



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 November 2021

REPORT TITLE:	KINGSWAY SCHOOL - PFI UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of the options available to explore the future use of the former Kingsway High School, Wallasey.

The Kingsway School is part of the Wirral PFI schools' contract that was signed in 2007. The PFI scheme allowed for the significant refurbishment and new build of nine schools across the local authority. This included eight secondary schools and one primary school.

The Kingsway Academy closed on the 31st August 2018, the school had 129 pupils on roll and was part of the Northern School Trust. The school site has a capacity of 1450 pupils and in addition the site has a former City Learning Centre building within the boundary of the school grounds.

The Kingsway Academy school building has remained empty since the closure of the school. The site is being maintained by the current PFI contractor until a use for the building has been formalised.

Options in relation to the school building use had been explored at the end of 2019, of which one of these was the possibility of Clare Mount School moving to The Kingsway School building. Options outlined have not been developed further due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the different options available for the use of The Kingsway Academy site.

2. Support a full feasibility assessment of The Kingsway School site including the possibility of moving Clare Mount school into the site.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Children, Young People and Education Committee has a role in making sure that council assets are utilised in the most appropriate way and have a positive impact on the lives of Wirral's young people.
- 1.2 The current cost to the council of The Kingsway Academy site is £867.5k per annum, this cost will continue until 2031 or until another use of the building is found.
- 1.3 Clare Mount School is seen as an appropriate option to explore. This is due to both schools being within a 3 mile radius and the current Clare Mount School needing significant capital investment due to the current condition of the school.
- 1.4 Clare Mount School currently has 249 pupils on roll and has outgrown its current facility. To address the current demand temporary classrooms are currently on site. In addition, sixth form pupils at the school are currently using the CLC facility based at The Kingsway Academy site.
- 1.4 The current site occupied by Clare Mount School is in very poor condition and would require significant capital investment over several years to improve the condition of the building.
- 1.5 The facilities within The Kingsway Academy could be adapted to meet the needs of the pupils that currently attend Clare Mount School.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The school building could be utilised by another mainstream secondary school, with the capacity for up to 1450 pupils on. Currently Wirral birth rates and secondary school occupancy levels indicate an additional secondary school is not required on Wirral.
- 2.2 The possibility to split the site to allow two primary schools to co-locate. Wirral local authority is conducting a primary school sufficiency review that will take 5 years to complete. Currently, no close match could be identified, and the completion of the primary sufficiency assessment needs to be completed for this locality.
- 2.3 To split the use of the building between school and "education support staff" to utilise the space more effectively. This would be difficult due to the restrictions within the PFI contract and how the building must be used for education purposes.
- 2.4 Demolition of the school site and termination of the PFI contract for this site. The cost implications related to demolition and cancellation of the PFI contract would be cost prohibitive, in addition the loss of a school with excellent facilities would not be appropriate.
- 2.5 We could do nothing and the current liability of the PFI costs associated with The Kingsway School site will remain with the local authority for the next 10 years.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Kingsway Academy opened in February 2015; the school had previously been the Wallasey School. It was inspected in November 2013 and was graded as having serious weaknesses.
- 3.2 The Kingsway Academy was part of the Northern Schools trust, due to low pupil numbers and the fixed PFI costs associated with the building. The Academy Trust gave notice of its intention for the school to close in June 2017, the school closed permanently in August 2018.
- 3.3 Discussions have been ongoing since 2018 with the PFI provider, Wirral Schools Services Ltd in relation to explorations around costs/savings and options for the building.
- 3.4 A request was put forward to establish short term savings. Costs were proposed by the PFI providers for mothballing the building in the short term from Sept 2018 – August 2021.
- 3.5 The option for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to move into The Kingsway Academy is seen as the preferable option based on the locality of the two sites and the current condition of the Clare Mount School building.
- 3.6 Clare Mount Sports college is a secondary school supporting pupils aged 11 – 19 with Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD) and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). The school is currently rated as outstanding by OFSTED. The school has 249 pupils on roll.
- 3.7 The current Clare Mount School has significant building issues; flat roofs are prone to leaks and this would be an ongoing issue if the school remained at this site; Windows are not double glazed, and many sections need replacement; The construction has led to poor insulation and flooding has been an issue historically due to the low water table in the area.
- 3.8 Investment has been made with an extension to their sports facilities, but this was over 15 years ago. Major investment is needed to improve the condition of the building if the school is to remain on this site.
- 3.9 The option to explore the feasibility of Clare Mount School moving to the Kingsway site, would only be to use a section of The Kingsway Academy site. Clare Mount School has 249 pupils on roll, where as the site was developed to accommodate 1450 pupils. The space required by Clare Mount School would be a greater proportion than would be expected in comparison with a mainstream provision, this is due to the fact the an MLD/ASC provision would have smaller classes sizes to meet need.
- 3.10 As part of the feasibility study to determine whether The Kingsway Academy site is suitable for Clare Mount School, an architectural assessment will be required to ascertain the provision required to accommodate Clare Mount School.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Current financial cost to the local authority is £867.5K per annum, this cost will remain until the end of the PFI scheme in 2032, unless an alternative use of the building can be found.
- 4.2 As part of the feasibility study as to whether Clare Mount School could move to The Kingsway Academy site, an assessment of the costs associated with Clare Mount School moving to the site will be undertaken. This will cover both capital and revenue costs.
- 4.3 The re-purposing of The Kingsway Academy will reduce the financial revenue costs currently covered by the council.
- 4.4 At present, we do not know how much of a saving will be made in relation to revenue costs. A clearer picture in relation to this will be deduced during the feasibility assessment.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As part of the feasibility study in relation to the Clare Mount School option, a formal consultation will take place.
- 5.2 During the consultation process all relevant stakeholders, parents/carers and school staff will take part.
- 5.3 If the feasibility study moves forward, a statutory consultation with the DFE will take place in relation to the Clare Mount School changing location.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 As part of the feasibility study, an assessment of what resources can be transferred from the Clare Mount School site to The Kingsway Academy site will need to take place.
- 6.2 In relation to ICT, an assessment of the working condition of the ICT facilities at The Kingsway Academy site will need to take place. In addition, an asset assessment of the ICT equipment at Clare Mount School will need to take place and ascertain what can be transferred effectively.
- 6.3 In relation to staffing, an assessment of what is needed to support the transfer from the Clare Mount School site to The Kingsway Academy site will need to take place as part of the feasibility study.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The feasibility study of Clare Mount School moving to The Kingsway Academy site could find that move is not appropriate and cannot accommodate the requirements of Clare Mount School.

