

REPORT TO: Education Committee

MEETING DATE: 8 March 2016

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: Update on the Communication Provision – Knox Academy

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress regarding the development of a new Communication Provision at Knox Academy.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress regarding the development of the new Communication Provision in the former Haddington Infant School building, following approval at Cabinet on 9 June 2015.

3 BACKGROUND

Review of specialist provision for children with autism in East Lothian

- 3.1 In February 2011 the Head of Education requested that a review of specialist provision for secondary aged pupils with autism and communication difficulties be undertaken. This request was in response to concerns that our specialist provision in Ross High School did not have capacity to continue to provide places for these pupils. The challenge to ensure appropriate provision for these pupils was further exacerbated by the lack of places in special schools out with East Lothian.

Outcome of review

- 3.2 Following a period of debate, consultation and analysis of viable options, approval was given by Cabinet on 9 June 2015 for the former Haddington Infant School building to be renovated and converted into a purpose built specialist provision.

Current Temporary Arrangements

- 3.3 Until such time as the Communication Provision opens, officers have been working in consultation with parents to set up a temporary provision within Knox Academy School building. A small staff team was also recruited including a Deputy Head Teacher, teacher and auxiliary.
- 3.4 Of the 5 pupils affected, the following arrangements have been in place since August 2015:
- 3 pupils started in the temporary provision in Knox Academy.
 - 1 pupil remained at the Cove (the primary communication provision) in accordance with parental wishes until the new Communication Provision opens.
 - 1 pupil transitioned to Ross High School Specialist Base in accordance with parental wishes.

Update on the new Communication Provision project

- 3.5 The contract for the renovation work was awarded to Clark Contracts. Work started in July 2015 and is scheduled to be completed on 11 April 2016. This is a delay of 4 weeks on the original contract completion date (14 March 2016). Reasons for the delay are; additional rot treatment, additional asbestos and works costs, water ingress costs and contractor claim for extension of time which has still to be assessed and agreed. Fitting out after the contractor finishes is scheduled to take 2 weeks, with the provision becoming operational on 25 April 2016. Pupils who are already in the temporary provision will then start their transition to the new building.

Pupil enrolment/entrance criteria

- 3.6 Pupils will be enrolled into the provision through the Specialist Moderation Panel, as is the case for all authority specialist provisions. The number of pupils in the provision will increase year on year as outlined in the original proposal paper.
- 3.7 Criteria have been drawn up by a multi agency group for admission to the Communication Provision. The criteria will be reviewed as required to ensure that we continue to assess the needs of pupils with autism and communication difficulties in the authority.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – The additional works outlined at 3.4.1 will result in additional estimated costs of £130,000 above previous reported position.

The Council's Design Team will endeavour to contain the contractor's Extension of Time Claim within the original contract sum.

Service and facilities management and staffing costs will be funded from the Education ASL budget as are all our authority specialist provisions.

- 6.2 Personnel – Staffing levels and resources will be determined using the same policy as our other specialist provisions in East Lothian. The Head Teacher of Knox Academy will have management responsibility for the Communication Provision, as is the case for the other specialist provisions. The Head Teacher is working closely with the Service Manager - Education (ASN & Early Years), Education Support Officer (ASN) and Strategic Asset and Capital Planning Management personnel.
- 6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Cabinet report dated 9 June 2015.

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