

Schools Capital Suitability Update

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Schools' Capital Subgroup has recently reviewed all issues highlighted through the suitability surveys that were carried out in all schools eligible for Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding, and have agreed a list of schemes to move forward for approval.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to inform Schools' Forum which schemes have been selected by Schools' Capital Subgroup and to seek approval for these proposed schemes.

2. Background

- 2.1. In 2014 it was agreed, by a Schools' Forum Task and Finish Group, that the priorities for DSG would be to ensure that all buildings were wind and water tight; primary cooking and nutrition curriculum provision; secondary science provision; and building issues affecting the delivery of the curriculum.
- 2.2. In order to fairly assess the needs of each school it was agreed to carry out suitability surveys, applying Department of Education methodology which assesses whether areas within a school (teaching and non teaching) are fit for purpose. A proforma for each school was created which provided details of every room i.e. room number, type, size etc. This proforma, along with a floor plan and suitability guidance was emailed to all schools and visits were arranged with each school individually to discuss the process.
- 2.3. There were a significantly high number of issues highlighted that far outstretched the budget available (£942,000.00). Issues highlighted that fell in to category A 'unable to teach curriculum' and category B 'teaching methods inhibited' were progressed forward for feasibility assessment and costing. These schemes alone had an estimated total cost of £4,233,689.
- 2.4. Schools' Capital Sub Group made the decision to prioritise the issues that posed a health & safety risk. In November 2015 Hartlepool Borough Council's Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team reviewed highlighted issues and gave advice on associated risk. A Task and Finish Group convened to take on this advice and prioritise potential schemes.
- 2.5. Issues not deemed to be a health and safety risk were discounted, those that were deemed to be to be a risk were categorised as high, medium or low priority. The group agreed that all 'high' and 'medium' priority schemes be selected for progression.

3. Selected Schemes for Approval

- 3.1. Appendix 1 of this report details the high priority health and safety issues submitted for approval. Appendix 2 of this report details the medium priority health and safety issues submitted for approval.
- 3.2. Total estimated costs for schemes with a high or medium priority health & safety risk are £968,033.20 (high priority - £664,033.20, medium priority - £304,000.00). 10% of costs for all schemes will need to be met by individual school budgets. This brings down the total cost to the DSG budget to £871,229.88 (high priority - £597,629.88, medium priority £273,600.00).
- 3.3. Costs provided in the feasibility assessments were for guidance only. It is likely that the cost of each scheme will change however; the expectation is that, where the nature of the work does not change considerably, the actual cost should not differ that much from what is quoted.
- 3.4. If further funding is available Schools' Capital Sub Group would like to review the low risk issues to see if there is any merit in progressing some of the lower cost schemes.

4. Primary Cooking & Nutrition Curriculum Provision

- 4.1. As part of the suitability survey process primary schools gave feedback on their current ability to meet the cooking and nutrition curriculum. Nine schools felt that they needed additional facilities put into their school to help them meet this element of the curriculum. In some cases these were simple changes to current facilities, others need building extensions to accommodate further kitchen space. A total estimated cost to meet these changes is £379,449.00.
- 4.2. A Task and Finish Group met on the 13th January to review the issues associated with the primary cooking and nutrition curriculum. The suggested schemes were considered and it was agreed cooking was a small part of the overall primary curriculum with schools only needing to dedicate 1 day per half term to this subject. It was felt that some of the suggested schemes and associated costs were not proportionate to the curriculum; and that this was not a good use of public money.
- 4.3. The Cooking & Nutrition Task and Finish Group agreed that, rather than commit £380,000 to make the suggested adjustments to schools, it would be better to broker support from secondary schools, that can accommodate, or Hartlepool College of Further Education. A scoping exercise will be carried out to see how feasible this would be and options papers will be presented to the task and finish group by the end of the current school term. Some funding may need to be allocated to support this however, it is expected that this will be much lower than the quotes to make changes to school buildings.
- 4.4. It was raised at Schools' Capital Subgroup that there are other elements of the curriculum, such as ICT, that are underfunded in primary schools and should take priority over cooking and nutrition. It was requested that the priorities for this funding be reconsidered to take this into consideration.

5. Secondary Science Provision

- 5.1. Through the suitability surveys St Hild's highlighted that they require changes to their science labs with a total estimated cost of £309,625.00. A science specialist has reviewed the proposals and believes that they are unnecessary, though they did recognise that some smaller scale adjustments would be of benefit.
- 5.2. £325,000 is currently being held in relation to science labs at English Martyrs, pending confirmation from the EFA regarding where this academy is in the Priority School Build Programme – Phase 2 timetable.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. It is recommended that the identified high priority schemes, with an estimated value of £597,629.88, and medium priority schemes, with an estimated value of £273,000, are approved.
- 6.2. Funding priorities relating to specific areas of the curriculum should be reconsidered to see if they are still relevant and match the needs of schools.