

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

TUESDAY 14TH JUNE 2022

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION: COUNCILLOR FIONA BAKER

Report Title School Minor Works budget: To address condition issues in West Northamptonshire Maintained Schools Estate – 2022/23

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Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Paul Hanson on behalf of Catherine Whitehead	30/05/2022
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Other Director/SME	Chris Kiernan – interim Director of Children’s Services	30/05/2022
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Gavin Moore	30/05/2022

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide Members with all the necessary information to make a fully informed decision on the recommendations below to approve the ‘School’s Minor Works’ budget for 2022/23 which will be funded by the Department for Education (DfE) ‘School Condition Allocation’ grant.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The 'School's Minor Works' scheme commissions condition surveys on property within the authority's school estate, which in turn inform condition works which need to be undertaken to ensure that the local authority fulfils its statutory obligation of keeping pupils 'safe, warm and dry.'
- 2.2 West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is responsible for maintaining school buildings and sites at all schools in West Northamptonshire with 'Community', 'Voluntary Controlled' and 'Foundation' status, but does not include those that form part of a PFI contract.
- 2.3 There are 47 schools (all primary schools) that fall within the categories outlined above and for which WNC is responsible for maintenance.
- 2.4 All Local Authorities receive 'School Condition Allocation' (SCA) funding annually from the DfE for the purposes outlined above. WNC's allocation of SCA funding for the 22/23 financial year, for maintained schools, is £1,732,900.
- 2.5 Voluntary aided schools, Multi-academy trusts, non-maintained special schools and specialist post-16 institutions receive their funding allocations directly and are responsible for their own condition surveys.
- 2.6 In addition to the central funding of £1,732,900. for maintained schools, £413, 050 has been allocated to the LA for forwarding to the schools directly. This is known as the Devolved Formula Capital (DCF) and is a school level allocation.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - a. Approve the 2022/23 'School Minor Works' budget to rectify condition issues in WNC maintained schools, ensuring the Council continues to fulfil its statutory obligation of maintaining its school estate;
 - b. Note that WNC's allocation of 'School Condition Allocation' funding has been confirmed by the DfE at £1,732,900 and that this grant funding will be utilised as WNC's 'School Minor Works' budget for 2022/23;
 - c. Note that any works undertaken under the 'Schools Minor Works' budget will be delivered as part of a rolling programme of conditions surveys at maintained schools in the Local Authority;
 - d. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of condition schemes.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 Reason for Recommendations:

- WNC will continue to fulfil its statutory obligation of maintaining its school estate;
- The recommended course of action is the most effective and prevents delays in procuring essential works;
- Consistency with previous decisions. This is the third year of the ‘School Minor Works’ programme.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 WNC receive ‘School Condition Allocation’ (SCA) funding from central government, the purpose of which is to address condition issues within maintained schools. The amount of SCA funding each local authority receives is announced annually and is linked to the number of maintained schools within that local authority. This funding reduces as schools convert to academy status;
- 5.2 The DfE specify SCA funding should be spent as follows;
‘Investment should be prioritised on keeping school buildings safe and in good working order by tackling poor building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency and health and safety issues.’
- 5.3 West Northamptonshire Council’s SCA funding for 2022/23 has been confirmed at £1,732,900.
- 5.4 The ‘Schools Minor Works’ budget was first established in 2019/20 under Northamptonshire County Council as a mechanism for streamlining the financial and governance for capital schemes designed to address condition issues in maintained schools. The method used previous to this had been reactive and led to delays in addressing condition issues in schools, some of which required immediate attention;
- 5.5 There have been three previous tranches of School Minor Works schemes, in 2019/20, 20/21 and 21/22, where schools with known condition issues or very old condition surveys were prioritised;
- 5.6 This year’s ‘School Minor Works’ scheme builds on the previous tranches to ensure further maintained schools/nursery schools have an up to date condition survey. The results of these surveys will direct the works to be undertaken. The SCA funding from the DfE will fund these works.
- 5.7 WNC will commission a series of condition surveys for the 22/23 tranche of schools, which incorporates 10 schools located within the WNC area.
- 5.8 This rolling programme of condition surveys and associated remedial works aims to ensure all children and young people being educated in the Local Authority are being taught in a ‘safe, warm and dry’ environment.
- 5.9 Each condition survey provides a comprehensive report on the fabric of the school building and site, and any work required to ensure that each building remains ‘safe, warm and dry’. Surveys classify any remedial work required into one of four categories identified below:
1: Urgent - works required immediately or within one year;
2: Essential – required within 2 years;

