



Cabinet
22 May 2023

**Report from Corporate Director,
Children and Young People**

Post-16 Skills Resource Centre

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report presents a proposal to develop a Post-16 Skills Resource Centre for young people and young adults with special educational needs. The proposed Post-16 Skills Resource Centre is outlined in the School Place Planning Strategy 2019-23 refresh, approved by Cabinet in November 2021, and is included within the local partnership SEND Strategy 2021-25.
- 1.2 A Post-16 Skills Resource Centre will support the Brent partnership to meet the preparation for adulthood duties as laid out in the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the SEND Review 2022 and as detailed in the Brent SEND Strategy 2021-2025. The Centre would support an improvement in outcomes for young people and young adults in Brent, in terms of education, employment or training, healthy lifestyles, community participation and independent living.
- 1.3 The intended approach is a Post-16 Skills Resource Centre that would operate from two sites. The Welsh Harp Centre would be developed to provide a horticultural facility with work experience and volunteering opportunities. The second site would be based in new facilities on the Airco Close site in Kingsbury. The intention is to develop facilities for a Post-16 Skills Resource

Centre alongside an expansion of special school provision, as agreed in the SEND Capital Programme, building on the synergies between the two developments.

2.0 Recommendations

That Cabinet

- 2.1 approves the development of the Welsh Harp Centre for a Post-16 Skills Centre as detailed in this report, on the basis of the funding model to meet the Welsh Harp Centre revenue costs as detailed in Section 4, recognising the invest to save benefits of the proposal.
- 2.2 agrees that £3m capital cost for the Welsh Harp project is funded from the High Needs Capital Grant.
- 2.3 agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Children and Young People, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children, Young People and Schools to approve the Capital Project Business Case.
- 2.4 agrees in principle to the proposal to develop the Airco Close site for both special school provision and the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre. This is subject to discussions with the Compass Learning Partnership and the London Regional Director for Education regarding satellite special school provision on the Airco Close site.
- 2.5 Notes that officers will return to Cabinet with a detailed business case for the Airco Close development proposal based on the outcome of feasibility work for the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre and special school provision.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Cabinet committed to supporting a Post-16 Skills Resource Centre in 2019 as part of the School Place Planning Strategy 2019-23, in recognition of the lack of in-borough provision for young people with complex learning difficulties. Developing a centre for young people aged 16-25 is reflective of related key national documents such as the SEND Code of Practice (2015), National Autism Strategy (2021), the National Disability Strategy (2021) and NHS Long Term Plan. The SEND highlights a need to focus on improving outcomes for older children and young people against preparation for later life and adulthood indicators.
- 3.2 At a local level the case for the development of a Post-16 Skills Resource Centre:
 - Responds to a lack of in-borough provision for young people with complex learning difficulties as set out in 2019-2023 School Place Planning Strategy November 2021 refresh
 - Aligns with local priorities consistent with the 2023-2027 Brent Borough Plan, the Brent SEND Strategy 2021-2025, the Brent Youth Strategy 2021-2023, the Brent Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26 and priorities identified by the Integrated Care Partnership.

