

25 March 2015		ITEM: 17
Council		
Approval of the Schools Capital Budget		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor J. Kent, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Education		
Accountable Head of Service: Janet Clark, Strategic Leader, Operational, Resources and Libraries Unit		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report seeks Council approval to procure a Specialist Project Team for the Schools Capital Improvement Programme, and contractors to take forward the proposed schemes within the current affordability envelope of £5.5 million.

It also recommends delegated authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education to award the contract/s for the delivery of the approved schemes within the next school capital programme, subject to the procurement process being compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 and the council's constitution.

The Schools Capital Programme has an estimated provisional total value of £5.5 Million funded from the future capital basic need budget, and underspends from the current capital programme, and therefore requires Council approval.

1. Recommendations:

- 1.1 That the School Capital Programme budget of £5.5 million funded as set out in this report be approved.**
 - 1.1.1 That the invitation of tenders be approved in accordance with Council & EU procurement procedures for a one year agreement for providing Specialist Project Teams, for a JCT (Joint Contracts Tribunal) form of contract School Improvement Programme, and principal contractors to take forward the proposed schemes.**
- 1.2 That authority be delegated to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to enter into a contract**

following the selection procedure results in compliance with procurement regulations.

2. Introduction and Background:

- 2.1 The local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that suitable and sufficient school places are available in Thurrock for every child of school age whose parents wish them to have one
- 2.2 The 2013/14 school capital programme consisted of six projects in Thurrock schools. The extensive programme is now at its conclusion, but for the provision of an additional double demountable classroom at Woodside Academy which is in progress at the time of writing this report.
- 2.3 The 2013/14 school capital programme progressed well and incorporated innovative partnership working to deliver the identified additional pupil places required
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The demand for pupil places has increased significantly, over the last few months we have seen a large increase in 'in term' admissions from families moving into the Authority. In 2013/14, 209 children moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and 590 from elsewhere within the UK. For the first five months of this year, 199 more children have moved into Thurrock from outside of the UK, and there have been 493 new arrivals from within the UK. The demand does not appear to be slowing, and this level of demand has not been seen before. This is putting greater pressures on places, and steps need to be taken now to further increase capacity within schools.
- 2.6 The contract for providing a specialist programme/project management multi-disciplinary design team to oversee the Schools Capital Programme has expired. A stopgap contract for carrying out feasibility studies in relation to the possible expansion of Woodside Academy and Thameside Primary due to the predicted increase in pupil numbers has been undertaken, in the short term, individual contracts are currently being utilised for any immediate urgent remodelling works, and the provision of demountable modular buildings.
- 2.7 A new one year JCT framework agreement 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 commitment with a single service provider that would impact on future asset management decisions.

- 2.8 The conclusion of the feasibility study undertaken during January 2015 makes the following recommendations:

Woodside Academy:

Upon the Woodside Academy site the current proposals are to increase from a two form entry to a three form entry and full planning approval has already been granted for a two storey extension to the northern end of the junior block. These have been prepared by an appointed architect. The proposed scheme includes for six new class bases of 56sq.m, three to the ground floor together with three to the first floor. The present proposed designs include for increased toilet facilities, and increased car parking (Planning ref: 10/01197/FUL).

Presently the Nursery has a three form entry, however the School only provides a two form entry, and therefore currently approximately 30% of pupils need to be relocated as they progress from nursery to primary school. The current proposals are aimed to address this situation.

Currently upon the adjacent former South Essex College site a development of circa 362 homes are being constructed together with a further 350 homes at the Heath Farm site, this being within the designated catchment area for this school.

The current staff room facility was improved very recently and is considered of adequate size at this time to facilitate the proposed extension.

The programming of these works needs to be progressed as rapidly as possible if the aspirations of Woodside Academy are to be met.

Thameside Primary:

Upon the Thameside Primary site, the current proposals are to increase from a three form entry to a four form entry with the short term provision of additional classroom space provided by three demountable modular classrooms. The location of these is to be within the existing hard landscaping playground adjacent to the 'Junior School'. The demountable units are supplied with associated sanitary facilities. Full planning approval has already been granted for this proposal, and this would appear to meet the current demand and aspirations of the school.

The provision for additional permanent class bases requires a more detailed design exercise to be completed. This will need to investigate potential planning issues together with any likely impact upon the current school layout. The provision of any 'link' type development will likely involve remodelling to some of the existing school facilities, and as such will have a consequential impact during construction. This may require the use of temporary accommodation to enable the works to proceed if not undertaken during a shutdown period. Similarly any permanent extensions will need to be

designed to be sympathetic to the existing structures and facilitate circulation both within and around the site and current buildings.

Notwithstanding the challenges that are presented above, the programming of this design work needs to be progressed as rapidly as possible, and needs to take into account the requirement for the expansion to the existing car parking facilities if the aspirations of Thameside Primary are to be met.

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, is subject to Thurrock Council & EU procurement legislation.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Increasing the accommodation on certain sites can be very challenging to undertake due to the nature of the individual sites and various technical constraints. Amongst the constraints are general building challenges such as access arrangements, ground conditions and planning restrictions.
- 4.2 In addition careful consideration has needed to be given with educational concerns over making the school sites congested, resulting in a negative effect on pupil behaviour and subsequent pupil performance.
- 4.3 Any school accommodation increase particularly resulting from a form of entry increase has needed to consider teaching accommodation as well as ancillary spaces such as kitchen, staff room, assembly hall and administration spaces. Often these can be overlooked however they are an important part of ensuring a school continues to operate successfully.
- 4.4 Within the two proposed site extensions, the necessary ancillary spaces have been considered, however further investigation will need to be undertaken at final design stage to ascertain the specific solution for each site.
- 4.5 To ensure a subjective review of each high level option the schemes are compared through an options appraisal. Adopting this approach ensures that each scheme is judged on an equitable and impartial basis across each planning area.

Options have been judged using the following criteria;

- 1 Costs – Schemes are assessed on their affordability and value for money
- 2 Existing School – Options are reviewed for their impact on the existing school
- 3 Access – Solutions are assessed on the ease of both vehicular

- pedestrian access to the school grounds as well as impact on the local transport network
- 4 Meets the demand – Options are reviewed for their ability to specifically meet the pupil place demand
 - 5 Future proofing – Schemes are assessed within their ability to meet any future increase in demand.

Each site is appraised against the above criteria and the following scoring adopted, 10 = positive and 1 = negative.

Costs do have a significant bearing on deliverability of each scheme and in many cases will define if a scheme is to proceed, despite this to ensure fair assessment additional criteria is adopted to ensure that the scheme is measured broadly across other areas.

Below is the scoring appraisal sheet with the preferred options scored.

School	Cost/ Affordability	Impact on Existing School	Pedestrian/ Vehicular Access	Ability to meet the demand/ brief	Future Proofing	Total
Woodside Academy	9	10	5	10	10	44
Thameside Primary	9	10	6	10	10	45

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

- 5.1. This report has not been considered by the 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 The award of this framework agreement will enable the Council to continue to meet its statutory duty under the Education Act 2006.

7. Implications:

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**

Interim Finance Manager

Additional accommodation required for increased pupil numbers will be funded from a combination of the future capital basic need budget, and underspends from the current capital programme. Once in-depth feasibility studies have been undertaken, funding requirements will be quantified and confirmed. This will include any funds applied for and successfully obtained from the Education Funding Agency, under the Targeted Basic Need Programme.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Assaf Chaudry**
Major Project Lawyer

The Council has a duty under the Education Act 2006 to ensure the provision of “sufficient schools” for the provision of primary and secondary education in their area.

The report proposes to commence a procurement exercise for a Specialist Project Team for the schools capital improvement programme, and contractors to take forward the proposed schemes within the current affordability envelope of £5.5 million. Given its value it has to comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2006 (as amended), the EU regulations and the Council’s constitution. Other than that there are no other legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

There are currently no direct diversity and equality implications. However, the next Thurrock Schools’ Capital Programme will continue to commit to improving learning environments for young people, supporting improvements in standards and raising aspirations to give all children the best possible life chances. The provision of these projects will help to tackle inequality and social exclusion.

Equality legislation places a duty on public bodies to prevent discrimination in all aspects of service provision, including procurement. It provides a clear and positive legal duty to eliminate discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity.

The Council should note that where an external supplier carries out a function, the Council remains responsible for meeting the statutory duty set out in these Acts. The tender process will give true regard to the full range of equality considerations.

8. 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):

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 and a seamless service provision.

- PRP Feasibility Study dated January 2015:
- Contact Officer: Graeme Parker
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9. Appendices to the report

- Not applicable.

Report Author:

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Children's Services