
PRIMARY SCHOOL CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Responsible Cabinet Member – Cllr Chris McEwan, Children’s Services Portfolio

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of Children’s Services

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with information concerning the Building Schools for the Future: Primary Capital Programme; and to outline the proposed timetable for the development of a long-term capital strategy – *The Primary Strategy for Change*.

Background

2. In his Budget 2005, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a new capital programme to ensure that primary schools and primary-age special schools are well equipped for the 21st century.
3. The overall aim of the Primary Capital Programme is to rebuild, remodel or improve at least half of all primary schools nationally, ensuring that they are appropriately equipped for 21st century learning at the heart of the community, with children’s services in reach of every family. The budget made £150 million extra available in 2008-09, rising to £500 million in 2009-10. It is expected that investment will remain at that level for around 15 years, subject to future public spending decisions. The figure will reach £7 billion in total.
4. It is intended that the primary capital programme will help achieve a number of national strategies already underway. It will particularly support ‘Every Child Matters: Change for Children’, the White Paper ‘Higher Standards, Better Schools for All’, and the Primary Strategy. It also brings together the ten-year childcare strategy, workforce strategy, and ICT and extended schools programmes.

Information and Analysis

5. The Government’s plans for this new, strategic and long-term capital investment programme for the primary sector were set out in the *Every Child Matters: Primary Capital Programme* prospectus issued by the DfES in March 2006.
6. DfES have confirmed that all local authorities will, in 2009/10, begin to receive formulaic funding to commence the Every Child Matters: Primary Capital Programme in their respective area. To date the specific allocations for each authority are not known, but the consultation document indicated that Authorities with 10,000 pupils will receive up to £4 million per funding allocation round. Darlington is anticipated to have around 9000 pupils in 2009/10 and therefore we hope to receive between £3 million and £4 million as an initial allocation.

7. Although the national Primary Capital Programme is expected to allocate capital of around £500 million a year for around 15 years (subject to future spending decisions), it is not yet clear how many years an authority like Darlington can expect to remain in the programme. Funding decisions are currently being considered by DfES and we expect to receive clarity in the autumn of 2007.

Primary Strategy for Change

8. To ensure that investment is targeted at the areas of greatest need and is used to deliver the national aims and objectives of the Programme, the DfES require all local authorities to take a strategic view of investment.
9. This strategic plan, titled *A Primary Strategy for Change* will be developed by the local authority in consultation with stakeholders, and should cover:
 - (a) A baseline analysis of the current picture of provision within the authority. It should include the latest available school-level data on places, building condition, educational performance, deprivation and extended services.
 - (b) The long term strategic aims of the local authority for primary education and how future provision will be shaped using the Primary Capital Programme funding
 - (c) How the authority proposes to approach this transformational change programme, including local issues that may influence future investment decisions e.g. local challenges and priorities, planning, prioritisation, capacity building, design, ICT, procurement.
 - (d) An initial investment plan to demonstrate how the authority will identify priorities and target investment over the initial four years of the programme, in line with the long term aims of the strategy.
10. In October 2007 guidance will be issued to all local authorities regarding the arrangements for completing and submitting these strategic plans. There will be a requirement for every local authority to submit a Strategy in order to release future funding allocations from the DfES. The proposed national timetable is:

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|--------------|--|
| October 2007 | — Guidance issued to all Local authorities |
| April 2008 | — Deadline for submission of local strategies |
| June 2008 | — Local strategies approved/confirmation of indicative allocations |
| April 2009 | — Funding available |
11. In the autumn of 2006, Darlington was announced as one of 23 pathfinder authorities that will lead the development of the DfES primary capital strategy. Pathfinder authorities were selected following a competitive bidding process to identify those with:
 - (a) A clear strategic vision for transforming their primary school estate
 - (b) A proven track record and capacity to deliver; and
 - (c) High quality, replicable and deliverable capital projects.