- Responds to the demographic context of increasing rates of young people with SEND in the borough as well as the high levels of these young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) compared to the general population.
- 3.3 The proposed approach has been co-produced with young people and parents and carers. Themes that arose in the consultation were:
- young people's desire to be successful, to work and live independently.
 - the lack of opportunities for young people and young adults to fully participate in the opportunities that Brent gives them.
 - a wish for all young people to be active members of their communities.
- 3.4 A recurring theme during the consultation was that young adults with either SEND support needs or an ECHP did not have many options to access appropriate Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) support. Whilst all consulted wanted an inclusive society, it was felt that this age group had been overlooked. Very often the only option for young people or young adults when they leave school or college is to attend an adult social care day centre. Whilst this offers effective support for some, for many this means that they no longer have access to friends of their own age, access to specialist support and information for young adults that would prepare them for adulthood and a successful transition into meaningful employment. Young people confirmed the need for more inclusive/supported apprenticeships and paid employment opportunities specifically for young adults with disabilities.
- 3.5 There are increasing numbers of young people with SEND in Brent. In January 2023, 3223 children and young people had ECHPs compared to 2938 the previous year (an increase of 9.7%). Between 2022 and 2023 the number of EHCPs in the 11 - 15 age group increased by 11.7% and those in the 20 - 25 age group increased by 30.73%. The current cohort of 11-15 year-olds is 1038 compared to 931 in 2022. There are 567 16–19 year-olds and 285 20-25 year olds. The cohort of 16-25 year olds with SEND in Brent is expected to increase year on year, meaning that the offer for pathways into employment also needs to increase.
- 3.6 The proposed Post-16 Skills Resource Centre would complement the offer of the John Billam Resource Centre and the New Millennium Centre by providing a dedicated young adults' provision. The John Billam Resource and New Millennium Centres do not have the facilities or resources to support the needs of 16-25 year olds with SEND who need access to targeted activities and support to achieve PFA outcomes (currently 852 young people). Young people who reach the adult social care threshold by the age of 19, are usually connected to adult day centres (approximately 150 Adult Social Care service users are aged 17-30 and there are 200 disabled Children and Young People's Service users aged 16-25).
- 3.7 The proposed Post-16 Skills Resource Centre would provide access to the following:

- a) a one stop shop for enterprise, employment, education and training advice and guidance, volunteering, career pathway mapping, employability and enterprise training and support into work
- b) training and advice and guidance in relation to healthy living, keeping safe and healthy relationships and travel training
- c) testing out enablement equipment and clinical space for annual health checks, therapy, drugs and alcohol support, emotional wellbeing and mental health support
- d) a creative and cultural skills and independent living centre at the Airco Close site in Kingsbury, for example a digital media studio to develop skills and confidence in digital media, upskilling opportunities to progress into employment and self-employment in the digital economy and access to therapeutic and creative design development to support self-employment in the creative industries
- e) a horticultural centre based at Welsh Harp, with the horticultural land developed for operation in September 2023 using the existing accommodation and a new build programme completed by March 2024.

3.8 The Post-16 Skills Resource Centre would:

- Provide more residents within the community the opportunity to succeed in line with borough plan priorities.
- Improve economic activity for people with disabilities
- Improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young people and young adults
- Contributing towards the Council's goals of promoting social cohesion and inclusion
- Provide employers with opportunities to improve the diversity of their workforce and encourage inward grant funding opportunities.
- Achieve social value through economic investment in the local community.
- Increase participation rates of employment, education and training and greater take up and longevity of supported housing arrangements.

3.9 It is proposed that the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre operates from two sites. The Welsh Harp Centre would be developed to provide a horticultural facility with work experience and volunteering opportunities. The second site would be based in new facilities on the Airco Close site in Kingsbury, alongside an expansion of the special school provision that is delivered by the Compass Learning Trust. An expansion of special school places had previously been planned at The Village and Woodfield Schools. Use of the Airco Close site would facilitate the Compass Learning Trust developing 14+ pathways to employment for children with SEND. The intention is that the Compass Learning Trust also operates the Horticultural Facility at Welsh Harp to bring cohesion to the offer across the two sites. However, the lease would remain with the Council which would oversee the use of the site by third sector and community organisations, including the Scouts who have shown interest in operating from the site in partnership with the Council.

3.10 Delivery of the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre would be a partnership between the Council's Children and Young People's Department, the Compass Learning Trust, the Integrated Care Partnership and the third sector who will deliver the

range of skills identified in paragraph 3.8 and community organisations. To oversee the commissioning of activity and use of both sites for the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre, a Strategic Partnership Board would be established.

