

Meeting of the Council – 15th October 2007

Report of the Cabinet

Capital Programme Monitoring

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the proposals of the Cabinet regarding amendments proposed to the Capital Programme and matters associated therewith.

Background

2. On consideration of the issues below, the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 12th September, 2007, resolved to recommend the Council to approve the proposals set out in paragraphs 23-38 (inclusive) below. Other proposals contained in the report submitted to the meeting were determined by the Cabinet under the powers delegated to it. A copy of the report is available from Richard Sanders in the Directorate of Law and Property (telephone (01384) 815236 or email richard.sanders@dudley.gov.uk) or on the Council's website www.dudley.gov.uk and follow the links to Council Decisions/Committee information.

Adult, Community and Housing

Public Sector Housing Capital Programme 2007/11

3. Additional resources have been identified amounting to £858,000, mainly resulting from house and land sales in excess of previous expectations. It is proposed that these extra resources be allocated as follows and the Capital Programme be amended accordingly:
 - Addition of £400,000 to the Minor Works budget to fund necessary works arising from the Fire Risk Assessments of sheltered accommodation and flatted developments.
 - Addition of £458,000 to the Community Safety budget for improvements to garages and garage sites across the Borough - to fund extra works not originally envisaged (access difficulties often making it difficult to ascertain the full extent of works necessary); replacement of around 120 more garages than initially planned; and replacement to a significantly higher specification at other sites as a result of planning requirements.

Disabled Facilities Grants

4. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) provide funding for capital works to enable disabled people to continue to live in their own homes. Dudley's waiting times for DFGs have improved greatly over the last three years - reducing from around four years to just under two years as a result of the injection of extra capital resources over and above

the Government allocation. To maintain that improvement a further injection of capital resources is now required.

It is proposed that an extra £2m is made available from “prudential borrowing” to be spent over the next two years. The debt charges on this borrowing of approximately £200,000 per year can be funded from anticipated increased Housing General Fund resources, which are assumed to be ongoing for the next few years. If these extra resources are not ongoing, the debt charges will have to be found from elsewhere in revenue budgets.

In service improvement terms, this will mean that grants to an extra 170 vulnerable people will be dealt with more quickly.

Stair Lifts

5. A sum of £100,000 has been identified from within the Access and Systems Capacity grant allocation to fund the installation of stair lifts for those assessed as needing them. The investment is in line with Government directions and targets will assist more people to remain living in their own homes.

It is proposed that this expenditure be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

Minor Works

6. Additional external resources of £76,000 have been identified to supplement the current Capital Minor Works budget - which funds expenditure across the Directorate’s Social Care building stock to meet legislative requirements and keep buildings fit for purpose. This includes around £200,000 to extend and carry out minor alterations to Roseville Day Centre to provide enhanced care and facilities for persons with dementia.

It is proposed that these extra resources be noted and the Capital Programme be amended accordingly.

Urban Environment

Liveability

7. It is proposed that the following minor enhancements to the Liveability programme be approved, and that the Capital Programme be amended accordingly:
 - King George IV Park, Kingswinford - installation of seats in the park to be funded from a donation of £1,300 made by the Friends of the Park group;
 - Leasowes - additional path works requested by the park wardens costing £2,000 to be funded from Culture and Community revenue budgets.

Improvements at Crystal, Dudley and Halesowen Leisure Centres

8. Building on from the current good performance of the partnership with Alliance Leisure Services (ALS) at Halesowen Leisure Centre, further improvements in the health and fitness offer are proposed at Crystal, Dudley and Halesowen Leisure Centres. In partnership with ALS, the developments will include agreed structural works and the purchase of new health and fitness equipment which will considerably improve the service to existing and potential customers.

The forecast capital costs of the developments are:

	£'000
Crystal	744
Dudley	393
Halesowen	273
Total	1,410

The initial financing of these costs will depend on the results of evaluating alternative sources (including “prudential borrowing”) and can be funded by the increased income generated at the sites.

In addition, while these improvements are being undertaken at Dudley Leisure Centre the opportunity can be taken to improve the reception area at this site. The cost of these works is estimated to be £68,000 and can be funded from earmarked Section 106 resources.

