

17 EDUCATION CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Report By: HEAD OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

1. To provide the Committee with details of the current capital programme, identify issues to be addressed to improve the monitoring of that programme, and to consider priorities for future capital expenditure particularly 2004/5 and 2005/6.

Financial Implications

2. The current capital programme has been developed and is being implemented within available resources. Approval to future capital work will be sought when resources are available.

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Setting Priorities

3. Capital investment in schools must reflect the needs identified in the assessments of condition, suitability, and sufficiency within the Education Asset Management Plan. Following the work carried out in 2001/02, 9 Priorities have been set in the local policy statement of the Education Asset Management Plan. They are as follows:
 1. To ensure a **sufficient supply of school places** – major additions to the sixth form accommodation at Ledbury, John Masefield High School and Ross, John Kyrle High School are in hand. In addition, the temporary classroom programme is being used to ensure that a number of other schools have sufficient accommodation.
 2. To maintain **safe and secure buildings** – a maintenance programme of more than £1m has been established to ensure that schools are safe and weathertight.
 3. To ensure **efficient provision of school places** – at present there are no proposals to reduce capacity that would involve capital expenditure.
 4. To ensure that **access for children with disability** is provided at primary or secondary schools unless there is a good reason not to – £225,000 under the Disabled Access initiative is being spent, some in the form of strategic investment to ensure there are high schools in all part of the County accessible by pupils with mobility difficulties, and some to support individual children in various schools.

5. To ensure that the statutory requirements of the **School Premises Regulations** are met, particularly as they relate to playingfields, medical inspection rooms, toilets and staff facilities – negotiations are in hand to purchase land to provide a playingfield for Fairfield High School. A new playingfield is being laid out at Weobley Primary School.
6. To ensure that improved facilities are provided in **village schools** – work is at various stages to provide new schools at Lea, Cradley and Stauton on Wye, and site acquisition is proceeding for a replacement school at Sutton St. Michael.
7. To provide sufficient **science laboratories** suited to the curriculum for all high school pupils – a rolling programme to improve science provision in all high schools will resolve all high priority needs.
8. To provide dedicated **indoor PE spaces** in all high schools with more than 600 pupils – Kingstone and Weobley High School lack a dedicated indoor PE space. A Stage 2 bid has been made for a Sportshall at Kingstone under the New Opportunities Funds for PE and Sport in Schools. Initial design work is also taking place at Weobley High School.
9. To **maximise capital investment** in schools throughout the county – bids continue to be made where funding opportunities present themselves. A bid to provide a resource centre at Lord Scudamore Primary School (and in so doing increase the size of the school site) has been made under the Classrooms for the Future Initiative.

Expenditure within the Current Programme

Current spending reflects:

- (a) final payments on capital schemes
- (b) monthly payments on schemes under contract.
- (c) design fees on projects which have not yet been contractually committed.

A full list of schemes (other than the maintenance programme) is set out under all three categories, in Appendix 1.

Assessment of Programme

It has been suggested that successful implementation of the programme should be assessed in terms of:

- (a) Have the programmes delivered what schools wanted and met the objectives?
- (b) Was the programme achieved within budget?
- (c) Was the programme achieved on time?

There have been informal assessments of how each project has performed against each of the 3 criteria above, but it is now proposed to undertake this more systematically. A draft questionnaire for schools to complete is attached at Appendix 2. Currently, informal feedback confirms that school needs are generally met, with some isolated examples of poor performance by some consultants, resulting in continuing problems, which, in some cases, which may need to be resolved by contract enforcement.

The programme as a whole has been managed within the capital resources available. However, a number of individual schemes have been found to be over-budget at tender stage, for a variety of reasons, including limited feasibility work at the budget setting stage, changes to the brief increasing demands during the design period, and some volatility in the construction industry. In such instances solutions have been found by reducing the brief and/or finding alternative funding sources, whilst still allowing the main objective of the project to be achieved.

Generally, it has been possible to spend resources within the year in which they are available, so losses of funding have been avoided. However, some individual projects have not been completed by the date when schools expected to be able to use them. Delay has generally been caused by funding difficulties, planning and site acquisition issues, the workload of design teams, and the efficiency of the construction process. Improvements need to be made, to ensure that everyone responsible for projects clearly understands the required timescale.

Looking to the future there is significant work to be undertaken to meet the 9 priorities set in 2002. For example:

1. *To ensure a **sufficient supply of school places***

Although pupil numbers overall will decline, a few schools are likely to continue to face pressure from additional pupils. There will therefore be a need to maintain a programme allowing the transfer and/or additional provision of temporary classrooms. Contributions will be expected from housing developers where extra pupil numbers at particular schools arise from new housing developments.

2. *To maintain **safe and secure buildings***

The cost of the outstanding maintenance works is estimated to be £15 million. An annual programme of at least £1 m needs to be maintained so as to reduce the back log. There is a particular problem at Fairfield High School where the Design/Technology block has reached the end of its life.

3. *To ensure **efficient provision of school places***

There are no expenditure proposals under this heading at present, though the need could emerge if practical proposals to rationalise provision are developed.

4. *To ensure that **access for children with disability** is provided at primary or secondary schools unless there is a good reason not to*

It is expected that the DfES will maintain funding under the Disabled Access Initiative. Strategic investment for high schools will need to be considered as part of the Building Schools for the Future Programme.

5. *To ensure that the statutory requirements of the **School Premises Regulations** are met, particularly as they relate to playingfields, medical inspection rooms, toilets and staff facilities*

A number of high and primary schools have unsatisfactory provision of playingfields, toilets, medical inspection rooms, etc. It is expected that schools will use their devolved capital to meet such needs where costs involved is modest. The Council will have to address the problems where costs are more significant, as in the case of playingfields for Fairfield High and Little Dewchurch primary.

6. *To ensure that improved facilities are provided in **village schools***

Future programmes will need to address the needs at Sutton (replacement school) and Kington (refurbishment extension).

7. *To provide sufficient **science laboratories** suited to the curriculum for all high school pupils*

Although all high priority schemes should have been completed, there is still work to refurbish the remaining laboratories at an approximate cost of £2 million to consider. This would have to be considered in the context of Building Schools for the Future programme.

8. *To provide dedicated **indoor PE spaces** in all high schools with more than 600 pupils*

Reserves to build a sportshall at Weobley High School, at the estimated cost of £1.2 million still need to be identified.

9. *To **maximise capital investment** in schools throughout the county*

The DfES have launched the initiative '**building for the future**' in which all high schools in the country will be replaced or refurbished between 2005 and 2020. An invitation from the DfES is expected in July to submit a bid for an early start to this programme from 2005-06. The DfES have suggested that packages of work with a value of £150 million will be supported, and initially a package which includes schools with poor performance and high school deprivation will be favoured. Although those criteria would seem not to give Herefordshire high priority, the DfES have also indicated that they may wish to support a rural pilot and a case for improved performance and deprivation as a result of low increases can be made. At this stage, it is not clear what cost would have to be borne locally and how it would be linked to the new prudential code method of capital funding.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked -

- (i) **to comment on existing programmes.**
- (ii) **to consider the priorities previously set, and the opportunities, to meet these priorities.**
- (iii) **to express a view on the response to be adopted on the Government initiative on 'building (high) schools for the future'.**

For further information on the subject of this report is available from
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