

12 November 2020		ITEM: 5
Extraordinary Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
School Capital Programme Update 2020/21		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Sarah Williams, Service Manager, Education Support Service, Children's Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Education & Skills, Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The council's school capital programme is developed following extensive pupil place planning to assess likely demand. The new programme aims to deliver sufficient pupil places for 2020 and 2021 academic years.

The new Pupil Place Plan 2020-2024 has now been published. The pupil place plan identifies sufficiency concerns in primary schools in the Tilbury planning area, Stanford and Corringham planning area and Aveley, Ockendon and Purfleet Planning areas.

This report seeks feedback from O&S before submitting to cabinet for approval to progress the school capital programme 20/21. The report seeks the views from O&S to build capacity in the planning areas where there is a current and forecasted need to provide additional primary school places.

This report additionally provides an update highlighting projects managed by Thurrock Council which form part of the current school capital programme emphasising the considerable and continued progress that has been achieved since the last report to Cabinet in March 2019.

This report also provides an update of the provision of temporary accommodation to ensure sufficient pupil places were available for September 2020.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That O&S support the recommendation to Cabinet that a provisional School Capital Programme budget of £8 million as set out in this report be approved.**
- 1.2 **That O&S support the recommendation to Cabinet to approve the commencement of the procurement process in accordance with Council & EU procurement procedures to appoint Architect led multi discipline designers and Project Teams, for the next School Capital Programme and appoint the Principal Contractors to take forward the proposed schemes.**

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.
- 2.2 The 2019/20 school capital programme has, despite the unique and challenging conditions progressed well and incorporated innovative partnership working, as well as utilising both traditional as well as modern methods of construction to deliver the identified additional pupil places required.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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. Between September 2019 and August 2020 we received school applications and offered schools places for 190 children that moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and 1063 that moved to Thurrock from elsewhere within the UK. In order to deal with demand for this September we have created bulge reception classes of 30 children in our primary schools in both the Grays planning area and the Ockendon planning area. We are still seeing pressure in the some planning areas and will need to create additional school places following further in-year primary school applications.
- 2.5 Despite the relatively recent expansion of Graham James Primary School in 2015 which created an additional 210 places within the Corringham area of the borough, as well as 52 additional nursery places, 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 and nursery places in the Corringham area.
- 2.6 At the time of writing, a feasibility study has commenced at Abbots Hall Primary School to identify the scope of works required in order to return the

school to a 2 form entry school, with a view to addressing the predicted shortage of places from September 2022 onwards in the planning area.

- 2.7 Following completion of this scoping and feasibility study, the proposal upon Abbots Hall Primary will be to refurbish and possibly remodel some of the areas of the existing building to ensure it is fit for purpose and meeting Department for Education building guidelines, as well as repurpose the nursery area in order to provide 6 classrooms, and new nursery. The school is in the process of submitting a Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bid in order to relocate the nursery to an alternative location within the school. The nursery that is already onsite is operating within the school building. An estimated budget of £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.
- 2.8 In addition to the works at Abbots Hall a further budget of £6m is required to provide additional school places in the Tilbury Planning area and the Aveley, Ockendon and Purfleet planning area to meet existing and future demand. Options for additional provision is in the process of being identified.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 In advance of these procurements, small value individual contracts are being utilised for the carrying out of topographical surveys, transport assessments, and environmental impact assessments.
- 2.11 *Update on the current school capital programme*

The 2019/19 & 2019/2020 school capital programme consisted of 6 No. projects in Thurrock primary schools. This extensive programme is now reaching its conclusion, with only works at Corringham Primary (new nursery and early years wrap around provision), St Clere's Secondary School (10 classroom expansion in addition to a 4 court sports hall), and Benyon Primary School (1FE 6 classroom expansion scheme) in progress at the time of writing this report, all of which are due to complete before the end of this calendar year.

- 2.12 *Update on temporary accommodation*

Works to convert the former Thurrock Learning Campus building into a temporary secondary school on behalf of Thames Park were fast tracked with all works being undertaken during the period of National lockdown.

Internally, the extensive remodelling was completed by early August 2020, with the external groundworks to provide an outdoor recreation space and sports ball court completed early September 2020. This building is anticipated to remain in use by Thames Park Academy for approximately two years while the permanent building is under construction.

- 2.13 Temporary accommodation was also completed at Orsett Heath Academy and opened to new pupils in September. The pupil will remain in this building for approximately two years whilst the permanent building is constructed.
- 2.14 In order to meet demand for places, from September 2019 Treetops school has had a double demountable classroom placed upon its site. This demountable is expected to remain for a further year while the new free school is under construction.

3. Issues Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 The contract, due to its potential value over the threshold.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Funding to the value of £8 Million as outlined in this report is requested in order to take forward the expansion programme and deliver required pupil places from September 2021 and meet the council's statutory duty.

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

- 5.1. This report is to be considered by the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2. 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. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 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.
- 6.2 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.

6.3 The issues in this paper support the council's vision to be an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future. It also supports the prosperity priority - a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

Additional accommodation required to meet the statutory requirement to provide places for the increasing pupil numbers will be funded from a combination of the DfE capital basic needs grant, Section 106 monies held for Education provision. Once in-depth feasibility studies have been completed, funding requirements will be quantified and confirmed.

There is sufficient funds available within the basic need grant.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell,**
Education Lawyer

This report does not require a decision to be made. It requests that Sections 13 and 14 of the Education Act 1996 impose duties on the Council to promote high standards of and fair access to education, to secure sufficient schools in its area and to consider the need to secure provision for children with SEN.

Any procurement of building contracts using the JCT form of contract must comply with the provisions of the Public Contract Regulation 2015 including the Council's Contract procedure rules. Legal Services is on hand to advice on any specific issue relating to these Works procurement as and when required.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager Community

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.

8. Background papers used in preparing this report:

- Cabinet report - School Capital Programme Update 2019/20

9. Appendices to this report:

- Pupil Place Plan 2022 – 2024

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