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**PRIMARY STRATEGY FOR CHANGE**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Cllr Chris McEwan, Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on the progress of the Primary Strategy for Change.
2. To seek approval for Darlington's submission of its Primary Strategy for Change to the Department for Children, Schools and Families.
3. To request Members' approval of proposed projects.

**Summary**

4. This report provides detail of Darlington's Primary Strategy for Change and includes detail of the asset management needs identified by primary schools in order to improve their suitability and functionality, so that standards can continue to be driven upwards.

**Recommendations**

5. Members are asked to:-
  - (a) Endorse the Strategy for Change; and
  - (b) Approve the list of projects to be submitted to the Department for Children, Schools and Families, as shown in **Appendix B**.

**Reasons**

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
  - (a) In order to secure the release of capital funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families; and
  - (b) In order to begin detailed work on the recommended schemes.

**Murray Rose,**  
**Director of Children's Services**

## Background Papers

### DCSF Primary Capital Programme Guidance Comprehensive Spending Review – 3 year Schools Capital Allocations 2008-09 to 2010-11

Rachel Jones : Extension 2026

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no direct implications arising from this report. However, up to date and refurbished buildings are likely to be respected by the communities they serve and less likely to attract vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
Health and Well Being	The provision of improved learning environments will contribute to improved health and wellbeing for the next generation of Darlington's children.
Sustainability	Improvements to the primary school estate will be designed to the lowest carbon footprint possible. Innovation from our Pathfinder scheme at North Road Primary School can be capitalised in other primary capital programme build projects.
Diversity	The Primary Strategy for Change will remove barriers to access and encourage schools to be open to all community members. The increase in school places will enhance real parental choice.
Wards Affected	The Primary Strategy for Change will apply to all wards in the Borough.
Groups Affected	Children aged 4 – 11 years will be the principal beneficiaries of the Primary Strategy for Change.
Budget and Policy Framework	Capital revenue made available from DCSF and contributions from Schools' Developed Formula Capital.
Key Decision	This is a key decision as all Wards are affected and the budget is considerable.
Urgent Decision	No.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Primary Strategy for Change is consistent with the Aspiring Darlington strand, providing enhanced facilities for learning and achievement for young people.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

7. The Government's plans for a 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 (now the DCSF) in March 2006.
8. The overall aim of the Primary Capital Programme is to rebuild, remodel or improve at least half of all primary schools nationally over the next 15 years, 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.
9. It is intended that the primary capital programme will enhance a number of existing national strategies. It will particularly support 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children', and the White Paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All'. It also brings together the ten-year childcare strategy, workforce strategy, and ICT and extended schools programmes.

### Funding

10. On 10 October 2007, allocations for the Primary Capital Programme were announced, including pilot projects for 23 local authorities in 2008-09.
11. Over the period 2008-11, Darlington has been allocated £14.878m (detailed in Table 1). Included in this total is an allocation of £6.5m to build a replacement for North Road Primary School.
12. To ensure maximum impact for schools in Darlington, an additional £1.2million is proposed to be committed from modernisation funding, and £1.546million from basic need funding over the next 2 financial years.
13. Schools that will benefit from capital investment in the current round will be asked to contribute up to an additional £1.42million from their Devolved Formula Capital allocation. The overall funding package therefore is as follows:

Funding Source	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	TOTAL
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
PCP allocation	£6,500	£3,000	£5,378	£14,878
North Road Primary	- £6,500	£0	£0	- £6,500
Modernisation	£0	£600	£600	£1,200
Basic Need	£0	£773	£773	£1,546
DFC	£0	£710	£710	£1,420
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£4,673</b>	<b>£7,051</b>	<b>£12,544</b>

14. Within the overall sum of £12,544m which could be made available to support the PSC process, the commitment of £1.42m of DFC would need the agreement of governors of the schools affected.

### **PCP Strategy and DCSF Approval**

15. Before the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will approve release of funding for the Primary Capital Programme it requires local authorities to submit a detailed Primary Strategy for Change Document. Darlington's strategy (attached at **Appendix A**), has been written following consultation with Headteachers and sets out the authority's ambitions for delivering the Primary Capital Programme across the 30 infant, junior and primary schools in the Borough. It explains that the process is not only an opportunity to enhance the educational experience for all children by improving the built environment, but it is also an opportunity to extend and improve the services provided by schools to the whole community.
16. Darlington's philosophy for future investment is that every new development should be built as an exciting, flexible learning environment that stimulates all users. Projects should enrich the facilities available to the local community, helping us to break the vicious cycle of deprivation and under-achievement that is often associated with poverty.

### **Our principles for work to raise standards**

17. We want every school in Darlington to be a school of choice. Successful schools share a broad set of characteristics which can be described in terms of the way in which they deliver their responsibilities to promote the well-being and achievement of all of their pupils.

The hallmarks of a school that has successfully taken responsibility for shaping its own future are:

- (a) a strong and distinctive sense of purpose;
  - (b) the capacity to innovate;
  - (c) a powerful collective ethos that is shared by all staff;
  - (d) a refusal to allow the socio-economic background of pupils and resources (or the lack of them) to become an obstacle to progress.
18. The hallmarks of a school that is willing to carry its share of a wider responsibility are:
    - (a) a willingness to be inclusive, to make provision for all children;
    - (b) extended schooling;
    - (c) a strong sense of partnership with children, their parents, and the community – particularly through children's centres.
  19. Consultation and discussion with stakeholders has identified the following key assumptions that will be applied to future investment. These aspirations will ensure that capital investment is targeted in a way which can support the raising standards agenda and help achieve improvements in the priority areas outlined in the Strategy for Change:

