



# **Title of report: Local Authority School Building Maintenance Works 2026 - 2028**

**Decision maker: Cabinet member children and young people**

**Decision Date: 25 February 2026**

**Report by: Sufficiency, Planning and Capital Investment Manager**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

To approve the proposed expenditure of capital grant funding for school building maintenance works and Aylestone School improvement works.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) **The Service Director for Education, Skills and Learning be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the programme of works, and any urgent contingency schemes required, within the approved budget of £3.97 million for school maintenance projects over financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28 (subject to Full Council approval);**
- b) **The Service Director for Education, Skills and Learning be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the additional programme of works, within the additional approved budget of £2.79 million for Aylestone School improvement works over financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28 (subject to full council approval);**
- c) **The Service Director for Education, Skills and Learning be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to vary the programme of works should the amount of funding received from the Department for Education differ from that used to determine the initial programme of works; and**
- d) **The Service Director for Education, Skills and Learning be authorised to take all operational decisions relating to the procurement and award of contracts for the above programmes of work.**

## **Alternative options**

1. The maintenance grant supporting building works in schools could be profiled differently. The schemes will be determined based on the most recent condition reports produced for each school. The profile will be produced by the consultants undertaking the update of the condition reports and will be considered extensively by the school's capital investment strategy team, the Council's property services section and the capital strategy consultative group (involving headteachers). The proposed works will address the known priorities.
2. Not to undertake any capital works at Aylestone School. This is not recommended as the school estate will continue to deteriorate further which will place further pressure on the school and the Council's finance in the future. Further deterioration may also mean the school will be unable to operate normally which could impact on the school community.

## **Key considerations**

3. The Department for Education (DfE) provides capital funding to local authorities responsible for schools. This funding includes the schools condition allocation which is intended for the maintenance of community and voluntary controlled schools.
4. The distribution of this funding is determined in accordance with the principles set out in the school's capital investment strategy and is based on regularly updated condition surveys.
5. The capital funding for Aylestone School improvement works will be used to address current issues around the school estate that have been identified. This includes, but is not limited to, whole school boiler replacement, remedial works to Broadlands House and re-roofing the CDT Block.
6. The maintenance grant is to support large scale improvement work in community and voluntary controlled schools. Grant monies not allocated or spent within a financial year can be retained

by the Council for use in the following years. The council must complete statutory returns which include details of where the funding has been spent.

7. Academy and free schools have access to the DfE's Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) for building works, both maintenance and improvements. They cannot utilise the maintenance grant.
8. Voluntary Aided schools have access to School Condition Allocations (SCA) and Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). The SCA will be co-ordinated by their respective dioceses and archdioceses. Where a school is not associated with one of these bodies, they will have access to the bid-based CIF. They cannot utilise the maintenance grant.
9. The national schools funding formula means all schools receive a relatively small, devolved formula capital allocation to support minor maintenance or improvement works. Schools may convert revenue budgets to capital to assist with these works. Bigger maintenance schemes like the replacement of a roof, a new heating system or windows, are funded through the central maintenance grant awarded to the council for community and voluntary controlled schools. Denominational and academy schools will have use of CIF and diocesan SCA to support these large schemes. Opportunities for schools to contribute to works by using their devolved formula capital allocation or school balances will always be explored by council officers in discussion with schools.
10. The sums allocated to local authorities are determined by the DfE and are published on the government website. Maintenance work is prioritised based on up-to-date condition surveys and site visits conducted by our consultants.
11. There are still various priority items from the previous batch of school condition surveys, undertaken in 2022, that are yet to be delivered. There is also insufficient budget to address all the maintenance and condition issues highlighted in Council maintained schools, as indicated by the last set of condition surveys. An estimated £15 million was required for investment over the five-year period covered by the surveys compared with SCA receipts of approximately £1.2 million per year.
12. To prioritise the expenditure, all maintained school condition surveys are scrutinised to identify the most significant and pressing works that are highlighted as requiring attention. In addition, priority is given to health and safety work regarding fire safety arising from routine inspections of schools by qualified fire safety officers and any safeguarding arrangements that are considered a potential safeguarding risk.
13. A new set of condition reports are currently being undertaken and expected to be completed by the end of June 2026. These reports will be used to create the maintenance programme for the next three years 2027/28 through to 2029/2030. The consultants undertaking the new surveys have been commissioned to produce a programme of works to cover the three-year period based on the findings of the reports. It is expected as a minimum that all priority 1 works (those requiring immediate remedial works or replacements) will be included in the programme.
14. It is not always possible to foresee all schemes that need to be undertaken in any one year. An element of emergency / contingency funding is therefore set aside to cover such events that cannot wait to be included in a future year's funding.
15. Due to the insufficient budget available from the DfE for addressing condition items in schools, not all priority items from the 2022 condition reports were able to be addressed. In addition to this the number and cost of urgent unforeseen works has been increasing annually. These urgent works have impacted on the programme of works put forward for 2023/24-2025/26 financial years. This has resulted in a number of items being deferred from the programme. In order to address the outstanding priority items and the deferred works without impacting on future years' funding from the DfE, a request for additional capital to deliver these works has been made and

