
Meeting: Executive
Date: 06 April 2010
Subject: Approval of schools capital projects and programmes.
Report of: Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis , Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Summary: The report invites Executive to approve the commencement of a number of schools' capital projects, to note the approval of capital schemes under delegated powers and to approve the Schools Accessibility Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Assistant Director Policy, Planning and Commissioning
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive
Key Decision Yes
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate) N/A

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The capital projects and programmes outlined in this report support the council's priority of educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people and also reflect the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan. The project to provide additional capacity at Etonbury School also supports the council's priority of managing growth effectively by anticipating forecast increases in pupil numbers from local housing growth.

Financial:

The projects and programmes contained in this report reflect a total value of £6.437m being £5.57m for the named schemes plus schools matched funding of £867K to the kitchen and dining grant. The majority is externally funded with the overall net cost to the council being £1.53m. All of these projects and programmes are in the 2010/11 capital budget approved by Executive on the 25th February 2010.

Any revenue implications arising from these projects and programmes will relate to the resulting increase in floor area provided by each scheme. Where this is relevant the additional revenue will be paid through the Dedicated School Grant formulae and will not represent an implication to the council.

The project to create a new 8 place Autistic Spectrum Disorder unit at Holmemead Middle School will enable students to remain within their local community rather than being offered “out of area” places. The revenue funding for this provision will mainly come from the statementing budget which is allocated annually from Direct Schools Grant (DSG) through the school’s Individual Schools Budget (ISB).

Legal:

The council’s Executive approved the proposal to create a new 8 place ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) unit at Holmemead Middle School in December 2009. That approval places a statutory obligation on the council to now implement that decision.

The Schools Accessibility Strategy and linked School Access Initiative fund ensure that the council meets its obligations under Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) as outlined in this report.

The project to create additional capacity at Etonbury School in Stotfold ensures the fulfilment of the council’s duty to provide sufficient school places for students in the area.

There are no further legal implications resulting from this report.

Risk Management:

Key risks associated with each specific project and programmes have been identified within the relevant business case attached to this report. Each scheme is also project managed through contract arrangements with the council’s property partner or main contractor under school managed projects. The delivery of each scheme is overseen by officers within the School Organisation & Capital Planning Team to ensure that risks are identified and managed appropriately with stakeholder involvement.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Central Bedfordshire Council has a legal duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other persons
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disability
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take steps to take account of disabled person’s disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favorably than others

The proposal to create a new 8 place Autistic Spectrum Disorder unit at Holmemead Middle School will ensure that there is improved local provision for pupils with ASD enabling them to remain within and be educated in their local community rather than being offered “out of area” places. The new provision will also enable outreach work to be undertaken to support other pupils in their local school setting.

The Schools Accessibility Strategy and School Access Initiative fund aims to improve access to schools and to the curriculum for disabled pupils. This ensures that disabled students are not treated less favourably without clear justification, and enables the council and schools to make reasonable adjustments to ensure they are not disadvantaged compared to their peers.

Each of the projects and programmes in this report will be designed to ensure enhanced accessibility for disabled students. The Accessibility Strategy and Access Initiative will also help open up schools to disabled parents / carers and other sections of the community who need to access extended services at school locations.

Community Safety:

All new schemes will adhere to the principle of designing-out crime and creating space both within and outside the building that is safe for young people, helping to reduce the potential for anti social behaviour.

Sustainability:

The new Autistic Spectrum Disorder unit at Holmemead will improve the quality of provision for young people in the area and the community as a whole resulting in a reduction in the need to place pupils in “out of area” provision.

Sustainability is a key principle of design of all new build and refurbishment projects, complying with new regulations and responding to market demands for improved environmental performance.

The projects outlined in this report have all been evaluated to ensure that the capital investment enhances the sustainability of each school in terms of their ability to teach a full curriculum and meet forecast pupil demand in each geographic area.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:

This report has not been subject to consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That the Executive approve:

(a) The commencement of the following capital projects:

- (i) Etonbury Middle School – provision of additional pupil places at a capital cost of £941k (\$106 funded)**

	<p>(ii) The refurbishment of Tithe Farm Lower School at a capital cost of £1.774m (DCSF funded - Primary Capital Programme)</p> <p>(iii) Specialist provision for Autistic Spectrum Disorder at Holmemead Middle School at a capital cost of £550k</p> <p>(b) The Schools Accessibility Strategy as attached at Appendix D and the use of the Schools Access Initiative funds (£579k) across all community, Voluntary Controlled and Foundation schools in accordance with the priorities set out in the Strategy.</p> <p>2. That the Executive note the approval under delegated powers of the following capital projects:</p> <p>(a) Alterations to Arnold Middle School at a capital cost of £457k</p> <p>(b) Teaching/Learning practical food skills at Gilbert Inglefield Middle School at a capital cost of £323k (DCSF grant and S106)</p> <p>(c) Teaching/Learning practical food skills at Parkfields Middle School at a capital cost of £324k (DCSF grant and S106)</p> <p>(d) Rolling programme of improvements to school kitchens and dining rooms at a total cost of £622k across 24 schools (DCSF grant)</p>
<p><i>Reason for Recommendation(s):</i></p>	<p><i>(a) so that the capital projects detailed in this report can proceed to detailed design, procurement and construction</i></p> <p><i>(b) to approve the Schools Access Strategy as the basis for prioritising the allocation of funding under the Schools Access Initiative</i></p> <p><i>(c) to note that delegated authority has been used to progress the schemes set out in the recommendation.</i></p>

Executive Summary

There are three named schemes set out in the report which are within the approved capital programme and which are at the stage where Executive approval is sought so that they can commence. Separately, the report seeks formal approval to the current draft Schools Accessibility Strategy set out at Appendix D and invites Executive to note that four further capital schemes, which are rolling programmes or projects between £200k and £500k and which fall within delegated powers, have been approved. Outline Business Cases (OBCs) as previously supported by the Corporate Asset Management Group (CAMG) are attached as Appendices for each of the projects named within the report.