- (a) All schools should be fully equipped and suitable to deliver a first class 21st century curriculum.
  - (b) All schools should be sufficiently resourced and suitably designed to ensure that they don't restrict any child's learning and development progression.
  - (c) Children learn in different ways and all teachers teach in different ways therefore learning environments should be as flexible as possible and provide the technology to support the curriculum.
  - (d) All classrooms should be safe, warm and dry, be suitable to deliver the curriculum, have adequate and appropriate storage and have access to ICT equipment.
  - (e) A child's educational experience should not be restricted to the physical school building but should take advantage of outdoor learning opportunities and access to external areas should be developed wherever possible.
20. In Darlington, our aim is to create an inclusive education system where aspirations and achievement are raised. We therefore wish to create inclusive schools where all children and young people can have access to good quality educational opportunities and take full advantage of the life of the school community.
21. In developing services and facilities within schools the authority will also support provision for resource bases for other professionals and teachers in the locality, training spaces or areas for group and 1:1 discussion, and resource areas for parents and the wider community so they can access resources at any time.
22. In addition to demonstrating a clear co-ordination of policy, Local Authorities have also been required to identify a programme of work with key schemes selected through the use of agreed and transparent selection criteria.
23. Consultation has been on-going over the past year and a number of methods have been used, including presentations to Headteacher and Governor briefings and on-line consultation using the Internet based Phoenix system.
24. Throughout the development of the Strategy for Change members of the Joint Consultative Group have been kept informed of developments at each of their meetings.
25. Consultation and engagement with schools continued to be a priority and on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008, all primary school Headteachers were invited to attend a consultation event to be held at Darlington Football Club. The event focused on developing the key priorities and sought Headteachers' views on how our primary school estate will need to develop in order to meet the demands of the curriculum in the next 15 years.
26. In addition every primary, infant and junior school (including VA schools) has had an individual visit from officers in order to develop the Local Asset Management Planning principles for their schools and identify key priorities for investment. Once collected this information was fed into the PCP assessment matrix as outlined in the Strategy for Change.

## Prioritisation of Projects

27. Through the annual Local Asset Management Planning (LAMPA) review process, schools and officers have worked in collaboration to review every school's ongoing capital programme and prioritise future needs. Schools have been encouraged to be forward thinking and develop innovative ideas which will address their needs for the medium to long-term.
28. Each school has been invited to submit three potential projects for consideration under the Primary Strategy for Change. The completed bids ranged from major capital developments addressing whole school issues, to smaller projects, targeted at specific issues.
29. To ensure that the schools needing the highest levels of investment are targeted, a sophisticated assessment mechanism was developed that recognises the clear vision the Authority has for schools and extended services for children. All projects have been scored against agreed criteria, (further details of which are included in Section 5 of **Appendix A**). Criteria have been developed through consultation with all stakeholders and have been carefully selected to reflect the education, social and policy needs of schools, local and national policy drivers and the wider community.
30. Overall 28 schools bid for a total of 46 projects. These can be broken down as follows:
  - (a) 3 schools bid for three projects
  - (b) 10 schools bid for two projects
  - (c) 11 schools bid for a single project
  - (d) 3 Federated schools bid for a total of 6 projects

In terms of the types of project, these fall under the following headings:

Type of Project	No. of Bids	Total funding requested (£000's)
New Schools	3	23,000
Re-modelling	14	14,040
Basic Need	5	4,300
Condition	2	1,400
Community Projects	3	2,400
Foundation Stage	3	1,350
Minor Projects	16	1,948
		48,438

31. In evaluating projects to be recommended for support it was necessary to ensure reference was made to the strategic priorities across the Borough. In order to achieve this, projects were broken down into the following areas of need:
  - (a) Sufficiency – ensuring sufficient school places for future demand
  - (b) Condition and Suitability – poor building accommodation and unsuitable teaching areas
  - (c) Community focussed bids that would enhance facilities or improve flexibility

32. **Appendix C** shows all the projects submitted and how they were broken down into these three priority areas. Each individual bid submitted has been assessed using the scoring matrix developed for the Primary Capital Programme.

### **Proposed schemes to be supported**

33. Inspection of the bids and their relative scores show that maximum impact can be gained for transformation of Darlington's primary schools, and best value achieved if seventeen schools' bids are supported within the £12.544 million available. Other schemes may be supported in future funding rounds. **Appendix B** provides details of each individual scheme and the proposed funding allocation but in summary the following groups of projects are proposed for support:
- (a) 5 schools to each receive a £1.5m allocation to address a basic need for additional primary places across the town or to focus on large scale remodelling work to address the suitability of the accommodation to deliver a 21st century curriculum.
  - (b) 6 schools to each receive between £450,000 and £900,000 to address significant condition related issues, some basic need provision and smaller remodelling projects
  - (c) 6 schools to each receive between £44,000 and £350,000 for minor projects that will address suitability issues, improved teaching and learning provision, better access to promote inclusion and enhancements to facilities to encourage community use and access.
34. If approved this project list will mean that 56% of schools have been successful in securing funding through this process. Members will be aware that due to Darlington's successful record of attracting capital funding, seven primary schools (including North Road) have been rebuilt in the last five years and provide attractive and suitable learning environments for pupils.
35. The authority will continue to work with those schools whose bids were unsuccessful to ensure that benefit from future funding opportunities and to ensure that their premises remain fit for use.
36. The Primary Strategy for Change is to cover a 15 year period. To date, local authorities have only been informed of funding up the end of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2008-11. DCSF has indicated that further funding is expected in the 2012-15 period but at a reduced level.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

37. The consultation on the PSC is reported in paragraphs 23-26. In addition, the strategy is consistent with the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy: One Darlington, Perfectly Placed. The Strategy supports the theme of Aspiring Darlington by creating high quality teaching and learning environments.
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