

13 March 2019		ITEM: 11 Decision: 110508
Cabinet		
School Capital Programme Update 2019/20		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor James Halden, Cabinet member for Education and Health		
Accountable Assistant Director : Michelle Lucas, Interim Assistant Director of Learning, Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director, Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Firstly, parents can be assured that Thurrock will have more than enough school places for all children for September of this year. This is the result of the strong partnership working between the council and schools, enabling a number of expansions before September 2019.

There have been a number of recent planning events which have caused a great deal of commentary. To be clear, we are currently in the process of delivering three new free schools; Orsett Health Secondary, Thames Park Secondary, and Treetops 2 Special Needs. This is vital and massive investment in response to having a historic problem where Thurrock has circa 19,000 primary school places and only 11,000 secondary school places. These are key projects.

Recently, a planning application went to the committee for a £3m investment on part of the Rugby Club land in Blackshots. This would have enabled a smaller school building for Orsett Health Academy to open before the full building was complete, and then the Rugby club would have a great new building to share with the school. The information contained in the Planning Committee report was accurate; there was no alternative to the proposal, and the community benefit to improving sporting facilities and educational provision justified the development and council investment. However, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (who directly fund and develop new free schools) was not able to progress the main school project along the original timelines.

A solution could have been allowing a temporary annex from current secondary schools at different locations, this year, to make up a shortfall caused by forces outside of our control. We took the view that speculative temporary solutions would

cause too much confusion and anxiety for young people and their parents who may have wanted to apply to the new school. We felt they deserved better.

The solution we have arrived at is as follows; we will make £1m extra available this year to expand strong local secondary schools, and fund the associated school transport costs. The expansions will be funded from our basic needs capital funding from the DfE, although the transport will bring an additional cost to the local taxpayer. However this approach avoids ad hoc solutions, gives young people good and permeant places, and provides us time for the ESFA to build the free schools. We are very grateful to local schools for working so hard with us to find a solution. Every child will have a school place for this year thanks to the council's ability to make additional investment available and thanks to the positive working relationship we have with our family of schools.

To be clear, the growth in child population, the imbalance between primary and secondary school places, and the circa 800 place deficit (outlined in the Pupil Place Plan) in Grays by 2021 is still there and therefore all of these projects must be delivered. Due to the difficult nature of delivering these large projects, we will still progress the £3m investment at the Thurrock Rugby Club to ensure Orsett Health can open next year, subject to EFSA final feasibility studies on the land.

We are carrying out similar prep works for Thames Park. This follows a successful negotiation where we convinced the EFSA to invest additional funds to procure private land for the new build. This was only arrived at after they ruled out all of the councils land, such as Elm Park. If we had of withheld council owned land, we would have put the project at risk on the grounds we would have been seen to be land banking and attempting to force the budget for the school above the original estimate by not working in cooperation with the EFSA.

All of this work is in addition to the future proofing we are doing by expanding good and oversubscribed local schools like Benyon Primary, and the existing work to expand and improve educational, nursery, SEND bases and sporting facilities at East Tilbury, Corringham Primary, St Cleres, Ockendon, Harris and Quarry Hill.

The Council, with EFSA, is delivering 3,500 new school places and educational improvements to the tune of over £70m. This is investment in our future that we are proud of.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 To approve a £2.2M budget for the expansion of Benyon Primary School to be funded from the School' Basic Need capital funding 2019/20.**
- 1.2 To approve a budget of up to £1M for works to be undertaken to enable construction of additional classrooms in current secondary schools.**
- 1.3 To progress the procurement process to secure design and construction for the expansion of Benyon Primary School to take forward the proposed schemes.**

- 1.4 **To delegate authority of the approval of the construction contract for the Benyon School scheme to the Corporate Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that suitable and sufficient places are available in Thurrock for every child of school age whose parents wish them to have one.

The 2018/19 school capital programme has progressed well and incorporated innovative partnership working, as well as utilising modern methods of construction to deliver the identified additional pupil places required.

- 2.2 The provision of additional accommodation to meet the predicted increase in pupil numbers has generated positive feedback from schools, particularly in relation to the impact on learning through improvements to the built environment.
- 2.3 The demand for pupil places has increased significantly, over the last few months we have seen a large increase in 'in year' admissions from families moving into the Authority. In 2017/18, 143 primary and 107 secondary children moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and 797 primary and 238 secondary from elsewhere within the UK. For the first 5 months of this year, 83 primary and 54 secondary more children have moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and there have been 619 primary and 164 secondary new arrivals from within the UK. The demand does not appear to be slowing, and this level of demand is unprecedented.