Proposed sites

Welsh Harp

- 3.11 The proposed Welsh Harp Horticultural Facility would provide training in horticulture, work experience, periods of volunteering and employment and enterprise development. This facility responds directly to the Borough Plan objectives 'The Best Start in Life' and 'A Healthier Brent'. The proposed facility would also respond to the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy 2021-2030, as it would provide opportunity for residents to be better connected to nature and enhance green spaces and biodiversity.
- 3.12 The Welsh Harp Facility would re-provide with input from the third sector the existing Environmental Education Centre that works with schools and volunteers, operating in tandem with the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee and supporting development of a biodiversity centre. The facility would also support pupils from across Brent schools to engage in environmental science. It would also be able to support Brent in Bloom and the delivery of commercial contracts, again increasing the economic activity and visibility of younger residents with disabilities.
- 3.13 The Welsh Harp Centre could operate as a training centre for 5 days per week and at weekends and the evenings would open to the public for wider programme of activities including supporting residents to grow their own food and learn about healthy meals alongside wider environmentally based activities.
- 3.14 The current building is in poor quality and at the end of its lifespan and requires significant capital investment to replace. This proposal would enable the Environmental Education programme to schools to continue to be delivered as part of the wider building use alongside the Post-16 horticultural use. The capital project to replace the building is estimated to cost £3m. This would be funded from the SEND Capital Grant (see below).
- 3.15 Table 1 below proposes the high-level milestones to deliver the Welsh Harp new building. More detail will be included in the capital project business case for the project.

Table 1 – Capital Project Milestones

Milestone	Start	Finish
Welsh Harp Feasibility Study	July 2022	October 2022
Cabinet Approval of Post-16 Provision	November 2022	May 2023
Technical Consultancy Procurement and appointment	March 2023	May 2023
Design Work	May 2023	January 2024
Planning Application	November 2023	January 2024
Secure vacant possession of site	December 2023	February 2024
Contractor Procurement	January 2024	March 2024
Construction works	April 2024	December 2024
Building in operation	January 2025	January 2025
Overall Project Closure	December 2025	December 2025

3.16 As a revenue invest to save proposal, the Welsh Harp Centre would provide activities focused on contributing towards the following objectives, with funding allocated to activities that would directly impact on outcomes for Brent residents that can be tracked and reported on annually:

- a) Independent life and work skills training and support for the post-16 SEND population resulting in a reduction in HNB expenditure through, for example, a reduction in the number of EHCPs that are maintained as young people receive training that helps them to secure employment.
- b) the Public Health Outcomes Framework, and in particular indicators that improve the wider determinants of health / health inequalities, for example increasing employment opportunities for young adults with learning disabilities, addressing social isolation and loneliness and supporting the wider public to make healthy lifestyle choices. These indicators would be measured for young people and adults accessing the Centre.
- c) Adult Social Care measures, specifically the proportion of adults with a learning disability in paid employment, the proportion of people with a learning disability living in their own home or with family and the proportion of people who use services who have control over their daily life.
- d) NHSE outcomes including the employment of people with long-term conditions or who feel supported to manage their condition and the NHS Learning Disability and ASD long term plan.

Airco Close site

3.17 The proposal to develop a linked facility for secondary pupils with SEND (aged 14+) with a Post-16 Skills Resource Centre for those 16-25 would:

- a) Enable the expansion of special school places in the Compass Learning Partnership Trust, across The Village School and Woodfield School. Expanding the number on roll could provide the opportunity for students on roll in provision out of the authority to return to Brent to engage in a tailored curriculum rooted in preparation for adulthood. This would reduce HNB spend through cost avoidance on expensive out-of-borough placements.

- b) Pupils would be able to access a state of the art creative and cultural and independent living skills centre as part of their curriculum programme delivered in partnership with the third sector.
 - c) A 19+ curriculum offer could be developed drawing on funding from the DWP, HNB and the adult learning fund particularly for those young people unable to access Further Education provision and to expand the offer to young adults for supported employment.
- 3.18 The facility would be open from 2pm daily, over the weekend and through the holidays via third sector partners. The building would be designed to deliver safeguarding assurance. Third sector organisations would focus on developing skills for young people across a range of cultural and creative environments, employability skills and entrepreneurial skills to meet the objectives of the Post-16 sector as set out above. A mock studio and training kitchen would support training in independent living skills. A small area would be allocated for timetabled drop-in advice sessions from across education, health and care, alongside a youth meeting space. The Brent Parent/Carer Forum would be able to access office space. The intention would be to support third sector providers to deliver the offer utilising NCIL grant funding or through external funding bids.
- 3.19 The Post-16 Skills Resource Centre would maintain a central objective of developing the confidence and skills of young people and young adults to become visibly active members of society and to be economically active, meeting Adult Social Care, Public Health and NHSE outcomes.
- 3.20 Expansions of The Village School and Woodfield School form part of the SEND Capital Programme approved by Cabinet in January 2022. Officers are liaising with the Compass Learning Partnership, including the two schools, and the DfE Regional Director to confirm if the Airco Close site proposal is workable in place of the school expansions of the Village School and Woodfield School that were agreed as part of the SEND Capital Expansion Programme by Cabinet in January 2023 (120 places).
- 3.21 Upon conclusion of the liaison with the stakeholders listed in paragraph 3.20 and feasibility work on the capital project proposal, it is expected a detailed business case proposal will be drafted and presented to Cabinet for consideration. If the proposal is viable, it is expected that the capital costs will be funded via the allocated SEND Capital Programme funding for the Village School and Woodfield School expansions and Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL).

4.0 Financial Implications

Capital Implications

- 4.1 Table 2 details the expected capital costs for the Welsh Harp site. It is proposed that this is funded by the High Needs Capital Grant. Brent Council has been allocated £7.4m High Needs Capital Allocation. The proposal is to use £3m from the Capital allocation, leaving £4.4m for future SEND requirements, such

as the expansion of places on the Airco Close site or further expansions of additionally resourced provisions in mainstream schools.

Table 2 Capital Project Costs

Element	Cost (£m)
Construction	2.00
Fees/Professional Services	0.24
Surveys	0.05
Statutory Costs	0.01
FF&E and ICT	0.40
Sub-Total	2.70
Contingency	0.30
Total	3.00

4.2 The indicative costs above include for the horticultural elements and the proposed new building. Current costs include for demolition of the current Environmental Centre and this area can be returned to open space once the new centre is complete.

Revenue Implications

4.3 Table 3 details the projected revenue costs for the Welsh Harp development and the staffing to oversee both the sites. While Table 3 details the additional cost for the High Needs Block from the project, this is expected to be offset by increased opportunities for employment leading to a higher number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) being ceased. This is the main cost driver within the High Needs Block. Increased employability would also positively impact on wider public sector funding by reducing health inequalities for young adults with disabilities. This is effectively an invest to save project.

4.4 There will be additional costs for the delivery of the accredited provision that is expected to be delivered through the provider income stream and from the High Needs Block, Direct Payments, Adult Learning Fund and external grant income.

4.5 The High Needs Block will meet the revenue costs of the Post-16 Centre as an invest to save project. However, as the design develops and the outcome measures are confirmed, opportunities for a grant contribution from Adults Social Care and Public Health will be explored.

Table 3: Revenue costs

Brent Council Estimated Costs	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£	£	£	£	£
Senior Capital Project Manager (funding secured through Covid Recovery Initiative)	82,848	0	0	0	0
Supported Employment Development Manager across both sites	85,934	88,512	91,167	93,902	96,719
Caretaker across both sites	47,872	49,253	50,731	52,253	53,820
Security (eve, weekend, holiday)	47,872	49,253	50,731	52,253	53,820
Existing project officer - no additional cost					
TOTAL Staffing costs excluding Senior Capital Project Manager	181,678	187,018	192,628	198,407	204,360
Welsh Harp	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£	£	£	£	£
Maintenance Costs (based on 3% increase pa from 2024/5)	30,000	77,250	79,568	81,955	84,413
Income - Horticultural Centre Revenue	-32,000	-66,000	-66,000	-66,000	-66,000
Subtotal	43,000	11,250	13,568	15,955	18,413
Education centre activity costs	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Income - revenue for activity costs via grants and direct payments	-15,000	-80,000	-75,000	-75,000	-75,000
Subtotal	-15,000	-30,000	-55,000	-55,000	-55,000
Horticultural/Welsh Harp net	48,000	-18,750	-41,433	-39,045	-36,587
TOTAL REVENUE COSTS	229,678	168,268	151,196	159,362	167,773
Direct Grants	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£	£	£	£	£
Grant income from DFE - supported employment officer	-20,000	-20,000	0	0	0
TOTAL GRANT INCOME*	-20,000	-20,000	0	0	0
Total Costs to the HNB	209,678	148,268	151,196	159,362	167,773

*Opportunities for a contribution from ASC and PH will be explored as the project develops.

