

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 October 2021

Supplementary Capital Programme for Schools 2021/2022



Cllr Jonathan Price, Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) said,

“It is essential that children and young people in the county have access to a good, local school.

“Our capital programme for the next year is designed to ensure we make the most of the funding we have, and work with schools to improve school infrastructure. This way, we can ensure the county’s children are learning in the best environment possible.

“Added to this, the extra funding from government means we can really make an impact in terms of making schools more sustainable and contribute to the reduction in our carbon footprint.”

Report Summary:

Approval of the Capital Programme for Schools Phase 2 for 2021/22. Central government recently confirmed an extra £300m national investment for maintaining and improving the school estate. This additional funding combined with a new methodology for calculating School Condition Allocations (SCA) has resulted in an increased amount of funding for the upkeep of SCC maintained schools.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Considers the report and approves the Schools Capital Programme Phase 2 2021/22 investment proposal set out in the supporting appendices.
- b. Agrees that the Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets monitors progress and makes any necessary in-year alterations in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND).

Local Members Interest
N/A

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Recommendations of Cllr Jonathan Price, Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)

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Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Staffordshire is a great place to live, work and invest where most people enjoy a good quality of life. There are over 400 schools and academies providing education for around 120,000 primary, middle, and secondary pupils. Every Staffordshire child deserves the best possible education and to leave school or college with the learning and skills that they need to succeed in further education or the workplace. A strong economy relies on a high performing education system to produce the workforce of the future, and young people with the right skills, attitude, and ambition to meet the needs of our employers or to start a business of their own.
2. It is widely recognised that the quality of school buildings can help or hinder learning and teaching. Well-designed buildings and pleasant surroundings can lead to better attendance and concentration as well as motivation and self-esteem - factors which can improve performance. Staffordshire's Schools Asset Management Plan (AMP) and Statement of Priorities (StOP) ensure that capital spending is clearly aligned to corporate priorities and delivers value for money.

Summary

3. School condition funding is for maintaining and improving the condition of the school estate and includes allocations for individual institutions through Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) awarded directly to the schools; and allocations to the bodies responsible for managing capital funding through direct School Condition Allocations (SCA).
4. The DfE have committed £1.8 billion (an increase of £300 million) in 2021-22 for maintaining and improving the school estate. Using data from their Condition Data Collection (2017-2019) and more up-to-date pupil numbers from the spring 2020 census the DfE have introduced a new system that they believe more accurately reflects condition need and is simpler and easier to understand.
5. Bodies that are responsible for prioritising, distributing, and assuring the use of School Condition Allocations are referred to as “responsible bodies”. At the time of the allocation, Staffordshire County Council is the responsible body for 128 maintained schools.
6. As a result of increased government investment and a revised allocation system, SCC have received SCA of £9,586,242 which is the highest allocation since 2015-16 when we were responsible for c300 maintained schools.
7. This is a one-year allocation but given that it’s the first year of the new methodology it’s hopeful that future funding will be calculated the same way. The DfE has started on its Condition Data Collection 2 (CDC2) which is a 5-year programme running from 2021 until 2026 and will refresh the condition data held. Data from CDC2 will directly inform future investment in the condition of school buildings and will provide an evidence base to support the successful delivery and development of education capital policy.
8. Given the delay in the funding announcement (without warning of the increased funding), the Schools Capital Programme 2021-22 was formulated and subsequently approved by Cabinet (17 March 2021) using an estimated SCA of £3.9 million. Clearly this significantly higher SCA presents us with the opportunity to further address our condition priorities in schools. Whilst maintaining the ethos of “today’s money for today’s children” it is important to note that we’re not under pressure to spend all the funding this financial year, giving us time to ensure that the investment is put to best use. This will also allow us to review the situation with scarcity of building materials and the escalating prices due to COVID and Brexit.

Planned Replacement Programme

9. Condition surveys of schools are conducted on a 3-year rolling programme to assess the condition of the buildings. This information is held in a database which identifies the most urgent categories of need. Every school has been provided with an Asset Management Plan (AMP) on which local decisions on capital projects can be made.
10. The Planned Maintenance approach enables a co-ordinated programme of repairs and allows resources to be targeted where they are most needed to reduce the effects of unsatisfactory premises on pupils' education. As part of the due diligence process Academy sponsors will wish to ensure that the buildings are in a good state of repair. The Maintenance Programme forms the basis for ensuring that buildings can be transferred in a safe and satisfactory condition.

Climate Change Programme

11. Tackling climate change is one of the key principles underpinning everything we're committed to do in our Strategic plan. The Climate Change Act was passed in 2008 and established a framework to develop an economically credible emissions reduction path. As a council, SCC are determined to do our bit to reach carbon net zero by 2050. Failure to comply with the legislation carries significant financial penalties. The County Council is committed to helping save energy and reduce carbon emissions and energy saving features are incorporated into building projects wherever possible. Our carbon baseline is around 50,000 tonnes (tCO₂e). This figure would have been significantly higher if not for innovative solutions we've already put in place to reduce our impact on the environment. Around half of Staffordshire's CO₂ emissions are due to buildings and some 80% of the property assets are schools. The challenge is now to remove the remaining 50,000 tonnes of carbon emissions and the school estate has a vital role to play in meeting increasing CO₂ reduction targets. It's expected that schools will make a financial contribution to any projects carried out to achieve this.
12. It is essential that capital funding is made available for programmes to replace inefficient electric heating systems with 'wet' systems; upgrade old pipework; install new energy controls that monitor usage; improve insulation and installing new LED lighting. Prioritisation methodology targets schools where modernising plant or equipment provides best value returns on investment. In addition to direct financial savings, the investment provides a better learning environment for staff and students through improved heating & lighting.