It is proposed that these improvements be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

Brierley Hill Regeneration

9. In March 2007, Cabinet approved an “umbrella” bid to Advantage West Midlands (AWM) for a package of schemes which will act as a catalyst for the transformational economic, physical and community regeneration vision of the Brierley Hill Strategic Centre. A further scheme is now envisaged which aims to revitalise the office market in the Brierley Hill area to meet the demands of the Black Country Study targets - in the form of two high quality office blocks totalling 10,400m² and 142 apartments, for which planning consent has been secured. The development is located on the canal waterfront above the Merry Hill Centre and opposite the Copthorne Hotel. AWM support is required to provide a realistic yield for the developer.

It is now proposed that subject to funding applications for the above scheme being successful:

- the Director of the Urban Environment be authorised to accept any grant funding arising;
- the Director of Law and Property be authorised to sign the necessary legal agreements with AWM;
- any relevant capital expenditure be included in the Capital Programme.

Children’s Services

Mobile ICT to Support Children’s Social Workers

10. The Council has been awarded a grant of £72,000 by the Government to invest in improved mobile ICT infrastructure for children’s social workers – including broadband access and equipment such as laptops and PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants). The aim is to help improve business processes, and so bring benefits such as improved workload management and better use of time for children’s social workers.

It is proposed that the grant allocation be noted, and that the associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme.

Big Lottery Children's Play

11. Following approval of the Council's Play Strategy and portfolio of projects to be funded from the above initiative, it is proposed that the following resources be added to the Capital budget to enhance certain specific schemes:

- Chapel Street Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) - £10,000 of Section 106 funding;
- Tenacre Lane Skate Park - £6,000 of Section 106 funding;
- Netherbrook Primary School Community MUGA and Play Area - £52,000 of Fair Share Lottery funding resulting from a successful bid by the school to the St. Andrew's Fair Share Panel.

Rosewood School Replacement

12. The Rosewood School has been awarded specialist status for Behaviour, which brings with it a capital grant of £100,000. Together with the necessary £20,000 matchfunding from sponsorship raised by the school, it is proposed to use this sum for a Vocational Centre as part of the relocation of the school to the former Highfields Primary site.

Also, it is proposed to use a further £50,000 of Standards Grant funding for kitchen improvements as part of the relocation.

School Travel Plan Grant 2007/08

13. The Council has been awarded £103,000 of School Travel Plan Grant, which provides funding to schools to implement measures aimed at encouraging children to walk, cycle or take the bus to school safely, thus reducing car use. This funding will benefit 16 schools in the Borough that have recently had their Travel Plans approved.

It is proposed that the funding be noted, and the associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme.

Diploma Gateway

14. Diplomas are new qualifications for 14-19 year olds that have been created to provide an alternative to more traditional education and qualifications - giving young people a fully rounded qualification, which combines theoretical and practical learning, including functional English, Maths and ICT, to equip them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need for further or higher education and long-term employability.

The Government has allocated £47m nationally as one-off capital grant funding to pump prime exemplar projects for investment in buildings, equipment or ICT that will enhance delivery of the overall 14-19 reforms, particularly the Diplomas.

Dudley's' share of this funding amounts to £576,000 for projects at the consortium of schools in the Halesowen area that is piloting the Diplomas. It is proposed that the allocation be noted, and the associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme.

Finance, ICT & Procurement

Server Replacement

15. Current technology in the Council's Data Centres requires individual computer servers for each system, and in some cases more than one server per system. Replacement with a cluster of powerful servers controlled by appropriate software would allow us to create a "virtual" server environment capable of running many applications independently. This would improve reliability and flexibility of ICT systems, whilst reducing power consumption and heat generated, and thus further reducing energy required for cooling. The estimated cost of £90,000 can be funded from savings in ICT Services revenue budget over a 5 year period, in areas such as electricity and hardware maintenance.

It is proposed that the expenditure be approved and included in the Capital Programme.

Chief Executive's

Local Area Agreement - Pump Priming Grant

16. The Cabinet at its meeting held on 12th September, 2007 received a report on the allocation of Local Area Agreement (LAA) Pump Priming Grant (PPG) to specific projects. A copy of the report is available from Richard Sanders in the Directorate of Law and Property (telephone (01384) 815236 or email richard.sanders@dudley.gov.uk) or on the Council's website www.dudley.gov.uk and follow the links to Council Decisions/Committee information.