is currently subject to Full Council approval in February 2026. If approved, these works will be carried out in the 2026/27 financial year.

16. The programme of works for 2026 - 2028 and the additional capital maintenance request will address key priorities only to keep the estate operational (safe, wind and watertight). They will not include any retrofit measures to align the buildings with the aim of the council to be net zero carbon. Where possible, works will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance. Past examples include the addition of increased insulation in roofing schemes and installation of LED lighting when ceilings were replaced.
17. The works specifically for Aylestone School will look to replace plant equipment that is currently over its end of life, address major structural concerns in Broadlands House (allowing it to be brought back into use) and ensuring that buildings around the campus are all safe, wind and watertight. Undertaking these specific works will reduce the burden of future maintenance costs at Aylestone School.
18. Although this programme doesn't seek to directly address the Council's concerns around climate change, schools do play an important role in achieving the Council's net zero aspirations. To this end a consultant was engaged to deliver a set of Heat Decarbonisation Plans for all maintained schools as a separate piece of work. These plans have informed the council of how schools can become carbon neutral and whether the site is cost effective to do so.
19. Approval for variations that can be covered within the available budget will follow the Council's governance processes. Where there is insufficient budget to cover the work required consideration will be given to reducing the scope of works, using some of the contingency, making an application to council for additional funding or, as a last resort, deferring the scheme to a future year.
20. All capital work will be procured in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules.

### **Community impact**

21. Schools are a key part of communities and as such it is important that they are well maintained. Parents are encouraged to choose a school suitable for their child.
22. Using the resources available to the Council to ensure that Herefordshire's school buildings are well maintained and fit for purpose supports the Council's County Plan ambition to strengthen communities to ensure that everyone lives well and safely together and the Children & Young People's Plan pledge of helping children and young people succeed – be amazing. The proposed works will include mitigation of potential health and safety and safeguarding risks, aim to promote well maintained buildings which are more cost effective to run and therefore benefit all pupils, including looked after children and care leavers.
23. The schemes fit within the school's capital investment strategy which sets out the Council's approach to delivering the legal duty to ensure there are enough school places for the children in its area. In Herefordshire this will be done in a way that supports the delivery of high-quality education and contributes to the attractiveness of the county as a place to live and work.
24. The schemes fit within the corporate property strategy whose aims are to support and help deliver public integrated services across the county with the vision to support the efficient integrated delivery of public services across the county by providing modern, fit for purpose buildings, shared by public agencies.

## Environmental impact

25. This decision / proposal seeks to deliver the Council's environmental policy commitments and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.
  - a) Reduce the council's carbon emissions
  - b) Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
  - c) Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
26. The Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
27. The environmental impact of this proposal has been considered through the service specification and includes appropriate requirements on the contractor/delivery partner to minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions and to consider opportunities to enhance biodiversity. This will be managed and reported through the ongoing contract management.
28. Replacement of assets provides a means of improving building service installations, for instance using more efficient light fittings and controls to better manage heating systems. These proposals will contribute towards the delivery of the aims in the Council's corporate plan to 'support improvement in the quality of the natural and built environment' and 'to make best use of the resources available to meet the Council's priorities' as well as improve the Council's energy efficiency, reduce its carbon footprint and provide cost savings.
29. Environmental measures will be considered as part of each scheme to support the Council's Carbon management Plan's target and areas of work for projects and schools and academies. Each scheme will be looked at independently to assess what additional features can be integrated into the scheme to improve the environmental performance of the school for example, additional insulation in a roof replacement scheme.
30. The environmental measures to be incorporated within the build will support the Council's Carbon Management Plan's target and areas of work for projects and Schools & Academies.
31. Opportunities to access grant funding for environmental improvement works, for example, Salix funding, will be explored. The use of this funding will ensure that an energy efficient scheme is implemented and will release funding from the maintenance grant to be utilised on other schools.
32. The development of this project has sought to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

## Equality duty

33. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
34. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this programme, and it has been found to have no impact for equality.

