

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....6th October 2011

1. Title of Item/Report

Capital Investment in Schools

2. Record of the Decision

Members considered a report that outlined the limited potential funding opportunities for Stockton and outlined a strategy for school capital development and investment in this context.

Members were reminded of the key recommendations coming from the James Review. The Government had accepted the majority of the recommendations made and were now consulting the implementation. Details of the Government's response to each recommendation were provide in an appendix to the report. A response to the consultation would be prepared by the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet member.

Cabinet noted that it was clear from information and funding announcements that, future funding, for major projects, would be to support improvements in condition and resolving pupil capacity issues.

Funding announcements included:-

- A Priority School Building Programme to address schools in the worst condition. This will be funded through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI), and was expected to cover £2bn of construction costs - equivalent of building or rebuilding approximately 100 secondary schools. The programme would be delivered over a 5 year period, with procurement commencing in 2012 and this was open to all schools (including Primary and Special). Applications for the programme would be required from either Local Authorities or schools (including academies) by 14 October 2011 and applicants would need to be part of a PFI arrangement.
- £500m in one off funding to fund more school places in the areas of most need.
- Funding associated with maintenance requirements and capacity issues

Cabinet agreed that whilst the Council would wish to be ambitious in plans going forward, given that resources available would be scarce and targeted towards condition and capacity, this was where the Council should focus its attention.

Although there were still some areas of uncertainty around funding, some clarity was developing over the priorities and direction of travel. Rather than wait for absolute certainty on all aspects, the overall strategy and plans for the Borough could now be considered.

Whilst there might not be significant levels of funding available, the Council still had a number of pressing maintenance capacity issues across the Borough and plans needed to be developed to resolve those issues. The Council would also look to identify opportunities for improving buildings wherever possible.

The Key aims of the Strategy for Stockton were:

- Provide sufficient school places across the Borough and have between 5-10% surplus places to:
  - Provide every primary pupil a place within 2 miles
  - Provide every secondary pupil a school place within 3 miles
- Ensure that schools were maintained in a good condition, with maintenance work undertaken.
- Identify opportunities to improve the school stock

As part of the development of the strategy, initial discussions had been held with:

- School representative groups (Primary, Secondary Heads)
  - Individual Schools (where there is a direct impact)
- Diocesan representatives

Members noted that the School Organisation Plan had identified that there were a number of emerging capacity pressures relating to some Secondary and Primary Schools in the Borough. The Strategy identified areas where investment and action were required.

In view of difficulties caused by the size, layout and nature of Westlands School the Strategy identified possible options.

The strategy also showed priority condition data for each school. Overall maintenance for community schools was as follows:-

Priority 1 – (urgently required) £11 million

Priority 2 – (within 2 years) £ 6 million  
Priority 3 – (2 – 5 years) £13 million

Members considered the funding announcements further.

With regard to the Priority School Building Programme the Council had assessed the condition data against the Department of Education formula to establish whether any schools met the criteria. The schools that met the criteria and were keen to submit bids were Grangefield (Community), Mandale Mill (Community) and Ian Ramsey C.E. (Diocesan).

Members noted the benefits of these schools pursuing a bid and endorsed the Council's support.

In terms of the one off funding Cabinet was advised that although there were a number of areas where there were pressures on school capacity, it was unclear whether the Council would be eligible to apply for any of the £500m funding as there had been no announcements on the allocation of this funding, however this would be closely monitored.

Finally, with regard to the Capital Funding although it had not been confirmed, it was anticipated that the Council would continue to receive £5m per annum to fund maintenance and capacity issues. Given the level of outstanding maintenance and the reconfiguration work outlined to members in this report, this would be insufficient to ensure that all maintenance work could be undertaken. There was a potential to generate capital receipts to supplement these resources and allow more work to be undertaken. It was noted that there might be a number of school sites where there was surplus land which could be made available for disposal. It was therefore suggested that detailed work be undertaken to identify such opportunities, in consultation with the schools and this be incorporated into the school plan. There might also be a need to continue to assess risk and only undertake the highest priority maintenance schemes within the funding envelope received, which would mean that not all maintenance would be undertaken within the 5 year period.

Cabinet expressed disappointment at the levels of funding and it was suggested that the Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People write to the Minister in this regard.

Members noted the next stages in the process:-

- Undertake consultation with Governing Bodies and other key stakeholder groups around the proposals.
- Submit bids for funding for Ian Ramsey C of E, Grangefield and

Mandale Mill Primary under the Priority School Building Programme, and any further schools identified by the Diocese.

- Work with the schools in Billingham to develop the schemes to enable a one site solution at Northfield school and ensure the proposed pupil admission numbers to be accommodated.
- Explore the options for increasing primary capacity as outlined.
- Assess the feasibility and costs for the options around special school provision.
- Develop a maintenance plan to address the highest priority condition issues.

It was explained that the Council had funds of approximately £2.5m available from the current years allocation of school capital and it was recommended that in advance of the final plan being developed, the allocation of this resource be delegated the Corporate Director, Children Education and Social Care in consultation with Cabinet Member for Children & Young People. This would allow a number of the projects, where urgent action might be needed to be undertaken, which would support the delivery of the Strategy.

RESOLVED that

1. The submission of a bid for funding from the Governments Priority School Building Programme for Ian Ramsey CE School, Grangefield School and Mandale Mill Primary School be endorsed.
2. The Strategy included detailed above, and in the report, be supported and endorsed and a further report be prepared for consideration by Cabinet to seek approval for a detailed plan in due course.
3. The responsibility for the allocation of the current year's School Capital allocation be delegated to the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Social Care in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, in order to commence priority projects which would support the delivery of the strategy.
4. The Leader and Member for Children and Young People write to the responsible Minister expressing disappointment at the level of the funding announcements.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Agree the Strategy for Capital Investment in Schools.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Beall, Cook, Coleman, Dixon, Harrington, Nelson and Rose each declared personal, non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Capital Investment in Schools as they were all school governors or had had involvement with Free School applications.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday 14 October 2011

Proper Officer  
10 October 2011