

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 19th MARCH 2007

REPORT ON: REPLACEMENT OF KINGSPARK SPECIAL SCHOOL

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 193-2007

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report outlines the proposal to build a new school to replace Kingspark Special School, for a population of children and young people with complex and profound needs, and for those with severe autistic spectrum disorder.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is proposed that the Education Committee should:

- i. note the contents of this report;
- ii. approve the proposal to build a replacement school for Kingspark; and
- iii. approve the establishment of a Project Board to manage the project and report as appropriate to the Education Committee.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Head of Finance has confirmed that the estimated total cost is £11.5m. The breakdown of this total cost is illustrated in the Financial Appendix. The Education Department's current Capital Plan will contribute £9m and the balance will be funded from a combination of savings, prudential borrowing and/or contributions from partner agencies.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

4.1 There are no sustainability issues arising from this report.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Approval of this report will ensure enhanced access to educational, and care and welfare, opportunities for the most physically and mentally vulnerable children and adolescents in Dundee.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 At its meeting of 31st March 2003 the Education Committee approved Report No. 260-2003 'Update on the Financial Implications of the Dundee Schools Capital Project', which identified funding for the replacement of the existing Kingspark

School from sources outwith the PPP Project. Since that time, detailed consideration has been given to the range of issues, listed below, surrounding the provision of a new facility.

- 6.2 Guidance has been issued to local authorities in respect of Section 15 of the 'Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000', requiring all pupils to be taught in mainstream settings unless any of three very specific exclusion clauses can be met, viz. that such education is not in the best interests of the individual child, that such a placement would not be in the best interests of other children, or that the cost of providing resources to service mainstream would be prohibitive and unrealistic.
- 6.3 These exclusion clauses in the Act first of all, secondly the increase in the number of Resourced Locations in Dundee's mainstream schools, and lastly a natural decrease in numbers being recommended for Kingspark School, all mean that a replacement school will cater for fewer pupils than Kingspark has historically catered for.
- 6.4 Kingspark has always provided a service for appropriate young persons and their families from the neighbouring authorities of Angus and Perth & Kinross. Developments in supporting children with significant additional support needs in these authorities now mean that Angus Council is likely to seek to enrol a smaller number of youngsters in Kingspark, and Perth & Kinross no longer refers pupils.
- 6.5 Extensive consultation has taken place with the staff and parent/carer populations on the question of a new provision. The Director of Education has attended meetings of the school staff, a sub-group of whom was also heavily involved in offering and commenting on design suggestions at a draft stage. Two formal consultations with the parent body were offered in the school, and the voluntary organisation Parent-to-Parent undertook on behalf of the Council a comprehensive consultation exercise with all families in their homes. This re-affirmed the high esteem in which Kingspark is held by parents, confirmed that a new provision would be welcome, and recorded the clear message that location would not be an important issue, as long as it was within the boundaries of Dundee.
- 6.6 A programme of visits has been arranged to schools in Scotland and England considered similar in size and population to Kingspark, or having design features of interest to the Kingspark design team. These visits have proved extremely useful in providing the opportunity to consider design issues with Head Teachers who had been involved from the outset in the project, and to compare the differing visions for the delivery of services to young people similar to those in Kingspark.
- 6.7 Oaklands Special School in Edinburgh was one of the schools visited in 2005, at that time still in its design phase. A follow-up visit took place in January 2007 once the school had opened. Key considerations arising from that visit, which the design team have considered in proposing a new specification, include: aspects of security; use of outside space; size of gym; use and amount of storage space; effective use of lightweight mobile partitions; location of hoists and tracking systems; issues relating to the transport of children to and from the school; and proximity of a mainstream campus.

7.0 PROPOSAL

7.1 It is proposed to take a decision in principle to build a new Kingspark School, taking account of the issues listed in 8.3 - 8.6 below.

7.2 A Project Board similar to that established to manage the PPP project, chaired by the Chief Executive, should be set up to manage all aspects of the new build, including the production of a detailed specification, consideration of the financial implications, and planning of the project. The Project Board should comprise administration and opposition elected members, officers from the Education, Architectural Services and Finance Departments, representatives from NHS Tayside and Angus Council, school staff and parent/carer representatives, and teacher and support staff unions.