4.6 There will be maintenance costs for the Airco Close site. However as this will be primarily a school facility with shared use for 16-25 year olds, an agreement will need to be established with the Compass Learning Trust to minimise any additional costs to the local authority or to the voluntary sector delivering provision for the older age group. It is envisaged that access will be through a peppercorn lease arrangement with the Trust.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a new legislative framework for children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND. It brought in a single system of integrated Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC plans) to cover all students from 0-25 years of age. The reforms aimed to increase protection for young people with SEND and to promote a greater focus on outcomes and

preparing for adulthood. The Code of Practice 2015 (COP) provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures.

- 5.2 As detailed within this report, the Council will be responsible for obtaining all necessary approvals to undertake the capital projects including planning approval.
- 5.3 The project will require the procurement of very low, low and medium value services and works contracts. All procurement will be conducted in accordance with Contract Standing Orders and Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR). Corporate Directors have delegated authority under the Constitution to procure and award contracts for Services and Supplies under £2M and for Works under £5M.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 Pursuant to s149 of the Equality Act 2010 (otherwise known as the Public Sector Equality Duty), the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 6.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.4 There is no prescribed manner in which the Council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary. The proposals set out in this report aim to ensure that there are sufficient and suitable school places and training activities for all Brent children and that their diverse and special educational needs are met.
- 6.5 The equality implications associated with the School Place Planning Strategy 2019-2023 were set out in the report to Cabinet to approve the same (November 2018). This report considers more specifically the needs of young people and young adults with a disability post-16.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools has been informed of these proposals.
- 7.2 Officers met with Ward members for Welsh Harp in September 2022 following a request from the Ward Members to discuss the long-term future of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre. The current situation and risks to the centre were discussed as well as the above proposal as a potential way to continue the centre, subject to Cabinet approval. A further meeting was held in March 2023 to discuss plans for the site and community and voluntary sector access.
- 7.3 The proposals have been co-produced with Brent residents as part of the SEND Strategy, with detailed planning with the Brent Parent Carer Forum, young people advisors and Children's Trust partners. A steering group comprising Brent Parent/Carer Forum, young people and representatives from Brent Children's Trust led a consultation process with parents and carers and young people to explore their experiences of the provision currently available for young people aged 16-25.
- 7.4 Meetings have been held with Brent Scouts and other interested community and voluntary sector organisations who are interested in operating from the Welsh Harp site alongside the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre, for example in evenings and weekends. Further consultation will be undertaken as the proposals develop, including with third party organisations that would like to deliver services from the Welsh Harp site to support the wider community.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications

- 8.1 A Development Manager would be in post from 2023/24 and would be responsible for developing the offer at Welsh Harp, the wider partnership and third sector offer. From the point of project approval, a senior project manager would be appointed to deliver the project working to the Head of Inclusion. Job roles and grades will be subject to job evaluation.
- 8.2 From a Property Perspective, there are two commercial tenants occupying the Environmental Education Centre and an adjacent building, Planet House.
- 8.3 Thames21 occupy the Environmental Education Centre on a 7 year lease which expires in December 2023. This lease covers the area of the proposed Horticultural Centre as well as occupation of a room for office use in Planet House. The Council's intention is to secure vacant possession from Thames21 upon lease expiry in order to handover the site to the contractor to commence the construction of the horticultural centre and replacement environmental education centre.
- 8.4 O.C. Building Services occupy Planet House under a lease that expires in July 2029. Officers are currently in discussions with O.C. Building Services about their long-term plans for the use of this building.

8.5 The Airco Close site was subject to a Cabinet report in February 2023. Cabinet approved the transfer of a 999 year lease to the Council from the developer as part of a S106 agreement to provide a primary school on the wider former Oriental City development. Any development that differs from the s106 agreement would require landlord approval although the terms of the lease allows for consent to not be unreasonably withheld.

Report sign off:

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Corporate Director of Children and
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