

**Meeting:** Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services)  
Cabinet Member - Children Schools and Families

**Date of Meeting:** 30 November 2010  
7<sup>th</sup> December 2010

**Title of Report:** Outline Business Case for the use of Thornton Site for Post  
16 Learners with Learning  
Difficulties and/or Disabilities

**Report of:**  
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This report contains	Yes	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> Information/		√
<b>EXEMPT</b> information by virtue of paragraph(s).....of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (If information <u>is</u> marked exempt, the Public Interest Test must be applied and favour the exclusion of the information from the press and public).		√
Is the decision on this report <b>DELEGATED?</b>		

**Recommendation(s)**

1. Members are asked to accept this outline business case.

**Corporate Objective Monitoring**

<u>Corporate Objective</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1. Creating a Learning Community	√		
2. Creating Safe Communities		√	
3. Jobs and Prosperity		√	
4. Improving Health and Well-Being	√		
5. Environmental Sustainability		√	
6. Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
7. Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy		√	
8. Children and Young People	√		

## **Financial Implications**

<b><u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>2006/ 2007 £</b>	<b>2007/ 2008 £</b>	<b>2008/ 2009 £</b>	<b>2009/ 2010 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<b><u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u></b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

### **Links to ensuring integration**

As set out in report

### **Impact upon Children's Services targets and priorities**

As set out in report

### **Departments consulted in the preparation of this Report**

As set out in report

### **List of background papers relied upon in the preparation of this Report**

N/A

**SEFTON M.B.C.**

### **Purpose of Report**

#### **Rationale**

1.1. Nearly three years ago Sefton was provided with Targeted Capital Funding because it was not involved in the early rounds of Building Schools for the Future. Of the £8m made available, £3m was secured to make improvements to provision for pupils with SEN (LLDD). Through discussion with Special School Headteachers it

was agreed that the bulk of this funding should be used to sponsor a major project rather than smaller projects in each of the schools.

1.2. Headteachers and Officers recognised a number of pressures in the system;

- The need to change the designation of Presfield School from Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) to Autistic Spectrum Disorders requires moving of post 16 MLD provision from Presfield to another site.
- Most of our special schools are at or above their designated recognised accommodation creating internal space pressures and the need for additional teaching spaces.
- The range of needs of pupils in the Post 16 provision at Rowan Park and Merefield makes it difficult for staff to provide an appropriate curriculum, particularly to stretch more able students.

1.3. Changes related to the dissolution of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) were also anticipated. In April 2010 Sefton Council became responsible for commissioning provision for all 16 -19 year olds and those aged 19 or over but under 25, subject to a learning difficulty assessment. The council duty is to secure enough suitable education and training to meet the reasonable needs of these students.

1.4. Historically, Sefton has had a small but significant number of students accessing Independent Sector Providers (ISP) at Post 19 – there are over 30 such learners in this provision each year (spread across a two or three year programme i.e. about 10 learners in each year cohort). Provision at these colleges is of variable quality. The majority of Sefton learners progress to one college and in summer 2010 this was deemed only satisfactory when inspected by Ofsted, with management deemed to be inadequate. The Independent Sector Provider costs are high when compared to the cost of Local Authority Special School Places. Each place costs about £35k for a day place to in excess of £65k for a residential placement. A day place at a Sefton special school is about £14k.

1.5. Nine learners completed their education in Independent Sector College placements in summer 2010. Of these 6 were day students and 3 residential. The cost of college provision for these 9 learners totalled £996,507 (£436,326 in day fees, £560,181 in residential fees). 5 learners have now progressed to either Hugh Baird or Southport College, with 3 moving into the care of Adult Social Services. The destination of the 9<sup>th</sup> student is currently not known.

1.6. There is a need then to develop the market for this group of learners to improve quality and reduce costs.

1.7. Finally, there is a plan to integrate Children, Schools and Families with Adult Social Care and Well Being, with an integrated management structure in place by April 2011. A key target for adult services is to ensure more young people and adults with LLDD are in paid employment for more than 16 hours per week. Improving progression routes for learners with LLDD will support better outcomes against this target.

## **The Proposal**

2.1. Thornton Primary School closed for pupils on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010. The former junior school building has been identified as a suitable Post 16 centre for youngsters with LLDD. Two million pounds of the Targeted Capital Funding has been made available by the council to refurbish and develop the building for this purpose.

2.2. The target group for this provision has been very clearly identified – there are potentially four groups of learners who may require this provision;

1. Young people who have been attending either Presfield (as an MLD placement) or Crosby High (designated MLD) who at age 16 are felt by staff and parents / carers not yet ready to access local sector colleges – this is the group of students who in the past have attended the P16 provision at Presfield. Funding for this group of learners would come from the Dedicated Schools Grant.
2. Those young people aged 19 leaving Rowan Park or Merefield who in the past may have been referred to an ISP (the thirty or so learners at any time referred to above – initially Thornton would replace day places at ISP's). Funding for these learners would be drawn down from the Young Person's Learning Agency by a Sefton College.
3. Students from Rowan Park and Merefield who may benefit from a more advanced course than is currently on offer at either school. Other students from our special schools, aged 14 – 16 requiring a sheltered opportunity to access a more adult environment may also benefit from taster sessions. These students would be supported by staff from their existing placement and so additional costs would be minimal.
4. There are relatively high numbers in our Not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) cohort described as having LLDD. This is not a homogeneous group – for some there are suitable courses in existence, for some adult services are needed but there is a group for whom appropriate provision does not exist – the Thornton Centre would aim to provide for these learners. A funding source has yet to be identified for this group.

2.3. As noted above the funding for this provision will come from either the Dedicated schools Grant for Learners aged 16 – 19 or from the Young Persons Learning Agency for those aged over 19. There would be no financial implications for the council.

2.4. The Thornton Centre would **not be designed** to meet the needs of young people who;

- ***Can access local colleges of Further Education and make progress through the offer available in those institutions***
- ***Require adult care and attention throughout their lives***

2.5. It is anticipated that over time the numbers at The Thornton Centre may increase to a maximum capacity of 70 learners. By keeping numbers low it will be possible to provide a personalised offer that enables young people to progress either to local college, supported or open employment.

2.6. The Courses available will be at Entry Level or working towards this level with the expectation that the learner will achieve at least Entry Level 1 by the end of their course. Courses will be time limited though the offer will be personalised to ensure that the learner has the best possible chance of success at the next stage of their progression route.

2.7. This provision will complement provision at local sector colleges, Hugh Baird and Southport, and provide more effective links to these institutions. By creating flexible pathways students will be able to progress to the next stage of their career at the right time rather than at the end of a fixed period as happens now with ISP placements. So some students may attend Thornton for 1 year, whilst others may need up to 3 years to be ready to move on.