

Decision maker:	Cabinet member corporate strategy and budget
Decision date:	Wednesday 30 August 2017
Title of report:	Feasibility work to provide options for Marlbrook Primary School
Report by:	Interim director of children's wellbeing

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

Redhill

Purpose and summary

To approve feasibility work to establish the options and costs to make Marlbrook Primary School in Hereford a three form entry school.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the interim director of children's wellbeing be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to complete feasibility work, including information that is necessary to support a planning application, to a total cost of £210k.**

Alternative options

1. Feasibility work is not completed. This would not enable a decision to be taken on the future expansion of Marlbrook Primary School. The expansion has already been considered as part of the council's capital programme and is an identified scheme approved by full Council.

Key considerations

2. Marlbrook Primary School is a council maintained school located in the south of Hereford. It is currently rated Outstanding by Ofsted and is also a teaching school. The school is a two form entry school with a planned admission number of 60 pupils a year, but has been consistently oversubscribed since 2011.
3. In line with the council's Schools Capital Investment Strategy (SCIS) principles, the council has supported the school in its expansion plans through making provision in the 2015 and 2016 capital programme for a permanent and temporary classroom respectively, providing sufficient capacity to enable the school to have a third entry class in 2016 and 2017. In approving these arrangements, it was noted that feasibility work would need to be carried out to establish a longer term solution for September 2018.
4. The council's capital programme for 2017/18 includes provision of £2.7m to enable Marlbrook to become a full three form entry school with an early years hub. This provision was based on a provisional estimate of costs, recognising that more detailed feasibility work would need to be carried out to inform any decision to proceed.
5. Using the SCAPE framework, the council has procured the Kier Group to undertake some initial feasibility work; this is supplemented by some technical studies undertaken by the council's contractor, Integral. Feasibility work needs to be completed to provide costed proposals for consideration which, in addition to providing permanent capacity for three form entry, the work will address potential transport and planning issues, and options for improving on site nursery provision. This work will enable a further decision to be taken on the way forward. Work is also taking place to determine interim options for three form entry from September 2018, pending a permanent solution.

Community impact

6. Marlbrook Primary School is highly valued by the local and surrounding community. It provides high quality education for its children, whilst also supporting adult learning, including for the parents of the school's children. The school is directly involved in early years provision and works closely with the nearby children's centre. All these activities support the council's Corporate Plan priority and Children and Young People's Plan objective of keeping children and young people safe and giving them a great start in life. The proposal to expand Marlbrook has been prioritised according to the principles set out in the Schools Capital Investment Strategy. The requirement for a three form entry school and the data that supported this was considered by Cabinet in the April 2016 report. Since then Marlbrook continues to be a school in high demand and the surrounding primary schools are experiencing growth in the number of pupils in their early age groups.

Equality duty

7. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation. Marlbrook serves communities where there is a relatively high percentage of children with special needs. The new building will be fully compliant with disability legislation and the feasibility work will take into account the needs of pupils with protected characteristics.

Resource implications

- 9. Feasibility work has already commenced and costs to date are £138,029. A further £71,000 is required to complete the work to inform a decision on next steps. This will enable planning, building control, energy, statutory service and existing building survey checks to be carried out (£52k). An estimation has been made for management fees (£10k). A further £9k has been estimated as contingency.

Legal implications

- 10. The feasibility study can be completed. There is a clear outline of the resource implications for completion of this work above.
- 11. Once this is completed, a further report will be required as outlined within this report that will set out the next steps in the process.
- 12. There is an agreement in place which the council is liable to pay. There is no obligation to continue any further or enter into a delivery agreement.

Risk management

- 13. There is a risk that sufficient classroom space is not made available for September 2018. This will be considered as part of the feasibility work and recommendations will be made on a value for money basis. There is potential to temporarily use existing building space on the current site.
- 14. There is a risk that work will have to take place to address transport issues to satisfy planning requirements. This will be identified in the feasibility work.
- 15. There is a risk that other users of the site, such as the nurseries and a residents' association, will be affected by the work. This will be identified in the feasibility work.

Consultees

- 16. Some consultation work has already begun and included school headteachers, staff and governors, the local ward member Councillor Paul Rone, and members of the community. This will inform the options put forward through the feasibility work.

Appendices

- 17. None

Background papers

18. None identified