13. It is important to note that in addition to the targeted sustainability projects, many of our other investments improve our carbon footprint with the schools becoming more energy efficient.

Priority Capital Projects Programme

14. Staffordshire recognises the importance that the school environment has in educational attainment and that capital investment is essential to support projects that are not driven by condition. The Priority Capital Projects Portfolio encourages schools to use some of their Devolved Formula Capital (DFC), variable dependant on the size of the project/school circumstances to contribute to the works enabling the funding to stretch further.
15. Development Officers identify priority projects in their areas and liaise with the schools about making contributions. All projects are assessed, weighted, and ranked so that a 'cut-off' point can be established as to which projects the capital funding can support. If savings are achieved, then the next project on the list is added to the portfolio.

Toilet Refurbishment

16. Historically, the design of school toilets has generally not been good for a complex set of reasons. Typically, children are reluctant to use them; when they are used, they are often the centre of behaviour and discipline problems. Prominent amongst the consequences are health problems and dehydration problems. Dehydrated children work less well.
17. There is considerable evidence highlighting the current issues with school toilets and the effects these have on pupils. An effective layout, high quality fittings and finishes, efficient cleaning, and maintenance, together with good access policies, are all essential to ensure that school facilities are valued. Overcoming common problems – such as the negative effects on short and long-term health caused by pupils avoiding drinking enough water or visiting the toilet – can have a positive influence on pupils' welfare, willingness, and ability to learn, their behaviour, morale, and attendance levels.

Proposed Phase 2 Investment 2021/22

18. Table 1 provides the balance of funding available and profile of the proposed areas of investment in the Capital Programme for Schools Phase 2 2021/22. A breakdown of the individual projects can be seen in Appendices 1 to 4.

Table 1: Funding and Proposed Investment

School Condition Allocation	9,586,242
Cabinet Approved Programme 17.03.21	3,900,000
Available Funding (SCA)	5,686,242

Planned Maintenance	2,118,842
Planned Maintenance (Sustainability)	1,122,688
Climate Change	331,797
Priority Projects	1,106,161
Toilet Refurbishment	878,599
Health & Safety	128,155
TOTAL Phase 2 for Cabinet Approval	5,686,242

* See appendices for list of individual projects

Strategic Priorities

19. In the current economic climate, where there is a considerable degree of uncertainty around the provision of capital funding to support schools and education, it is imperative that the County Council has a pre-determined set of priorities already in place so that it has the flexibility and responsiveness it will need to act on those capital funding streams as soon as they become available.
20. There will continue to be more demand for capital investment than there will be resources available to meet that demand. In turn this will mean that choices, sometimes very difficult choices, will have to be made. The County Council is committed to ensuring that the process of determining priorities for capital investment is open and transparent. Key features of this approach include:
- a. Consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities, the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) and the County Commissioner for Access to Learning to determine local priorities.

- b. Published criteria for the assessment of priorities in the Asset Management Plan, and open access to the information held within it on all schools (Planned Maintenance Programme).
 - c. Consultation with all relevant partners, including schools and the three Dioceses, both directly and through the Local Management of Schools Consultative Committee (LMSCC).
 - d. Consultation with the Assistant Director for Education, Strategy, and Improvement.
21. In accordance with these principles and approaches, the following strategic priorities have been identified for capital investment in schools:
- a. Improving educational standards by addressing highest priority condition issues ensuring schools are safe, warm, and dry through the Planned Maintenance Programme.
 - b. Meeting climate change and sustainability targets.
 - c. Delivering projects that make a difference to the school environment that are not condition driven but will have a significant impact through the Priority Capital Projects Portfolio.
 - d. Refurbishment of toilet facilities that are designed and fitted out to a standard that discourages anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Programme Management

22. Approval is sought for the Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets to continue with the practice of monitoring progress and making any necessary in-year alterations in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND).

Procurement of Works

23. Construction Projects – in line with Staffordshire County Councils ('Council') own Procurement Regulations, it is a requirement to utilise a 3rd party contract vehicle where available. Whilst the Council has previously procured its own traditional-build construction projects framework in the absence of any ideal option at the time, there is now a credible opportunity to procure Council construction projects from the recently let Construction West Midlands ('CWM') Framework Agreement (an arrangement procured and led by Birmingham City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council). Commencing October 2020 for a period of 4 years (with the

option for an extra 2), this arrangement has been procured compliantly, will see project values of up to £2b, mimics the ethos and operation of the typical construction Framework which the Council would wish to procure, and allows access to a governance team that is driving developments in framework best practice at a regional and national level. The Council do also recognise the competence and professional delivery of the providers recently appointed to this arrangement with many already working with the Council and its partner on current projects.

24. Maintenance Works – will continue to be procured in line with the Councils Procurement Regulations, turning to our own Framework arrangements where applicable.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Community Impact Assessment - Summary Document

Appendix 1 - Planned Replacement Programme Phase 2 2021/22

Appendix 2 - Climate Change Programme Phase 2 2021/22

Appendix 3 - Priority Capital Projects Phase 2 2021/22

Appendix 4 - Toilet Refurbishment Programme Phase 2 2021/22

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