
Meeting: Executive

Date: 10 November 2009

Subject: Roecroft Lower School – Approval of Capital project

Report of: Councillor Mrs Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Learning

Summary: The report requests that Executive approve the legacy project to replace Roecroft Lower School as a 300 place school on a new site at an estimated cost of £5.8m and approves a variation of the original implementation date from 1 September 2010 to 1 September 2011.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children Families and Learning

Contact Officer: Rob Parsons, Head of School Organisation & Capital Planning

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: Stotfold and Arlesey

Function of: Executive

Key Decision Yes

**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)** Not applicable

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The proposals support two of the Council's priorities in terms of Managing growth effectively and Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people

Financial:

Capital: The project is part funded from former County Council funding (£300k) of which £122k was expended in 2008/09 with £178 slipped to 2009/10; Primary Capital Programme grant funding (£3.5m) over the period 2009/10 and 2010/11 which, if not used to part cover the total costs of Roecroft will be difficult to successfully expend on other projects given the lead-in times involved. Grant not expended in the allocation period is at risk of having to be returned to the DCSF. The balance of funding (£2m) is in the Council's capital programme in 2010/11 but will mostly be used in 2011/12.

Revenue: The immediate revenue implications of the School's relocation by September 2011 will be the greater floor area that is to be reflected in Roecroft's delegated budget but funded from the DSG. The increase in floor area will need to be confirmed in due course but is approximately in the order of 1,200m².

Legal:

These are set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the main report.

Risk Management:

The lack of Executive approval of the £2m balance of funding would require the remainder to be found from the balance of the Primary Capital Programme causing a delay to other projects from within the DCSF previously approved programme.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

The proposals will mean that additional staff will be required at the enlarged school. Full consultation was carried out, including with Trades Unions ahead of the publication of the original Statutory Notices.

Equalities/Human Rights:

The proposals will ensure the sufficiency of Lower School places for this growing community. The school is designed to be fully accessible to disabled persons. The new school will also be better provided for in terms of the extended school offer it will be able to make to the existing and developing community thereby helping to promote equality for all sections of the local community.

Community Safety:

The project has been designed to ensure that the every child matters outcomes can be met, including staying safe. Similarly, the design of the school has followed the "secure by design" principles.

Sustainability:

The design incorporates initiatives to support the reduction in carbon emissions including the proposed use of biomass and a sustainable travel plan. The new school buildings will replace outdated and inefficient accommodation and improve the quality of provision for young people in the area and the community as a whole.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

It is recommended that the Executive:

- (1) Approves the project to replace Roecroft Lower School as a 300 place Lower School on a new site in Stotfold at an estimated cost of £5.8m**
- (2) Approves a modification to the original implementation date from 01 September 2010 to 01 September 2011.**

Reason for Recommendation(s): To ensure that the Council is able to meet its Statutory Obligations to secure sufficient Lower School places in the

Stoffold area.

To comply with the Legal requirement to seek a modification to the original implementation date set out in the previously approved Statutory Notices.

Background

1. The replacement of Roecroft Lower school as an enlarged school (300 places) on a new site in Stoffold was originally proposed by Statutory Notices and approved by the former County Council in response to the new housing developments within the area and the need to expand Lower School provision.
2. The original notices were approved with an implementation date of 1 September 2010 which, as a consequence of delays in design and obtaining planning approvals, is no longer achievable. There is a need therefore to request a modification to the original proposals to substitute a revised implementation date of 1 September 2011.

Impact of the proposals

3. In addition to providing an increase in the number of Lower school places, the project:
 - (a) will provide an enhanced set of modern facilities which will enable this outstanding school to further develop a wide range of teaching and learning styles to be adopted, including the use of more personalised learning supported by an up to date ICT infrastructure. Similarly, PE and sports can be developed more fully with a wider range of activities on offer as a result of the substantially improved indoor and outdoor facilities.
 - (b) provides an inspirational design which will be at the centre of a new community hub including proposals for a new community centre, sports provision and a local supermarket, connected via a green grid to the rest of the town. These complementary facilities will eventually provide a range of local opportunities to enable a wide range of activities to be offered of which the school will be the first part.
 - (c) offers the opportunity to learn through the design and construction processes linked to the curriculum and to develop, learn from and promote the schools sustainability credentials to champion energy efficiency within the community through the use of new technologies.

Progress to date

4. Design work on the scheme has been completed to RIBA Stage D to include Planning consent which was approved on 26 August 2009. Further approval is now required to enable the detailed design work to be completed, tenders sought and construction commenced to enable the enlarged school to be completed in Summer 2011 ready to formally open in September 2011.

5. A project Initiation Document (PID) providing more details of the scheme, its costs and the financing of the capital project has been completed and is attached at Appendix A

Legal framework

6. The original Statutory Notices were published by the former County Council in January 2008 and approved later that year. Having approved the notices, there is then a statutory duty to implement the proposals in full or to publish further proposals to be relieved of the duty to implement previously approved proposals. If it proves impossible to implement the proposals as approved, the proposers can seek a modification which may be made at any time before the implementation date. The most common modification is to the implementation date as is the case in this instance. The decision maker for the proposed modification is the Local Authority.
7. The originally published and approved proposals included both the enlargement of the school and the transfer of the school to a new site. Given the delays outlined above, it is no longer possible to complete the new school ready for occupation in September 2010, hence there is a need to request a modification to the approved implementation date to 1 September 2011 when the new buildings will be completed and the school can relocate. The school is aware of the new programme dates and has approved the plans for the new buildings.
8. Should there be a need to accommodate more pupils in the meantime; the Authority will work with the school to undertake whatever temporary measures may be necessary on the existing school site. The published admission number for the school for September 2010 has been approved at 30 which can be accommodated in the existing buildings. This will increase to 60 from September 2011.

Conclusion and Next Steps

9. The project to enlarge and relocate Roecroft Lower School has reached a stage whereby further approvals are required to enable the scheme to progress to completion ready for occupation of the new school buildings in September 2011. In terms of the capital required and the programme, these are set out in the attached PID.
10. There is also a need to request a modification to the originally published implementation date to reflect the revised programme for the project and to satisfy the legal duty to implement the proposals.
11. Executive is therefore invited to approve the PID for the project and to approve a modification to the implementation date to 01 September 2011.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Roecroft Project Initiation Document (PID)

Background Papers:

Statutory Notices previously published (17 January 2008) by Bedfordshire County Council

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands