

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

8th June 2021

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

Report Title	School Minor Works budget to address condition issues in West Northamptonshire Maintained Schools Estate – 2021/2022
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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 2021/22 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 Local Authority's school estate. These surveys direct the 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 under the PFI contract.
- 2.3 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 21/22 financial year is £1,629,546.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - a) Approve the 2021/22 '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 for 2021/22 has been confirmed by the DfE at £1,629,546 and agree that this grant funding will be utilised as WNC's 'School Minor Works' budget for 2021/22;
 - 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;

4. 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 2021/22 has been confirmed at £1,629,546.
- 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 two previous tranches of School Minor Works schemes, in 2019/20 and 2020/21, 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 It is intended that WNC will commission a series of condition surveys for the 21/22 tranche of schools, which incorporates around 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's maintained schools 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 £1,629,546 will be progressed in 2021/22.
- 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 21/22 financial year.
- 5.12 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. This is particularly likely to apply where the works are best done as part of a wider programme of works the school itself wishes to undertake.
- 5.13 WNC manages maintenance of schools under PFI arrangements, and academy schools under long leases to academy trusts, under different arrangements.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 This paper relates to the fulfilment of WNC’s statutory obligation of maintaining its maintained schools estate. If WNC take no action the schools estate will deteriorate and remedial works will represent a greater financial liability when requiring to be addressed in the future. The grant would also need to be returned to central Government.
- 6.2 Failure to address works categorised as ‘urgent’ or ‘required immediately’ would 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 2021/22 DfE Schools Condition Allocation (SCA) grant of £1,629,546. This funding is provided specifically for the purpose of maintaining the school estate.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 WNC has a statutory responsibility to maintain its maintained 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.

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 to be 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
Covid-19 impacts upon delivery of schemes	Timeframes for delivery arranged in full accordance with schools and in full compliance with all government advice	Green
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.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 N/A

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 These will be considered scheme by scheme and via the appropriate planning permissions obtained for each scheme that is progressed under this budget.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 These will be considered scheme by scheme, however the impact is expected to be positive for pupils, as the condition of the school estate will be improved.

8. Background Papers

8.1 N/A