
**BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE PRIMARY PROGRAMME &
BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE PRIMARY PILOT PROPOSAL**

Purpose

1. To provide Members with information concerning Primary School Capital Investment (including Infant & Junior Schools) and the recently announced Every Child Matters Primary Capital Programme (PCP). Also, to seek approval for the submission of a pilot scheme PCP for consideration of support by the Department for Education & Skills (DfES).

Background

2. The management and planning of school organisation within Darlington has historically been described within the statutory School Organisation Plan (SOP). The last SOP was issued in 2003 and covered the period 2003 – 2008. Although DfES removed the statutory requirement to produce SOPs from 2004, in terms of school place planning, it is still the key document used for describing the Local Authority's plans. Although it was anticipated that the new Children And Young People's Plan (CYPP) would replace the SOP, as it is not intended that SOP issues will be address in CYPP in the first year, a formal school place planning and assets plan is being developed and will be issued in Autumn 2006.

Primary Review

3. In 2001 the development of the SOP and associated Best Value (BV) review set the then Education Department the challenge of managing major changes within the Primary School sector. The BV Plan called for where possible, the amalgamation of Infant & Junior Schools, the creation of Foundation Stage provision in Primary schools, the reduction of surplus places, predicted to run into 18% by 2009, the renewal and replacement of poor accommodation, and the delivery of suitable premises to deliver 21st Century education.
4. The SOP and corresponding review by Life Long Learning Scrutiny Committee identified a number of issues within the Primary sector in Darlington. The result was to ask the Education Department to:
 - (a) Continue to deliver, in line with the BV Plan, the amalgamation of primary schools and or Primary and Nursery schools where trigger points are activated e.g. at the wish of individual schools to amalgamate, the retirement of a serving head teacher, etc.
 - (b) Positively reduce surplus places with smaller new build solutions, amalgamations and potentially school closures.

- (c) Develop a school organisation plan that takes account of new centres of population growth in the Borough (e.g. Middleton St George, Faverdale /West Park); and
- (d) Deliver premises suitable for delivering 21st Century education
5. Since 2001 the Authority has amalgamated and replaced with new build our worst, in terms of physical condition and % surplus places, 3 split site Primary schools at Firthmoor, Skerne Park, Alderman Leach.
 6. In addition a further 3 schools Corporation Road, Harrowgate Hill and Whinfield have also been amalgamated, and Harrowgate Hill was also the subject of a replacement school project which delivered the then Durham County Council's promise of 1970 that the schools would both be relocated onto a new single site.
 7. In addition to removing in total over 550 surplus places, the project at Alderman Leach also transferred the school 1 mile from its original location, closer to the new population centres in West Park and Faverdale.
 8. In the 2 other amalgamations, Whinfield and Corporation Road respectively, refurbishments / alterations have taken place. In each case these modifications were necessary to ensure 2, or in the case of Corporation Road 3 previously separate schools could successfully work together.
 9. Sadly some difficult decisions to close two schools (Sadberge with surplus places at 44% and Rise Carr 25%) have also had to be taken. Again in each closure the Authority considered the effect on the area / local population. The closure of Sadberge was linked to an expansion and new build at Middleton St George creating a new school in the east of the Borough. The majority of Rise Carr pupils were offered places in the 2 local schools within the North Road corridor, Harrowgate Hill and North Road Primary respectively
 10. The Authority is now in a position where 7 of the 24 primary schools in Darlington are in brand new accommodation.
 11. In addition surplus places are at 4% and expected not to rise in the long term (2016). This does not mean however that individual schools may not still be of concern and the % of surplus places in each school is regularly monitored. Equally, fluctuations in birth rate, which in the last 3 years have been upwards, are monitored to ensure long-term needs are fully considered.
 12. Investment continues to be targeted to high priority condition and suitability works in Primary schools, which can now be complemented by a national Capital Strategy for Primary schools "Every Child Matters Primary Capital Programme".

Information and Analysis

Every Child Matters Capital Programme:

13. On 9th March 2006 the Department for Education and Skills produced a consultation paper outlining proposals for a capital investment programme for Primary schools that aims to renew or replace 50% of all Primary schools over a 15-year period.

14. All Authorities would, in 2009/10, receive formulaic funding to commence the Every Child Matters Primary Capital Programme in their respective area. Indications are that Authorities with 10,000 pupils will receive £4 million each year until the programme is complete (in 2009 /10 Darlington is anticipated to have around 9000 pupils) and therefore we can expect between £3million-£4 million per year until 50% of our primary schools are renewed / refurbished.
15. Children's Services is developing a process to undertake a review of Primary School provision in the Borough. We will need to identify, using an option appraisal exercise, the priority schools for investment under the PCP and an alternative strategy for ensuring investment is delivered in all remaining schools.
16. **Appendix 1** contains the principles it is proposed to be used in undertaking such a review. The principles will be linked to a costing profile in order for the Department to identify a rebuild or refurbishment programmes for each school within our annual allocation of funding. This review will ultimately define the schools to be renewed / replaced under the PCP (50%), and those which will then require investment through alternative capital funding streams (formulaic or corporate).
17. The review will require extensive consultation to be undertaken with Members, schools, communities, Diocese etc. and will conclude with the agreed programme list being produced and agreed in the Autumn of 2007.

