



## **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **21 JUNE 2023**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>SCHOOL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023 - 2024</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

The Department for Education (DfE) allocates grant funding each year to help maintain and improve the condition of school buildings and grounds. All local authorities must ensure that they have a sound Capital strategy for education services, making sure that facilities are sufficient, safe and offer the best teaching environment for pupils of all abilities.

This report gives details of the planned Capital work for Maintained Schools over the next 12 months and gives details of proposed spend of two capital grants (i) School Condition Allocation (SCA) and (ii) High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA).

This report supports the Brighter Futures theme of the Wirral Plan 2021 - 26 and specifically the delivery of the school asset and sufficiency and SEND strategies.

This decision affects all Wards.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Children and Young People and Education Committee is recommended to approve that:

1. The identified projects are included in the Schools Capital Programme funded by the Department for Education.
2. Asset Management be requested to progress all project designs, tender documentation, and initiate project implementation. Noting that all projects over £100,000 will be required to present tender details and prices via Officer Decision Notices.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The programme of works represents the priorities of condition requirements in the identified schools, based on condition surveys, feedback from schools and building experts.
- 1.2 Asset Management are in a strong position to prioritise the works by utilising both in-house and external resources and based on the degree of urgency of the identified works. This will be done in close collaboration with the Children, Family and Education Directorate.

### 2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Outsourcing all programme management is an option however, this could impact on continuity of works having already been completed by in-house and could prove difficult to co-ordinate other major regeneration projects planned for the Borough.
- 2.2 The Local Authority remains responsible for the delivery of the programme of work in maintained schools, to ensure their condition including safety and compliance, suitability and sufficiency. The grants would not be devolved to schools directly as this would place significant risk for procurement, health and safety and general project assurance on governing bodies.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Department for Education provides a number of Capital grants for improvements, to the school stock, these are:

(i) School Condition Allocations (SCA), with funds paid to eligible bodies responsible for maintaining school buildings;

(ii) Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), a bidding round with funds paid directly to single academy trusts, small multi-academy trusts (MATs), small voluntary aided (VA) bodies and sixth form colleges;

(iii) Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) is allocated for individual schools and other eligible institutions to spend on small-scale capital projects that meet their own priorities;

(iv) High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA), allocated to the Local Authority to improve the suitability and sufficiency of high needs provision in their area.

<b>GRANT</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<b>SCHOOL CONDITION ALLOCATION (SCA)</b>	£3,720,684	£4,107,305	£4,132,191
<b>HIGH NEEDS PROVISION (HNP)</b>	£1,045,546	£2,870,617	£2,638,010
<b>BASIC NEED</b>	£0	£0	£381,049
<b>DEVOLVED FORMULA CAPITAL</b>	£588,108	£591,417	£591,445

3.2 Condition surveys are the main source of information which helps the Local Authority prioritise larger projects to be funded from the above grants: primarily the School Condition Allocation (SCA). Whilst the DfE surveys provide baseline information, these often do not reflect the issues with building fabric that schools have on a daily basis, the suitability of teaching and welfare arrangements or consideration of local pupil needs. A more detailed schedule of Condition Surveys has been recently commissioned and will provide more informed condition information which will be used in the prioritisation of Capital projects.

Asset Management has recently produced documents which will help headteachers and their Governing Bodies understand the process of raising building issues, apply for Capital funding and direct them to building guidance which is available. A retained technical group within the Council collaborates with schools and partner architectural and technical companies to deliver a wide range of schemes for maintained schools.

3.3 Criteria used by Asset Management to prioritise projects follows the DfE categories within condition reports, as follows:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Expression</b>	<b>Description</b>
A	Good	As new and performing as intended and with regular maintenance continue to operate efficiently
B	Satisfactory	Performing as intended but exhibiting minor deterioration
C	Poor	Exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended and will require attention in the short term, although not immediate
D	Bad	Life expired and/or serious risk of imminent failure

Additional weightings are also used by Asset Management for inclusion within the prioritisation exercise i.e. Compliance, Capacity, Safeguarding, Accessibility, Health and Safety and Critical building issues.

3.4 Within the programme of works there are sums identified for generic remedial works such as asbestos removal/encapsulation, electrical safety works, boiler replacements, condition surveys and accessibility. These allocations are draw upon during the year as mattes arise, we are not able to identify individual schools at this point in time who would benefit from this allocation.

3.5 Like many businesses the Council has experienced problems with delivering projects over the past couple of years, primarily due to the effects of the Covid pandemic which resulted in a shortage of building materials, reduced workforce availability, increased construction costs. More recent economic issues have affected the construction industry including soaring project costs and other related fees. Whilst the Capital Programme has slipped, good progress is now being made and many projects are scheduled to start, as shown in appendix 1.