3. PROJECTS

Benyon Primary School

- 3.1 Despite the recent expansion of Somers Heath Primary School in 2016 which created an additional 210 places within the Aveley and Ockendon areas of the borough, following the annual review of forecasts for pupil places and the large increase being experienced with regards in-year admissions there is now educational need for further primary school places in the Ockendon area.
- 3.2 The report presented to Cabinet on 14th November 2018 stated that a feasibility study had commenced at Benyon Primary School to identify whether an expansion of the school would be possible, with a view to addressing the shortage of places from September 2018 onwards in the planning area.
- 3.3 Following completion of this scoping and feasibility study, the proposal upon Benyon Primary is to extend the existing building to the rear in order to

provide 6 new classrooms each in excess of 60 m², a school hall extension, new WC's, a remodelled entrance including open plan reception and offices, and externally, an additional 17 car parking spaces for staff and visitors. Upon completion, Benyon Primary will have capacity to increase from a 1FE to 2 FE primary school.

- 3.4 An estimated budget of £2.2M is required to cover both an architect led multi-disciplinary design team responsible for providing specialist services needed to oversee the detailed and technical design for the expansion project, and a Principal Building Contractor for its construction phase.
- 3.5 JCT consultancy agreements and JCT Building contracts competitively procured and evaluated on both quality and price will provide opportunities for improving quality and value for money. It will give the council the flexibility to award individual elements of construction projects on an individual basis without any guarantee of future work. This approach will result in a greater level of control being retained within the authority, and will not tie the council into any single provider.
- 3.6 In advance of these procurements, small value individual contracts have been utilised for the carrying out of topographical surveys, transport assessments, and environmental impact assessments.
- 3.7 At the time of writing, a pre-planning application has also already been submitted.

Additional Secondary School Classes

- 3.8 Due to a shortfall in pupil places for September 2019, senior managers within Children Services are working in partnership with secondary schools to create much needed bulge classes. The local authority is creating permanent classrooms in some of its secondary schools in order to create the space required to enable those schools to take additional pupils. This will enable the local authority to meet its statutory duty and ensure that every children who has applied for a school place will have one on 1st March 2019 – National Offer day for secondary schools.

4. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

- 4.1 If the local authority does not undertake the school expansions and builds, it will not be able to fulfil its statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient places available in Thurrock for every child of school age.
- 4.2 All procurement exercises will be managed through the Council's Procurement Team and will be compliant with the Contract Procedure Rules and EU and UK Legislation.

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

5.1 The principle has been agreed with schools and any detailed build content will be agreed with the relevant schools. Consultation will continue with each school and key stakeholder, as each scheme and schedule of works evolves within the programme.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMENDATIONS

6.1 If the local authority does not undertake the school expansions and builds, the local authority will not be able to fulfil its statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient places available in Thurrock for every child of school age.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

7.1 The award of these JCT Construction and design contracts will enable the Council to continue to meet its statutory duty under the Education Act 2006.

7.2 The improvement of the educational assets is linked to key corporate priorities:

Priority	Delivered by
Creating a great place for learning and opportunity	By improving the education assets within the borough
Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity	Through the provision of local employment and training opportunities
Building pride, responsibility, and respect	Through improvements in the quality of the school assets and places provided
Improve health and wellbeing	Through improvements in the quality of the learning environment and opportunities provided

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mark Terry**
Senior Financial Accountant

The additional accommodation required for increased pupil numbers at Beynon Primary and the construction of additional classrooms at secondary schools, will be funded from the 2019/20 capital basic need budget. Following the announcement of the 2019/20 funding allocation, there is sufficient budget for both of these schemes to proceed.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

Whilst there are no direct diversity and equality implications, the provision of these services will help to tackle inequality and social exclusion. The procurement process will follow responsibilities as set out within The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, with due regard to advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The procurement approach set out in this report will enable the Council to continue to meet its statutory duty under the Education Act 2006, to ensure that suitable and sufficient places are available in Thurrock for every child of school age whose parents wish them to have one, whilst ensuring value for money.

9. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Cabinet report 14 November 2018 – Approval to increase scope of the Schools Capital Programme

10. **Appendices to this report:**

- Appendix 1 – Huggins Brommage Ferguson Feasibility Study for Benyon Primary

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