- 3: Desirable – required within 5 years;
- 4: Desirable – works not anticipated to be required within 5 years;

- 5.10 As with previous tranches, it is proposed that WNC provide funding for remedial works to address condition issues inclusive of categories 1 and 2, where possible. This will ensure WNC maintains the upkeep of school sites and buildings it holds a responsibility for and mitigates any further deterioration to the fabric of the surveyed schools. However, this will be dependent on the cost of works identified and the available budget. Surveys and works to a maximum of £1,732,900 will be progressed in 2022/23.
- 5.11 It is anticipated that the budget will be sufficient to progress the required condition works at this tranche of schools, whilst leaving a small contingency sum within the wider budget to address any emergency works that are required at maintained schools within the WNC area over the course of the 22/23 financial year.
- 5.12 Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of Children’s Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to authorise and approve, all financial, legal and property arrangements necessary to deliver works required to address condition issues in maintained schools;
- 5.13 Cabinet is asked to note that whilst the Capital Projects team will project manage the delivery of the ‘School Minor Works’ schemes, in certain circumstances, WNC may passport limited amounts of funding to schools, to ensure efficient delivery of a required scheme.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 This paper relates to the fulfilment of WNC’s statutory obligation of maintaining its schools’ estate. If WNC take no action the schools estate will continue to deteriorate and remedial works will represent a greater financial liability when requiring to be addressed in the future.
- 6.2 Failure to address works categorised as ‘urgent’ or ‘required immediately’ will increase the risk of serious health and safety incident(s) occurring, with schools potentially having to close as a result of condition issues and pupils being unable to access education. This is not considered to be a viable option.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 The Schools Minor Works scheme will be funded from the 2022/23 DfE Schools Condition Allocation (SCA) grant of £1,732,900. This funding is provided specifically for the purpose of maintaining the school estate. No schemes over the value of £1,732,900 will be progressed under this budget and this proposal can be considered to be 100% grant funded.

7.1.2 Schemes delivered under ‘School Minor Works’ budget will be managed by colleagues within the Capital Projects team at WNC and sufficient resource within the team has been identified to effectively manage and deliver this proposal.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 WNC has a statutory responsibility to maintain its school estate. Failure to do so could result in serious Health and Safety incidents occurring due to a lack of maintenance and consequentially, possible legal action against WNC, should this proposal not be progressed.

7.3 Risk

a. Risk(s) associated with the proposal

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Costs higher than available budget	All works to be procured through WNC procurement frameworks or with three quotes obtained to ensure best value is achieved. Works will have to be prioritised to ensure all can be delivered within available budget and least urgent works will not be progressed if they exceed available budget.	Green
Increasing construction costs and inflation	The current financial environment within which WNC must operate is unavoidable and the value of schemes that can be delivered within the budget envelope will need to be managed accordingly.	Red
Works undertaken impact on day to day school operation	Works to be planned in conjunction with schools and programmed to minimise impact.	Green

b. Risk(s) associated with not undertaking the proposal

Risk	Risk Rating
Health & Safety incident(s) resulting from poor condition of schools’ estate	Amber
School buildings continue to deteriorate and children and young people access education in ‘unsafe’ buildings	Red
Schools are required to close as a result of poor condition and children and young people are unable to access education	Red
Cost of addressing remedial issues at a later date will increase	Red

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 No statutory consultation is required for this proposal.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 N/A

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 The climate impact of any work progressed will be considered on an individual scheme basis and via the appropriate planning permissions obtained for each scheme that is progressed under this budget.

7.6.2 Where possible, schemes will address energy efficiency concerns within WNC schools and, where this occurs, a small positive climate impact will be realised.

7.7 **Community Impact**

7.7.1 This proposal will have a positive community impact via its improvement of WNC's school estate and ensuring that pupils attending the schools involved are able to access an improved educational environment.

7.8 **Communications**

7.8.1 N/A

8. **Background Papers**

8.1 N/A