

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17th July 2025

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

KEY DECISION

Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford, Cabinet Member of Children & Young People

SCHOOLS CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval for the allocation of capital funding to support two priority projects under the Council's School Investment Strategy: the refurbishment of pupil toilet facilities at Northfield School and funding for final stages of the development at Oxbridge Primary School.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet approval is required for the following reasons:

- Both projects involve significant capital expenditure. In accordance with Council governance procedures, Cabinet approval is necessary to authorise the approval and investment of the required funds.
- These investments are integral to the delivery of Stockton's wider education strategy, addressing condition, capacity, and accessibility.
- Approval at this stage will enable project teams to proceed with delivery, ensuring that works are completed in a timely manner and started before the next academic year where possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agree to invest an additional £500,000 of capital funding to complete the building works at Oxbridge Primary School
2. Agree to invest £1.16m of capital funding to install additional toilet block facilities at Northfield School & Sports College.
3. Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to take all necessary steps to deliver the projects within the approved budgets.
4. Cabinet delegate the transfer of budget caused by cost variations within the approved programme to the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Children's and Young People.

DETAIL

1. In October 2022, Cabinet approved the revised proposals relating to the school investment strategy of unallocated funds to support investment in Oxbridge Lane Primary School and Bishopton Centre Pupil Referral Unit. Whilst the works on Bishopton Centre completed in April 2024, with the introduction of 20 additional places for children who require alternative provision, the outlined works at Oxbridge Primary School require further investment prior to completion. Further agreed investment at that time, for SEND Provision at Abbey Hill at North Shore and Ash Trees at Billingham South are now complete, operational and running at capacity.
2. In Spring 2025, following allocation of funding by the Department for Education and further funding being obtained, the Council currently have £9.31m of unallocated capital funding from a range of sources (a summary is provided below). Whilst a separate report is being prepared in respect of proposed capital investment relating to required SEND provision, a further request is being made to invest in completion of the Oxbridge Lane Primary School works and for consideration of investment in Northfield School.
 - £1.56m Unallocated Basic Need Grant
 - £3.87m Unallocated High Need Capital Funding
 - £3.88m of Developer Contributions towards education
3. A significant amount of this is proposed to be invested into SEND provision in Stockton and a separate report will be presented to Cabinet to this effect. However, there is sufficient funds available within the £9.31m available to deliver the £1.66m worth of proposals in this report.
4. There are no cost saving or cost avoidance attached to this investment

Northfield School Toilets

5. The current number of pupil toilets at the school falls short of the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines. Based on the existing pupil roll, there is a shortfall of 18 toilets. This deficit is projected to increase to 24 toilets once the school reaches its full capacity, following the agreed increase in the Published Admission Number (PAN) to 1,600 pupils (350 per year group).
6. A particular area of concern is a section of the school where toilet provision is significantly below the required level. At present, both Year 8 and Year 11 students share access to a single set of facilities. This arrangement is suboptimal due to the age difference between the cohorts, the volume of students using the facilities, and the associated challenges in ensuring effective supervision and safeguarding. Currently, 590 pupils share access to only 14 toilets.
7. This situation not only raises safeguarding concerns but also contributes to increased pressure during break times, which may lead to disruption within the school.
8. To address these challenges, it is proposed that a new toilet block be constructed to provide dedicated facilities for Year 11 students. This would alleviate pressure on existing facilities, improve safeguarding, and support better behaviour management during unstructured times.
9. The cost of this solution will cost in total, £1.25m. Northfield school can contribute £90,000 of this from their devolved formula capital, leaving a cost to the Council of £1.16m. This is based on the scheme being designed to RIBA stage 4, with the exception of the mechanical and electrical component.

Oxbridge Primary School

10. Members will recall that the original budget for this project was £7.538m.

11. During demolition works, unforeseen issues with the existing building structure were identified, resulting in the full utilisation of the initial contingency. In response, a scope reduction exercise was undertaken in consultation with the school, enabling the project to ensure cost increases were minimised as a consequence.
12. With 14 months remaining until the scheduled project completion in August 2026, it is proposed that to mitigate any further potential risks that an overall funding envelope of £8.24m would be required. This will provide the necessary flexibility to manage any further unforeseen issues and ensure successful delivery of the scheme.
13. £200,000 has been allocated within the 25-26 Schools Planned Maintenance Programme due to a proportion of this project avoiding maintenance of existing buildings. It is recommended that a further £500,000 is taken from the funding identified in paragraph 4 to ensure the funding envelope is increased to £8.24m in order to allow successful completion.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

14. An EPIA was undertaken as part of planning and no mitigating actions were required.
15. This will benefit the schools and children who attend, through increasing accessibility and facilities within two schools within the borough. which should also increase choice.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

16. This report to does not contain corporate parenting implications

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. The £1.66m identified in this report, alongside a further £7.65m identified in the SEND St Johns and Mill Lane Investment report are funded from the £9.31m of resources outlined in paragraph 4.
18. These interventions utilise all available funding. Any new interventions not covered within the current capital programme would require further funding to be identified. Whilst there is the potential for future school capital to be announced there is no certainty on timing or amounts at present This includes no funding being available for the Alternative Provision Free School that is currently pending DfE approval, whereby in order for this to progress the Council would be required to fund the abnormal costs, on which high level estimates of £800k-£1m have been provided.
19. The schemes in both this report and the SEND Capital Investment Strategy are collectively summarised below for completeness.
- 20.

St John the Baptist Primary School	£5,350,000
Mill Lane Primary School	£1,700,000
Mainstream School Investment (not SEND related)	£1,660,000
Additional Scheme Contingency	£600,000
Total	£9,310,000

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

21. The Council as Local Education Authority has a duty under The Education Act 1944 to ensure a sufficient supply of school places to meet the needs of the children and young people resident in the borough.
22. The council must meet its duties under The School Premises Regulations 2012 in respect of ensuring that schools have adequate toilet and washing facilities and follow the guidance on the number of facilities in line with pupil population.

RISK ASSESSMENT

23. This school investment strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

24. No impact to Wards noted
25. Ward Councillor in Ropner, in respect of Oxbridge Primary School have been consulted with in respect of initial plans and commencement of the project in 2024.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Committee: Report of Assistant Director of Inclusive Growth and Development, May 2024

Stockton on Tees Local Plan Adopted 2019

Cabinet Report: An Investment Strategy for Schools, SEN and Early Years, October 2021

Cabinet Report: An Investment Strategy for Schools, SEND and Early Years, October 2022

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