8.0 ISSUES

8.1 This will be a large-scale project, catering for two distinct populations: severe and profoundly disabled, or severely autistic, young people. The population of Kingspark displays considerably more complex and profound needs than the pupil population of any other school visited. There is significant input from NHS staff providing therapeutic, medical and dental support. The proposed facility must therefore meet the needs of these young people. The design will be correspondingly complex, and unable to be compared to any mainstream project.

8.2 At the same time, this is an opportunity to design and build a facility for very vulnerable children, of which Dundee and its citizens will be proud, looked on with envy by public and professionals across the country.

8.3 Size of Population

8.3.1 There has been careful consideration of the needs of the individual young people currently at Kingspark, close examination of population trends in recent years, and careful projection into the future. The proposal is therefore to build a flexible facility for 102 pupils (54 with autistic spectrum disorder and 48 with complex and profound needs). It is likely that no more than 10 of these pupils will be from Angus at any one time, probably all with complex and profound needs. Any children from Perth & Kinross will only be there in the event of a successful parental placing request.

8.3.2 The current estimate is that the population will remain around 100 for the foreseeable future, from a peak of 170 a few years ago.

8.3.3 It is possible that, at some point in the future, society, national government and local thinking about inclusion and the concept of inclusiveness might change, and that consequently numbers might begin to rise again. A key principle to establish, therefore, is to have space and scope to expand, and flexibility of accommodation to meet all demands.

8.4 Location

8.4.1 Severe and profoundly disabled children thrive in light, pleasant and stimulating surroundings, and so an ideal site would be one with open vistas, green areas and ample opportunity for sensory stimulation. The outside world is also an extension of

the classroom for pupils, and so paths and other areas are essential for wheelchair or tricycle training, as well as for leisure activities.

- 8.4.2 In terms of the promotion of life skills the present Kingspark has benefited greatly from the close proximity of community facilities such as a superstore and a local library.
- 8.4.3 Almost all the special schools previously visited were relatively close to a mainstream educational facility, either as part of a larger educational campus or joined by connecting paths. Head Teachers of these special schools believed this added to their students' experience, and provided opportunities for mainstream students to work with their disabled peers, thus promoting greater awareness among the mainstream population of the needs of people with disabilities.
- 8.4.4 There are, therefore, general factors which need to be borne in mind in appraising any options for location: site size and access to services such as drainage; access to major and local roads; site aspect; site security; proximity to secondary schools; proximity of amenities; impact on neighbourhood; noise pollution (an important consideration when working with some autistic youngsters); potential for expansion; and the economic implications of use by the Council.
- 8.4.5 Three sites are worthy of full consideration: the Balfield playing fields behind St John's High School; Lawside Academy; and the open land on the southern perimeter of Camperdown Park. All three score highly in terms of major and local access, southern orientation, potential for expansion impact on the neighbourhood, the openness of the site, and general site attractiveness.
- 8.4.6 This report proposes that the first of these options, at Balfield, should be the preferred location. The reasons are:
- i. The site is well-positioned and attractive, secure and with a good outlook over an open area.
 - ii. The building will be adjacent to the newly extended and refurbished St John's High School, and will benefit from association with an education campus.
 - iii. The site currently contains playing fields, but replacement facilities can be established elsewhere in the city, in line with the requirements of the Sports Council's policy on the provision of sports pitches.
 - iv. The site has no significant economic potential for the Council.
 - v. Lawside Academy and Camperdown Park are both attractive sites when set against nearly all the general criteria. However, the former site will not be close to a secondary school, and also has potential as a residential development opportunity, while the latter suffers from not being a level site (with probable resultant increased building costs), from its relative geographical isolation, and from its limited direct access to community facilities. There are also difficulties with site servicing and public utility provision.

8.5 Accommodation

- 8.5.1 Classrooms in Kingspark must be sufficiently large to accommodate not just the children, their teaching and support staff, and their teaching resources, but also the equipment required for their care and welfare and for access to educational opportunity.

