

5 July 2011		ITEM 7
Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Asset Management Service Provision for Schools		
Report of: Colin Stewart, Head of Service, Children, Education and Families		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Accountable Head of Service: Colin Stewart – Head of Service, Children Education and Families		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson - Corporate Director of Children, Education & Families		
This report is public		
Purpose of Report: To update Children's Overview and Scrutiny committee on Directorate plans to improve quality of asset management planning support to schools and to clarify respective roles and responsibilities between the Council and schools for asset management and maintenance.		

Comment [s]: Please leave this for completion by Democratic Services

Comment [s]: PLEASE CLICK THIS BOX ONCE and enter the name of the Committee you are reporting to (in font 16, not capitals)

Comment [s]: Please state the name of the Cabinet Member and the Portfolio to which the report refers

Comment [s]: Please enter details of any Wards and Communities affected by the report. If this section is not applicable, you should enter "none".

Comment [s]: Yes/No/Not Applicable – a 'Key Decision' is generally one affecting more than 2 wards or above £50,000 expenditure – see Guideline 2.7

Comment [sj]: Please state the Head of Service's name and job title

Comment [sj]: Please state Director's name and job title

Comment [sj]: Briefly set out the purpose of your report

Comment [sj]: Please provide a summary of the key points in your report

Comment [s]: The recommendations should be set out in bold in the form of the decision that the decision-maker is being asked to make - See para. 5.2 of the report writing guidelines

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asset Management provision to schools has been identified as an area for significant improvement by schools in feedback to the Council through a variety of different mechanisms. The Council project to improve the service will address the current issues in three key areas: the quality and accuracy of asset management plans for schools; the scheduling and updating of asset management plans for schools; the respective roles and responsibilities between schools and the Council for delivering on key items within asset management plans. The report sets out in particular how the Council proposes to address the first of these issues because the quality of the asset management plans is the foundation on which the improvements in other areas of asset management maintenance and improvement will be based.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 Overview and Scrutiny note the proposed improvements in the Asset Management Service to schools.

2. KEY POINTS:

- 2.1 The provision of asset management plans for schools has been identified by schools themselves as a priority for improvement. At the time of developing the Council's Education Capital Strategy, the Council published a summary of the information which it held on capital investment priorities arising from those asset management plans. The purpose behind publishing the information at that time was two-fold: it gave an illustration of the scale of capital investment the Council would need to make to address only the backlog of suitability and condition issues in schools; secondly it confirmed the inconsistency between the information held by the Council about asset management priorities and the information held by the schools.
- 2.2 Previously the Council carried out a series of asset surveys on school on a three year cycle basis. The surveys were carried out by Europa and then progressed through a series of checks and reviews by both schools themselves and by Council officers. The feedback from Headteachers and Governing Bodies, and subsequent reviews of this process, identified a number of key issues: the accuracy of the surveys was questioned by many schools; timescales for producing an asset management plan for an individual school were inconsistent and some schools experienced unacceptably long delays; variations in prioritisation between one survey and the next were sometimes difficult for schools to follow and therefore understand (for example one survey might prioritise a roof repair only for the subsequent survey to remove that from the priority list even though no work had been carried out); the responsibilities between schools, Council officers and Europa for checking the accuracy of the data in the surveys was unclear; the responsibilities between schools and the Council for taking action on the asset management plan priorities was equally unclear; the ongoing cycle of asset management plans meant it was difficult to track progress on delivery from one plan to the next with the result that schools were uncertain on timescales and the scheduling of future asset surveys and new plans.
- 2.3 The recent DfE commissioned review of capital investment and management in schools, led by Sebastien James, concluded that schools should be able to maintain their own facilities while working together with other responsible bodies to ensure that the overall education estate meets or exceeds the needs of local children.
- 2.4 The first phase of the Council's planned transformation of the asset management service to schools will secure an entirely new approach to asset management surveys and the development of asset management plans.
- 2.5 The Council will shift from an ongoing three year cycle of asset management surveys to a model that sees all schools surveyed this

Comment [s]: You should briefly explain why the report is on the agenda - See para. 5.3 and 5.4 of the report writing guidelines.

year. This will form the basis of the Local Investment Plan which is suggested in the James Review to determine local capital investment priorities. The data collected through this survey of all schools will also be collected by DfE and used in their determination of future capital allocations. For these reasons it is vitally important that high quality surveys are carried out and that the resulting data is of good quality and is agreed with schools.

- 2.6 The ongoing maintenance of the survey data will be the responsibility of schools and will be referred to in the process of allocating capital investment and be subject to verification and challenge when being considered for potential capital investment by the Local Authority and/or responsible bodies.
- 2.7 The James Review does not clarify in detail the future of ongoing checks on condition data but it does suggest that DfE will undertake surveys or sample surveys on a five-year rolling programme. The net effect of this is that dependent on the final implementation of the James Review recommendations there may be a need to resurvey all schools again in five years time.
- 2.8 Consequently the Council will be required to commission and oversee the delivery of asset surveys in schools at the beginning of each 5 year cycle. This will allow the Council and schools to focus on the process of surveying and finalising the asset management plans at school level once in each cycle and this concentrated focus on this part of the process will ensure that it is delivered to the required timescale and standard. In addition it will allow the Council to aggregate the potential large scale priorities at the same time and then to develop and prepare a prioritised four year plan, setting out how and when the Council intends to address any larger scale maintenance improvements which are needed across the school estate.
- 2.9 The net effect of this change will also allow the Council to re-design the support it offers to schools during the asset management cycle and ensure that the small officer capacity the Council retains is available to be used in the most flexible way possible for targeted projects and interventions.
- 2.10 The Council has identified a suitable framework for commissioning a blanket survey of all schools and the production of new asset management plans. The specifications for this service have now been developed and agreed and invitations to tender for the work are being sought. The Council intends to complete the procurement of an asset management service provider for schools so that the work on surveys and drafting new asset management plans for schools can begin in September 2011.

2.11 School representatives have been consulted on the development of the specifications for a new asset management service and they will also participate in the tender evaluation process.

2.12 The Council has also developed a specific project plan for the transformation of the asset management service to schools. The Project Board for this work will include Headteacher representatives. The project will also work with school representatives on the design of a revised service and on drawing up a clear set of responsibilities which clarify the roles of both schools and officers in the future.

3. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

None

4. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

4.1 Effective asset management and maintenance of the school estate will support the Council's priority to improve the education and skills of local people and will support the Children's Plan priority of "Excellent childcare, schools, colleges and services".

5. **IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Meinir Hall**
Telephone and email: **01375 652147**
mhall@thurrock.gov.uk

The funding for this work will be met from the centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant. The work was identified in the previous financial year and there are sufficient funds available.

5.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Daniel Toohey**
Telephone and email: **01375652049**
dtoohey@thurrock.gov.uk

An updated and improved Asset Management plan will ensure that the Council meets its duties to schools and also in relation to the procurement and management of capital works contracts and related matters.

5.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**

Comment [a]: Please refer to Section 5.7 of the Report Writing Guidelines

Comment [sj]: This section should always be completed – if they are dealt with fully in another part of the report, they also need a brief cross reference here. The names and job titles of the officers providing the implications should be provided in full – see Guideline 6.1 and please note Democratic Services Deadlines and ensure that officers providing implications are given 5 clear working days to work on the report. Authors can write implications but they must be signed off by the appropriate officers

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.2

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.3

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.4

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sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no specific diversity and equality implications arising from this report as it is for information purposes only.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- Education Capital Strategy – February 2011
- Review of Education Capital – Sebastien James – April 2011

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- None

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Comment [sj]: See Guideline 8. If any Papers are to be placed in the Members room that relate to this report, you should also list them here

Comment [sj]: List the Appendices referred to in the Report

Comment [sj]: Insert the full contact details of the author of the report