Every Child Matters Pilot Programme:

18. In addition to the main Primary programme, the Department for Education and Skills has indicated that applications to support a limited pilot programme will be sought from Authorities by 14th June 2006. DfES wrote to all local Authorities on 1st May 2006 stating:

"There are excellent opportunities for piloting: before funding starts in 2008; in the first year of funding (2008-09) and continuously through the programme. We aim to have two or three pilots in each region. Short expressions of interest are invited from authorities that believe they: have a bold strategic vision for Every Child Matters and primary provision; are effective in joining up planning and funding; and are already making a difference for children, including raising standards at key stage 2. The expressions of interest should be no longer than five sides of A4 and should be submitted by the close of the consultation period, 14 June 2006. The Department will base its decision both on the expression of interest and on its other knowledge of the authorities' performance".
19. The pilot programme will allow 2 to 3 Authorities in each region (25 nationally) to undertake a single school replacement scheme that will be exemplars for other Authorities to learn from. The funding attached to the successful pilot is £4 to £5 million, to be released in 2008 / 09. If Darlington were to become a pilot Authority, this would enable us to move more quickly in our primary investment programme and although the competition will be intense it is proposed that we should apply.
20. DfES guidance on pilots suggests that the types of issues / proposals they are seeking will meet one or more of the following areas:
 - (a) responding to parental demand, expanding popular schools, solutions to school failure, federations, trusts and networks of schools

- (b) every child matters, using children's trusts, and extended services
 - (c) design and procurement issues, e.g. exemplar designs, standardisation, off-site construction, value for money procurement methods, sustainability, use of BB99
 - (d) involving partners, schools, pupils and communities; and
 - (e) joining up planning, funding and monitoring across children's and other services
21. Clearly, innovative projects such as the Education Village and Skerne Park would have been good candidates for any pilot programme and the Department for Education and Skills is looking for similar schemes in the primary pilot. Darlington does have a good track record in planning and delivering programmes such as these, which will count in our favour.
22. Excluding the recent new schools all remaining Darlington Primary schools could clearly provide compelling cases as to why they should be a priority for major capital investment. However an initial desktop review of all schools, using the criteria in Appendix 1 was undertaken. Given limited information this assessment concentrated mainly on condition and suitability needs of the schools. This identified a small number of schools which may have provided potential pilot submissions. They were:
- (a) Red Hall Primary School
 - (b) Corporation Road Community Primary School
 - (c) Reid Street Primary School
 - (d) North Road Primary School
 - (e) Dodmire Infant & Nursery, and Dodmire Junior Schools
 - (f) Heathfield Primary School; and
 - (g) Gurney Pease Primary School.
23. These schemes were then subject to a further review to assess in the context of the pilot criteria (**Appendix 2**) which was most likely to be viewed favourably by DfES.
24. In the final assessment it was felt that the school that offered most prospect of a successful pilot application was **North Road Primary School**.
25. The key reasons for selecting North Road Primary were:
- (a) The proposal provides excellent potential to raise education standards by providing new 21st Century accommodation with innovative use of teaching spaces designed around the needs of the teachers and learners
 - (b) The proposal would allow for the replacement of an existing Victorian school building which has significant condition and suitability needs. This is increasingly expensive to alter and maintain and places undue pressure on both the Authority's capital resources and the individual school's budget
 - (c) A new build will enhance the school's ability to meet Every Child Matters outcomes more positively through joint planned working with local Children Centre providers, after school and wrap around care providers, the Primary Care Trust, traveller community etc.

- (d) New build could be constructed on existing playing field provision at the school reducing the need to provide temporary accommodation. The ability to deliver the proposed project is a key element of DfES's assessment criteria. Once complete the school could move into new premises and the former school site would be demolished and reinstated as playing field for the school / community. The new build solution could allow new construction and procurement methods to be considered with an emphasis on sustainability and an innovative approach to school design
- (e) The new school would help address significant community needs within this area of the Borough by providing extended schools services within the North Road corridor; and
- (f) The school's location makes it possible to consider additional funding bids for co-location / usage of the building by other agencies.

Outcome of Consultation

- 26. The programme and potential pilot has been briefly discussed with Primary School Head Teachers. In the context of the pilot the timescales for submission, 14th June 2006, make it impossible to enter into further extended discussions. However, in relation to the main PCP programme, as outlined in paragraph 18, detailed and extensive consultation with broad sections of the community will be undertaken to establish the full Darlington Primary School programme.

Legal Implications

- 27. This report has been considered by the Legal Services Manager for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Legal Services Manager 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

- 28. 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

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

Decision Deadline

- 30. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this **does** represent an urgent matter. DfES initial guidance was issued in late March 2006 and full information on the pilot programme only obtained on 9th May 2006. As a result, the Council would need to submit the proposed pilot programme the day after this report has been considered by

Cabinet.

Key Decisions

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

Recommendations

32. It is recommended that Members:

(a) Note the DfES consultation on the new Every Child Matters Primary Capital Programme;

(b) Approve the robust review of all existing Primary Schools in the Borough, using the proposed criteria, which will result in the development of a programme of investment for all Darlington Primary schools; and

(c) Approve the submission of a pilot proposal for North Road Primary School by the deadline date of 14th June 2006.

Reasons

33. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

(a) 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; and

(b) To attempt to secure early investment into North Road Primary School through the ECM Primary Capital Programme.

Margaret Asquith
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Background Papers

DfES consultation documents, correspondence and guidance
Every Child Matters Primary Capital Programme

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