It is proposed that any element of this expenditure which is of a capital nature be included in the Capital Programme.

Safer Stronger Communities Fund 2007/08

17. As part of the pooled LAA funding stream, the Safe and Sound Community Safety Partnership has been allocated £110,000 for capital projects from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund. All of this funding will be spent on meeting LAA targets and will be administered by the Community Safety Team. Of the total:
- £30,000 will be used to part support the upgrading of the Borough's CCTV system from analogue to digital media;
 - £20,000 will support the work of the Joint Activity Group which is at present specifically focussing on stretch targets for reducing violent crime, criminal damage, theft of motor vehicles, domestic violence and arson;
 - £15,000 will provide extra equipment for the Home Security Initiative;
 - £15,000 will be used for Anti Social Behaviour Unit projects;
 - £30,000 for other projects to reduce domestic violence, anti social behaviour and re-offending rates.

It is proposed that the allocation be noted and the associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme.

Urgent Amendment to the Capital Programme

Queensway Halesowen Re-alignment

18. In order to enable the required timescales to be complied with, an urgent decision (ref. DUE/68/2007) was made by the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Director of Finance on 20th August, 2007 to approve an increase in the capital budget for the Queensway Re-alignment.

The detailed decision which was considered in private, is available to Members on request to Richard Sanders, Democratic Services, Directorate of Law and Property on (01384) 815236 or email richard.sanders@dudley.gov.uk.

Finance

19. This report is financial in nature and information about the individual proposals is contained within the body of the report.

Law

20. The Council's budgeting process is governed by the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and the Local Government Act 2003.

Equality Impact

21. These proposals comply with the Council's policy on Equality and Diversity.
22. With regard to Children and Young People:
 - The Capital Programme for Children's Services will be spent wholly on improving services for children and young people. Other elements of the Capital Programme will also have a significant impact on this group.
 - Consultation is undertaken with children and young people, if appropriate, when developing individual capital projects within the Programme.
 - There has been no direct involvement of children and young people in developing the proposals in this report.

Recommendations

23. That the Public Sector Housing Capital Programme be amended, as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
24. That an extra £2m be made available for expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grants over the next two years, as set out in paragraph 4 of the report.
25. That the expenditure on Stair Lifts be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 5 of the report.
26. That the extra resources for Social Care Minor Works, be noted and the Capital Programme be amended accordingly, as set out in paragraph 6 of the report.

27. That the enhancements to the Liveability programme be approved, and the Capital Programme be amended accordingly, as set out in paragraph 7 of the report.
28. That the improvements at Crystal, Dudley and Halesowen Leisure Centres be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 8 of the report.
29. That in respect of Brierley Hill Regeneration, subject to funding applications being successful:
 - the Director of the Urban Environment be authorised to accept any grant funding arising;
 - the Director of Law and Property be authorised to sign the necessary legal agreements with Advantage West Midlands;
 - any relevant capital expenditure be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 9 of the report.
30. That the grant allocation for Mobile ICT to support Children's Social Workers be noted, and the associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 10 of the report.
31. That the budget for the Big Lottery Children's Play projects be increased to include the extra Section 106 and Fair Share resources, as set out in paragraph 11 of the report.
32. That the specialist status funding totaling £120,000 be used for a Vocational Centre at the Rosewood School, and that £50,000 of Standards Grant funding be used for kitchen improvements, as set out in paragraph 12 of the report.
33. That the School Travel Plan Grant allocation be noted, and the associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 13 of the report.
34. That the allocation of Diploma Gateway funding be noted, and associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 14 of the report.
35. That the expenditure on computer server replacement be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 15 of the report.
36. That the capital element of the Local Area Agreement Pump Priming Grant expenditure be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 16 of the report.
37. That the Safer Stronger Communities Fund grant allocation be noted, and the associated expenditure be included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 17 of the report.
38. That the Urgent Amendment to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 18 of the report be noted.

David Caunt

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Leader of the Council