## Resource implications

35. Grants available to fund maintenance are shown in the table below. The maintenance grant for 2026/27 and 2027/28 are expected to be in the region of £2.4 million, in line with previous years' receipts. Announcements of the actual value of the grant is not due until March 2026 for the 2026/27 allocation and March 2027 for the 2027/28 allocation. The budget in the capital programme for 2026/27 and 2027/28 is currently £4.56 million and £2.2 million respectively. The figures will be adjusted by the S151 officer once the final award is announced. Given the above, the below figures will vary to match the actual grant award. The creation of a programme of works prior to receipt of funding enables scoping of the projects to be undertaken in the months leading up to the school summer holidays, which is the best time to complete the works, that is, when the buildings are unoccupied. This will also provide the best opportunity to spend the funding within the financial year in which it is received.
36. Should additional maintenance funding be received consideration will be given to adding further schemes to the programme of work. Should less funding be received consideration will be given to reducing the level of contingency to enable the programme for works as proposed to be delivered or removing schemes to fit within the reduced budget available.
37. An element of contingency funding has been allocated in each year to cover cost variations of planned work. As it is not always possible to foresee all schemes that need to be undertaken in any one year (urgent capital works), the contingency funding will also be used to cover such events that cannot wait to be included in a future years' funding.
38. Ongoing maintenance costs will be covered by the school's revenue budget so there will be no impact on the council's revenue budget in future years.

Capital cost of project	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>LA Planned Maintenance Programme (including fees)</i>	2,570	1,000	0	0	3,570
LA Maintenance contingency	200	200	0	0	400
Aylestone School Improvement Works	1,790	1,000	0	0	2,790
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,560</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,760</b>

Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>LA Maintenance Grant (provisional figure)</i>	1,200	1,200	0	0	2,400
<i>Corporate Funded Borrowing (subject to full council approval)</i>	0	1,000	0	0	1,000
<i>Capital Receipts Reserve (subject to full council approval)</i>	3,360	0	0	0	3,360
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,560</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,760</b>

39. The school's capital investment strategy sets out the expectation that where appropriate, schools contribute to the costs of capital works. Schools have their own devolved formula capital to cover minor maintenance works in accordance with Annex O (Schedule of Maintenance Responsibility) of the Herefordshire Council's Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools or Local Management of Schools (LMS). Where works are of a greater scale, or encompass some minor maintenance works, schools are expected to contribute alongside consideration of the Council's responsibilities for maintenance of maintained schools.

### **Legal implications**

40. The legal implications have been set out in other parts of this report.

### **Risk management**

41. By not undertaking the maintenance programme, more children will be attending schools with defects, including those that are considered health and safety concerns. This programme will address the highest known risks within the funding available.
42. The final scheme costs are significantly above or below the forecast. All schemes will be monitored by the school maintenance project board which meets monthly to review the programme. Education, property services and corporate programme management officers also meet weekly to discuss the individual schemes. Where there are variances to works, or tender process, these will be subject to the council's governance arrangements.

### **Consultees**

43. A political group consultation was conducted on 29 January 2026 in which 8 Councillors attended. Questions were raised around why the DfE were not picking up the additional cost for maintenance of the school estate. It was explained that the amount received is derived from a funding formula and that no other additional funding was available from DfE. It is also up to Herefordshire Council to maintain its school estate. A further question asked was whether the capital funding would lead to a reduction in future revenue funding. This will be the case on some schemes due to be delivered however the benefit in reduced revenue funding will be to the benefit to the school's revenue budget.
44. One Councillor asked whether we have investigated any grant funding opportunities for Broadlands House as it is a Grade II listed building. This will be explored further with our consultant to ensure the Council benefit from any funding opportunities available.

### **Appendices**

45. None.

### **Background papers**

46. None.