A new project management system is currently being implemented which will provide headteachers and Governing Bodies with more accurate dates for the commencement of their Capital projects. Priority will be given for those building elements which have health and safety implications and providing sufficient pupil places.

- 3.6 Grant available for High Needs Provision will fund larger projects to address the sufficiency within our Special Educational Needs (SEND) sector and to provide suitable accommodation within mainstream school for SEND bases. Working with the Children, Family and Education Directorate and dedicated workstreams to review and anticipate the need for SEND school places, Asset Management will support the delivery of projects in a managed way.
- 3.7 The school rebuilding programme carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at schools and sixth form college buildings across England, with buildings prioritised according to their condition. Bids were submitted for four Wirral schools to be included in this programme, these were: (i) Riverside Primary, Wallasey (ii) Mosslands School, Wallasey (iii) Pensby High School, Pensby and (iv) The Observatory School, Bidston. In 2022 it was confirmed that Riverside and Mosslands were to be included in the programme, the remaining two schools remain on the list for consideration.

We are currently at early stages of feasibility and design approval for the rebuilding of both schools. Working closely with the DfE, their partners for project management, architects, technical experts etc. Details will be provided to the Committee in due course of intended replacement designs and timescales for delivery. Both projects will be subject to the normal planning permissions, site surveys etc and all schools built under this programme will be net zero carbon.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Capital Grants are received on an annual basis from the Department for Education, in the region of £6.0 to £7.0 million but vary from year to year and are often not confirmed until the start of the financial year, which can make project planning challenging.
- 4.2 For all projects identified within the Capital programme, detailed project specifications are prepared by architects and tenders are processed either via the Council's Tender Portal the Chest or through agreed Frameworks in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 4.3 Whilst professional fees are charged to individual projects, discussions are ongoing for wider project management support in order to deliver the programme of works on behalf of the Children's Department.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The commission of the services are undertaken in accordance with The Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

5.2 The award of contracts is made on lowest tender basis. The Council's Contract Procedure rules set out how contracts are to be awarded by the Council in accordance with the Procurement Strategy requirements.

5.3 The award will be underpinned by a formal contract which are drawn up by the Council's legal team.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 There are no direct staffing and ICT implications arising from this report.

6.2 Any works undertaken will improve the fabric of the asset held within the school estate portfolio. All alterations to assets are amended within the Council's Asset Management system.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 Failure to deliver the Capital programme could have serious safety implications for the Council who has a statutory duty to provide a suitable and safe learning environment for Wirral children including those with Special Educational Needs.

7.2 Available resources could cause a delay in the delivery of identified projects within a 12-month period, if this is the case external support will be considered in addition to reviewing procurement methods.

7.3 For all projects, site and project delivery safety risks are assessed prior to the tender process starting. All projects will be managed under the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations and this includes direct communication with school management.

7.4 A new Fire Safety Act is being introduced, any changes within this piece of safety legislation will be identified and assessed within the scope of proposed works.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 Engagement takes place internally between technical and education officers at design of specification stage. Should external consultants be required to support with the project delivery there will also be a defined level of engagement and consultation.

8.2 Planning approval is obtained where necessary and forms an essential part of the programme management. Building Control are involved in the approval of design elements in many of the projects that are to be delivered.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. There are no known Equality Implications arising from this contract.

9.2 Projects within this programme will ensure that children’s disabilities are met within the area and within a facility that meets their special needs. All site and new facilities provided will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## 10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Many of the projects being undertaken are extensive refurbishments and elements such as installation of electrical and mechanical services will support greener solutions for energy use through LED lights, controllable energy management system. Building insulation due to window and door replacement and general material and product specification will enhance the environmental quality of the asset. New boiler installations also support the Council’s target of net Carbon zero by 2040 and other recommendations as set out in decarbonisation reports.

10.2 All internal architects have been trained in Carbon Literacy and maintain their knowledge through Continued Professional Development in line with their technical expertise.

## 11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 During the procurement phase companies will be checked that their business principles support the Council’s Code of Practice for employment and training. Companies will also be required to evidence their local employment and reduction of long-term employment strategies.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Project details for 2023/24 grant allocations and other works being delivered in 2023/24

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

DfE Condition surveys

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Financial Monitoring Reports presented to: Children, Young People and Education Committee	15/6/2021 13/9/2021 23/11/2021 6/12/2022 21/6/2022 10/3/2022