12. As a pathfinder authority Darlington has been awarded £6.5m to build a new school for the staff and pupils of North Road Primary School. This funding, available in 2008/09, is part of the limited £150m available nationally to pathfinder authorities to enable them to complete exemplar projects for opening in September 2009. Initial consultation and feasibility work on the project is in the early stages but will develop further throughout 2007.
13. In addition to receiving an early allocation of funding, pathfinder authorities are expected to build capacity and share good practice regionally and support the Department in developing and trialing arrangements for the preparation, submission and approval of strategic plans.
14. As a pathfinder authority, the DfES have issued instructions for us to prepare a 'test' version of the Primary Strategy for Change for Darlington. Completion and submission of this document will allow the DfES to test the systems and processes they have in place for managing the whole Primary Capital Programme when it is rolled out to all local authorities in October 2007.
15. A draft guidance document was issued by the DfES at the beginning of June 2007 and local authorities have been asked to complete and submit their 'test' documents by the end of July 2007. It is not the Department's intention to approve or reject the 'test' version at this stage or to hold us to account for any of the assumptions made in the document. The DfES plan to use the 'test' documents submitted by the 23 pathfinder local authorities to trial their internal assessment arrangements.
16. All pathfinder local authorities will still be expected to prepare and submit a full Primary Strategy for Change document by the end of March 2008, along with all other authorities. As a pathfinder authority, Darlington will have the advantage of submitting a 'Primary Strategy for Change' that has already been assessed and tested by DfES.

Outcome of Consultation

Proposed Consultation Programme and Methodology

17. To meet the requirements of the DfES Primary Capital Programme and to effectively plan the investment in local provision, the Authority aims to have in place a new School Organisation Plan and individual school investment strategy for all Darlington schools by April 2008. Below is the proposed timetable for developing these plans:

| Action | Audience | Method | Start | End |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Consult on Criterion to be used | Schools, Parents Governing Bodies. Children's Services LLL Scrutiny. Members. Local Community | Consultation Document | July 2007 | October 2007 |
| Gather information to on individual school issues | Children's Services | N/A | July 2007 | October 2007 |
| Agree Final Criterion and verify data with schools | As Above | N/A | | October 2007 |
| Apply criterion and methodology to all schools, generating investment plan | Cross Sector Steering Group made up of schools and LA Membership | Meetings | | November 2007 |
| Issue and discuss proposed plan | Schools, Parents Governing Bodies, Children's Services LLL Scrutiny Members Local Community | Documentation and Meetings | December 2007 | January 2007 |
| Amend / alter plans in line with comments | Children's Services and Steering group | Documentation | December 2007 | January 07 |
| Issue final documentation to Stakeholders | All Stakeholders | Strategy Document | | January 2008 |
| Develop 2009/10 formulaic investment to reflect proposed plan | Children's Services & Schools | LAMPA Meetings | January 08 | February 2008 |
| Submit final 'Primary Strategy for Change' to DfES | Children's Services | | | March 2008 |

18. The consultation programme and methodology will involve wide ranging discussion and consultation with schools, diocese's, local communities, etc, and should ensure Darlington is in place to implement a proposed primary programme from 2009.
19. The consultation programme and methodology will also address how works to maintain and improve schools not in receipt of funding from the Primary Capital Programme can be funded, and will review how formulaic funding is distributed and targeted at present.
20. The key areas which should be considered in establishing the criteria to be used for developing the investment programme are as follows:
 - (a) Physical condition of existing premises;
 - (b) Suitability of premises to deliver the national curriculum;
 - (c) Sufficiency – i.e. the need for places at a school;
 - (d) Standards – performance attained by school (both KS results and value added);
 - (e) Ofsted reports;
 - (f) Community role;
 - (g) Deliverability of the proposed investment programme;
 - (h) Effect upon parental preference / choice;
 - (i) The ability to offer a place at a local school;
 - (j) Availability of childcare provision;
 - (k) Extended School provision; and
 - (l) Introduction of catchment areas.

This list is not exhaustive and will be further developed as discussions with key stakeholders occur.

Legal Implications

21. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

22. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

23. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

24. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Key Decisions

25. This report affects all wards within the Borough and as such represents a key decision.

Recommendations

26. It is recommended that Members:-

- (a) Note the information provided about the Building Schools for the Future: Primary Capital Programme; and
- (b) Approve the proposed programme and structure for the development of a Primary Strategy for Change to be submitted to DfES by April 2008.

Reason

27. To develop a strategic investment plan for all Primary Schools in Darlington which will ensure the Council is in a position to target future investment through the PCP quickly and effectively.

Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

Every Child Matters: Primary Capital Programme prospectus issued by the DfES in March 2006

DfES Draft Guidance for Pathfinder authorities to test the Primary Strategy for Change - issued June 2007

Rachel Jones: Extension 2026