- 8.5.2 It is difficult to comprehend the amount and size of some of the equipment needed by severely disabled youngsters. A full list for a single child might include a wheelchair for mobility, a feeding chair, a side lyer, a Chailley lyer, a wedge, a mat, a standing frame, a walking frame, and a hoist and sling; and toilet accommodation comprising another hoist and sling, a changing plinth, a washbasin, a sluice and a shower unit. Some adolescents require extremely large pieces of equipment which are difficult to manoeuvre, and staff are needed to support youngsters in disabled toilets, which adds to the space required.
- 8.5.3 Those with autistic spectrum disorder require designated work stations, separated by screening, and also less formal areas for group work within classrooms. Again, these areas need adequate space to allow movement between the two.
- 8.5.4 Access to health specialists such as speech & language and occupational therapists is essential for Kingspark pupils, but we also look to provide a nursing and dental service, and adequate accommodation for visiting medical consultants. NHS Tayside will be fully consulted and involved regarding the specification of a health wing.
- 8.5.5 In summary, a new high specification design should contain features considered key to a building of quality: adequate storage facilities; appropriately sized classrooms with combined disabled toilet accommodation; a tracking hoist system; laundry; covered access; public and vehicular access; and specialised outdoor areas. It will allow appropriate space for moving and handling severely disabled pupils in accordance with guidance from the Health & Safety Executive. It will also minimise 'institutionalism' and facilitate appropriate interaction between young people of all ages and needs.

8.6 Staffing

- 8.6.1 There has recently been a review of the management structure in Kingspark, which now comprises 1 Head Teacher, 4 Depute Head Teachers and 6 Principal Teachers. The experience of visiting other special schools has led to the conclusion that the replacement school requires fewer managers, and it is recommended that we should move, through a process of natural wastage, to a structure comprising 1 Head Teacher and 3 Depute Head Teachers, supported by 3 Principal Teachers (Complex and Profound Needs, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and Practical and Aesthetic Activities).
- 8.6.2 Because of the need to accommodate a range of teaching and care resources in each classroom, it is proposed that there should be no more than 6 children in a class, accompanied by at least 1 teacher and 1 member of the support staff. It is further recognised that some children will have needs that require to be supported by their own dedicated member of support staff.
- 8.6.3 Using the current population as a guide, it is estimated that the replacement Kingspark will require 17 class teachers, 8 practical and aesthetic teachers (Art, Craft, Home Economics, Music and PE), 4 nursery nurses, and approximately 40 Training Care Assistants (SEN).

9.0 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), and Depute Chief Executive (Finance).

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None

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Director of Education

5th March, 2007

JC/DD

Financial Appendix

Building

School Accommodation

4382 m2

8 classrooms, storage areas incorporated (complex & profound)	1 Art room and store
10 classrooms, storage areas incorporated (autism)	1 Home Economics flat and kitchen area
1 Music room and store	1 conference room and 1 smaller meeting room
1 Home Economics room	1 first aid room
Soft play room	Gym hall and changing rooms
4 senior management offices	Dining Hall
Disabled/accessible toilets	Staffroom/toilets
Sensory room	General office accommodation/reception
Assembly Hall	Laundry
3 offices for Principal Teachers	Staff library and resource base
Facilities office	Wheelchair charging area and wheelchair store
Reception area	Storage area for community groups using
Bike store	
Technician's workshop	
premises	
Therapy swimming pool and changing rooms	Pool plant room
School kitchen, kitchen office and staff room	Switch room/boiler room/substation

Health Accommodation (dedicated)

371 m2

3 consulting rooms	2 occupational therapy rooms
Dental surgery and decontamination room	2 therapy offices
Therapy changing facilities	Reception office
Physiotherapy gymnasium	Orthotics and wheelchairs: plaster room
Stores	

Health Accommodation (shared 50%)

267m2

Home Economics	Physical Education
Administration	Toilets
Circulation (allowance)	

Feasibility Costs

School		
Building	£7,922,000	
Site works	810,000	
Furniture and fitting out	300,000	
Fees, etc.	1,048,000	
		£10,080,000
Health Board (dedicated)		
Building	670,000	
Site works	68,000	
Fees	88,000	
		£826,000
Health Board (shared)		
Building	482,000	

Site works	48,000	
Fees	64,000	
		£594,000
		£11,500,000