

MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF CAPITAL SCHEMES

Report By: HEAD OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

1. To report on capital expenditure for 2004/05 and to provide information about progress towards replacement of Staunton-on-Wye Primary School, and the prospect for "Building Schools for the Future".

Financial Implications

2. As set out within the report.

Report

Capital Expenditure

3. Projected expenditure on capital projects in Education for 2004/05 is summarised in Appendix 1. Projected spend on completed projects with final payment still to be made is shown in aggregate at the top of the table. Projects are shown individually where building contracts have been let and construction is underway, or where projects are still at the design stage.
4. During 2004/05, major building schemes will be completed at Lea Primary School (June 2004), Green Croft Early Excellence Centre (July 2004) and Cradley Primary School (October 2004). The users of each of these buildings will be asked to comment on the outcome of the project. The results will be reported at the next meeting of this Committee. Design work is currently underway on major schemes at:

Weobley High School	Improvements to staff and administrative accommodation, refurbishment of Science laboratories, provision of Library/ICT area and improved car parking area.
Fairfield High School	Construction of new Design Technology block and Art room.
Ledbury Primary School	New Nursery accommodation.
Kington Primary School	New Nursery accommodation in conjunction with a Sure Start Family Centre.

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5. Acquisition of the new site for the replacement Whitecross High School was not completed during the last financial year, as anticipated, but the acquisition will need to be completed this summer to allow the PFI scheme to proceed. Allowance also needs to be made for other land acquisition at Staunton-on-Wye, Sutton St. Nicholas and Little Dewchurch.

Staunton-on-Wye Primary School

6. The planning application for outline permission to use a field for primary school purposes caused some opposition in the village to the extent that the need for a new school was questioned.
7. In December 2001, the DfES gave approval for replacement of Staunton-on-Wye Primary School. As a Voluntary Aided School, a grant of £780,000 was allocated to the School Governors who have engaged the Property Services Department to act as their agents for this scheme.
8. The bid by the Governors to the DfES was supported by the Council, on the basis that a 3-class school with a maximum capacity of 70 should be built. This equates to the size of the existing school. It is anticipated that there will be approx. 45 children from the catchment area, with additional places being filled by out of area children, under the general policy for scope to be allowed for parental preference. It is acknowledged that there is sufficient places in surrounding schools to cater for the anticipated number of children. However, the catchment area is large, and the nearest alternative schools are some distance away at Eardisley, Madley and Weobley and Credenhill.
9. As a school constructed in the 1850s, Staunton-on-Wye lacks many of the facilities required for 21st century teaching. It does not have adequately sized classrooms, hall and practical areas, and has no provision for ICT or group rooms. A recent Health and Safety report also noted that the school suffers from a lack of a staff room and medical inspection room, with the Headteacher's office being used for inspections and consultations. Concerns have also been raised about the lack of security lighting around the building and there has been one accident reported on the stone staircase.
10. As a three-storey building, the school cannot comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, and the school currently relocates classes to the ground floor to accommodate a pupil with physical disabilities.
11. A recent condition survey report also confirmed that the building will continue to require significant expenditure to keep it safe and operational.
12. Numerous locations around the village were identified and assessed as possible sites for the replacement school, but, in conjunction with Planning and Highways Officers, a site at Bliss Hall Farm has been proposed, with an Outline Planning Application submitted, which should be determined on 16th June 2004.
13. Given the objections raised locally, the matter was discussed by the School Organisation Committee on 26th May, 2004, where it was resolved that the replacement school at Staunton on Wye should proceed as originally planned.
14. Since approval was given in December 2001, revised estimates, which also reflect inflation in the construction industry, suggest that the cost of the scheme will rise above the level of the grant. The total cost will be off set by a capital receipt from the existing school, leaving a net amount to be funded by the DfES grant 90% and Governors 10%. The liability of the Council, as LEA, is limited to the cost of that area of the site that will

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be used for playing fields. Such costs to the Council would include both the value of the land and the professional and legal fees in completing that acquisition.

Building Schools for the future.

15. The DfES have provided comments on the Herefordshire bid during a lengthy conference call in May. The conversation covered a number of issues in some detail, including the following main points.

- i. Ministers decided to support no more 'pilot' authorities as they felt that there was not a great deal to be learnt over and above the lessons from the first 4 pilot schemes. It was acknowledged that there were issues linked to rural authorities but not sufficient to allocate monies away from areas of high deprivation and poor performance on which they wanted to concentrate on in the first wave.
- ii. The Herefordshire bid was good. The Education vision covered all areas of particular interest to the DfES. The ICT proposals were interesting, particularly in terms of support for the community and the practical problems of delivery. Provision for Special Educational Needs was very good. The 14-19 agenda requires additional work to translate a strategy into an action plan.

In terms of the ability to deliver, the bid was realistic. More detail on how each school would have been managed within the 5-year programme would have been liked. [This is contrary to the earlier DfES guidance.]

The Herefordshire bid was, however, assessed as being "high risk" in terms of what the DfES have called "corporate capacity". The relative small size of the Authority and our limited experience with the single PFI project led them to this assessment.

iii. The Way Forward

It is anticipated that an announcement will be made later this year on the schemes to be given approval to start in 2006/07 and 2007/08. Other authorities may also be informed of the 'slot' they would be given in the programme to 2020. Given that rural issues have not been addressed, the possibility of a rural project, which, solely on the grounds of school performance and levels of deprivation, would not be given high priority, may be included in an earlier year. There were at least 2 other rural authorities which had expressed an interest in being a rural pilot.

- iv. At the end of the conversation, the DfES indicated that they were not at this stage seeking any further information or clarification/revision of Herefordshire's earlier submission.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT The Committee comment on any issues of concern arising from the capital programme progress report, and through the information reports on Staunton-on-Wye and "Building Schools for the Future".

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- **None identified.**

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