an area of Lancashire has been identified as requiring additional secondary places for 2020 and beyond.

This report outlines the current and projected position in the Preston area. This report also outlines action taken to secure temporary places in Preston for September 2020 and 2021 and recommends that additional places be made available in Year 7 at Ashton Community Science College for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years through a temporary expansion of pupil numbers, enabled by building works.

Reason for Urgency

This decision is urgent and cannot await the next meeting of Cabinet. The reason for this is that all formal meetings of the council, including Cabinet, have been cancelled for the foreseeable future and this decision has been deemed to be business critical by the relevant Executive Director. This decision is therefore being taken on behalf of Cabinet by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order C16(1).

Recommendation

The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools are asked to:

(i) Approve a temporary increase, for two years only, in the year 7 intake of Ashton Community Science College School in Preston, from 160 to 190 places for September 2020 and September 2021.

(ii) Approve the funding set out at Appendix 'A' to provide an additional hall space and servery, and the fitting out of a second food technology room, to enable the school to accommodate the additional numbers.

This decision should be implemented immediately for the purposes of Standing Order C29 as any delay could adversely affect the execution of the county council's responsibilities. The reason for this is that the decision has been designated as business critical by the relevant Executive Director, and any delay in its implementation would have an adverse affect on the operations of the county council.

Background and Advice

As detailed in the 'School Place Provision Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20' approved by Cabinet in August 2017, after a steady decrease between 1989 and 2001, birth rates across the county have subsequently been rising.

In addition, the changing dynamics of Lancashire's population, influenced by increased births, immigration, housing developments and economic migration, means that the provision of school places must also change in order to meet the changing needs of residents. This can be through provision of additional places, or through the redistribution of existing places within the county.

In dealing with rising numbers resulting from higher secondary intake rates, it is necessary to assess whether or not this is a short term increase or a more sustained trend.

The Preston secondary intake has been identified together as an area of growth, due to the significant level of housing development planned in the area as part of the City Deal. The table below shows projected demand:

There is forecast to be a shortfall of secondary school places in Preston as follows:

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Places available without housing	37	-46	-49	28	-26
Places available with housing	-34	-73	-89	-25	-92

The above information demonstrates sufficient secondary school places available for the September 2020 intake. However, once the impact from housing has been taken into account, there is projected to be a shortfall of places for September 2020 and future years.

With housing build rates being slower than anticipated, together with the fact that some schools within Preston are currently carrying spare places, it is proposed that the additional places for 2020 and 2021 be provided on a temporary basis at this stage, until further data is available to evidence the need for permanent places. This will be kept under review.

On identification of the area as a hotspot, all schools within the area of growth were contacted in order to seek expressions of interest in expansion. Visits and discussions were held with other schools in the area that had expressed an interest in providing the level of places required.

In an assessment of the potential to expand existing schools, the following factors were considered which are contained within the School Place Provision Strategy (<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/strategies-policies-plans/children-education-and-families/school-place-provision-strategy/>)

- The current strength of the school in terms of attainment levels and leadership;
- Parental preference;
- The existing size and layout of the school, and its potential to accommodate additional pupil numbers;
- Access to the site and proximity to the area of growth.

On application of these criteria, it was decided to propose the two year temporary expansion of Ashton Science College because the school was the only school which:

- expressed an interest to expand;
- fit the criteria above; and
- would provide the amount of additional places required for the area.

Ashton Community Science College currently has a Published Admission Number of 160. This means it would have 800 pupils if all years were full. The table below shows that there is capacity to accommodate the bulge year of 190 for the academic

year 2020-2021, due to lower numbers currently in years 8 and 9, but after that numbers would rise above 800.

	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
2019	165	150	129	155	155	754
2020	190	165	150	129	155	789
2021	190	190	165	150	129	824
2022	160	190	190	165	150	855
2023	160	160	190	190	165	865
2024	160	160	160	190	190	860
2025	160	160	160	160	190	830

Assessment of existing accommodation

The Capital Programme Team visited the school to check the current use of all spaces, and to understand current space pressures. A comparison of the accommodation currently available at the school and the Department for Education recommended numbers and sizes was carried out, to check whether it would be possible for the school to absorb the additional pupil numbers proposed.

This exercise showed that the numbers of teaching and support spaces was generally in line with recommendations for the higher numbers, but that the school had considerably less accommodation within the category of 'halls, dining and large spaces' than was recommended, even for 800 pupils. The school currently has a sports hall and a single assembly hall that is used for dining, assemblies and as a performance space. The use of the hall for dining means it is not available for much of the day, and the school leadership were concerned that increasing numbers of pupils having school lunches would make this even more difficult to manage. Most secondary schools have a separate dining area, allowing the assembly hall to be available for teaching and assemblies throughout the day.

The school were also concerned that they may exceed mandatory class sizes in food technology, for which they currently only have one fully fitted teaching space. It is therefore proposed to re-fit the adjacent room, which was originally also a food technology room but is currently used for general teaching, with the necessary services and equipment. This will enable them to provide the curriculum for the larger year groups.

Proposed Works

Following discussion and agreement with the Headteacher it is proposed that, in order to support the school in taking the additional numbers in the next few years, and to bring the school up to current space standards, a new assembly hall will be built linked to the main building circulation. This will allow the existing hall to be used for dining and performances, and will provide additional teaching, assembly and exam space, easing pressures on existing teaching accommodation. In addition, a small external servery pod is proposed to take pressure away from the main kitchen and hall space at lunch and break times, by providing an alternative outlet for sandwiches and drinks etc.

Consultations

The Headteacher and Governing Body of Ashton Community Science College have been consulted on the proposals. An increase to the Published Admission Number for September 2020 is supported, on the basis that the proposed works are carried out in time for the September 2021 intake.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

If additional secondary school places are not created, there is a risk that the county council would fail in its statutory responsibility to make sure that a maintained school place is available to all Lancashire children of the appropriate age range who want one.

Legal

The governing body has been consulted in line with the Schools Admissions Code 2014.

Lancashire County Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

Property Asset Management

The temporary expansion of Ashton Community Science College can be accommodated within the existing school building. However, assessment against recommended space standards shows that the proposed additional hall is desirable. A feasibility assessment has been carried out for the proposed expansion and has identified a suitable location for the proposed extension.

Equality and Cohesion

The proposals will make available a secondary school place within the north-west Preston area for all pupils who are expected to need one and should therefore contribute positively towards advancing equality of opportunity for young people in the area (age protected characteristic).

Financial

The financial implications are set out at Appendix 'A' and are deemed to be Part II for the reason set out below:

This section of the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Procurement

All Lancashire County Council procurement standing orders will be complied with. Contracts will be let through Lancashire County Council's approved frameworks.

Human Resources

The school may need to employ additional teachers as a result of the temporary expansion in numbers. Should the proposals be approved, the school would receive revenue funding assistance for each year of expansion to reflect the fact that pupils would begin two terms before the increased numbers were reflected in the school budget. This funding would be provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant in accordance with the rules agreed by the Lancashire Schools Forum. This will ensure that the school is not financially disadvantaged by the expansion.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

Appendix 'A' is not for publication - Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Urgent Decision Taken on behalf of Cabinet: Declarations

The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools

Temporary Increase in Pupil Places at Ashton Community Science College

Original recommendation, as set out in the report, approved without amendment. Yes/No *

Original recommendation amended and decision as follows: Yes/No *

I have a pecuniary/non-pecuniary interest in this matter. Yes/No *

If an interest is declared please give details below:

.....
Leader of the Council

insert date

Chief Officer

I certify that this is an appropriate and accurate record within the terms of Standing Order C30(2) and (3) of the decision taken by the Cabinet Member.

.....
insert title of authorising officer

insert date

*Delete as appropriate

This decision is to be taken by more than one Cabinet Member and all relevant Cabinet Members must be in agreement with the decision

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