Background

1. At its meeting on 25 February 2010, council approved the budget for 2010/11 which included the allocation of funding for a number of Capital schemes in schools.
2. A number of these schemes are now at a stage where they are ready to commence and further Executive approval is required before these can progress. Details of these schemes are set out at paragraphs 5-7 below.
3. The council is also required to have an approved Schools Accessibility Strategy which underpins its and schools' approaches to the issue of access for the disabled. This has been the subject of consultation and has now reached a stage where the strategy requires formal approval. The details are set out at paragraph 8-10 below. The capital programme provides a sum of £579k which is proposed to be allocated in accordance with the strategy.
4. Similarly, there are a number of projects which have recently been approved under delegated authority by the Director of Childrens' Services, Portfolio Holder for Childrens' Services, Director of Customer and Shared Services and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources. Executive is asked to note that these schemes have been approved to commence. Details are set out at paragraph 11 below.

Named major schemes

5. Etonbury Middle School – Provision of additional places:
The project is wholly externally funded and is to provide additional pupil places in response to recent housing developments in the area utilising the approved S106 planning obligations funding. The actual number of places to be provided will be determined by the available funding but follows on from the project to expand provision at Roecroft Lower School which is a feeder school to Etonbury. Currently, the available S106 funds are £941k which is an increase on the sums originally set out in the capital programme. A copy of the full Outline Business Case (OBC) is attached at Appendix A
6. Tithe Farm Lower School - Refurbishment:
The scheme involves the use of £1.774m Primary Capital Funding to transform the "tired" and unsuitable accommodation at Tithe Farm Lower School to provide a 21st Century environment capable of providing accommodation fit to meet the needs of teaching and learning and to support the local Community in this deprived area of Central Bedfordshire. Tithe Farm is also in an area which has been identified for significant growth in the future through the LDF process, so will need to form part of the future plans for the area. A copy of the full OBC is attached at Appendix B

7. Holmemead Middle School - ASD Provision:
The project is to ensure that there is adequate provision at the school to enable the creation of a new 8 place ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) unit as approved by Executive in December 2009. The re-provisioning of the Library and ICT Suite in a new build attached to the Sports Hall, will enable the alteration of the existing spaces to become the ASD Provision and ancillary areas at a cost of £550k. It includes an extension and alterations to the car park to allow a pick up and drop off area for the pupils attending the provision. A copy of the full OBC is attached at Appendix C.

Accessibility Strategy and the Schools Access Initiative

8. Under Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) schools and LAs must not treat disabled students less favourably without justification, and must make reasonable adjustments to ensure they are not disadvantaged compared to their peers. Instead they must plan strategically to increase access to schools and the curriculum over time. Schools must produce an accessibility plan setting out how they will do this, the council must produce an accessibility strategy.
9. A new Central Bedfordshire Schools Accessibility strategy for 2010 – 2012 has been produced with support from the Central Beds Access Group and, following consultation with schools, was considered by the Learning Transformation Board at its meeting in January 2010. The final draft of the Strategy is attached as Appendix D and Executive is invited to formally approve this as the council's Schools Accessibility Strategy.
10. In support of the council's statutory duty, the DCSF has allocated financial support through the Schools Access Initiative and this is reflected in the 2010 capital programme. In terms of the allocation of funding, this is available to all community, Voluntary Controlled and Foundation schools and the priority for the use of funding is set out in Appendix 1 of the strategy. This is a rolling programme to support a number of small projects across schools which is proposed to be managed under delegated authority. A full copy of the OBC is attached at Appendix E

Other capital schemes approved under delegated authority

11. other capital schemes have recently been approved under delegated authority, namely:
- Arnold Middle School – Phase 3
 - Gilbert Inglefield Middle School – New food Technology
 - Parkfields Middle School – New food Technology
 - Grant funding for improvements to Kitchen and dining rooms

The full OBCs for these are set out at Appendices F, G, H and I respectively.

Conclusion and Next Steps

12. All the schemes set out above are at a stage where they are ready to be delivered. Approvals are therefore sought to ensure that the schemes can now be progressed. The council's Corporate Asset Management Group considered the business cases referred to in this report on the 21st January 2010 and approved them for recommendation to the Executive.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Etonbury Middle School OBC
Appendix B – Tithe Farm Lower School OBC
Appendix C – Holmemead Middle School OBC
Appendix D – Schools Accessibility Strategy (Final Draft)
Appendix E – Schools Access Initiative OBC
Appendix F – Arnold Middle School OBC
Appendix G – Gilbert Inglefield Middle School OBC
Appendix H – Parkfields Middle School OBC
Appendix I – Kitchen and Dining room Improvements OBC

Background Papers: None