- 7.2 If the feasibility study deduces Clare Mount School moving to The Kingsway Academy is not appropriate, the feasibility study will capture detailed information in relation to other options that could be explored.
- 7.3 If no alternative use can be found for The Kingsway Academy site the annual costs of £867.5K per annum until 2032.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 An initial discussion with Headteacher, senior staff and Chair of Governors at Clare Mount School has taken place. Whilst colleagues at Clare Mount School are excited by the opportunity of exploring the option of moving to The Kingsway Academy site, they are clear the move must be right for the school and young people in the long term.
- 8.2 During discussions with Clare Mount School, as part of the feasibility study, it was made clear the school needed to know the impact of moving to a PFI building, how the site would be made appropriate for the school cohort and how the section allocated to Clare Mount School would be divided from the other parts of the school building.
- 8.3 A consultation with parents/carers and the local community will take place during the feasibility study of exploring the option of Clare Mount School moving to the Kingsway site if the recommendations are endorsed.
- 8.4 Clare Mount School will inform parents of the feasibility study to explore Clare Mount School moving to The Kingsway School site the week commencing 15th November.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.
- 9.2 A full EIA will need to be completed if any associated actions following feasibility study take place.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Consideration has been given to the climate emergency in exploration of re-using The Kingsway Academy site. The Kingsway Academy site is a newer building, with improved energy efficiency in comparison to the existing site being used by Clare Mount School. In addition, as part of the feasibility study, how The Kingsway Academy site could maximise the efficient use of technology to reduce carbon.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Audit and Risk Management Committee – 10th March 2020](#)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date