

Portfolio Holder Decisions/Leader Decisions

Monday 28 February 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Jeff Morgan

1. Bid for Funding to Department of Education for the Total or Partial Rebuilding of Warwickshire Maintained Schools

Resolved


That the Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education approves the submission of nominations to the DfE for the total or partial rebuild of the following maintained schools:

- Exhall Grange School
- Kingsbury Primary School
- Middlemarch Primary School
- Milby Primary School
- Chetwynd Junior School
- Bishopton Primary School
- Shrubland Street Primary School

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Proposed Decision to be made Under the Council's Urgency Procedure by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education

Bid for Funding to Department of Education for the Total or Partial Rebuilding of Warwickshire Maintained Schools

Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jeff Morgan
Date of decision	Decision Date
	Signed 

Decision taken

That the Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education approves the submission of nominations to the DfE for the total or partial rebuild of the following maintained schools:

- Exhall Grange School
- Kingsbury Primary School
- Middlemarch Primary School
- Milby Primary School
- Chetwynd Junior School
- Bishopton Primary School
- Shrubland Street Primary School

Reasons for decision

Before submitting any nominations, the DfE requires the applicant to confirm that:

- the uploaded information is correct to the best of their knowledge
- permission and approval to nominate has been granted by the Responsible Body
- the Headteacher and Governing Body of the schools have been made aware of their nomination.

The first point has been addressed through close collaboration with the Council's Property Services, Strategic Asset Management and Education Services Teams. The final point will be

managed and communicated by Education Services subject to the outcome of the second.

Reasons for Urgency

All nominations must be uploaded onto a DfE portal by 5.00pm Thursday, 3 March 2022.

The opportunity to bid with qualifying criteria was not announced until 3 February 2022. A DfE webinar held on 15 February 2022 and viewed by Strategic Asset Management Team representatives acknowledged feedback from attendees that timescales were tight, particularly in view of the half-term school shutdown.

Advice given on the webinar helped to focus the shortlisting process but subsequent detailed scrutiny on the condition of Warwickshire's qualifying schools has been a challenge.

Background information

Pursuant to the County Council's constitution, a Portfolio Holder decision is required to approve any bid for funding in excess of £250,000 or that will commit the council to funding in excess of £50,000 that cannot be met from a service's allocated budget. Although there is no match funding requirement, if the bid is successful the total amount of funding to be invested by the DfE in the schools (which are county assets) would significantly exceed £250,000.

The DfE School Rebuilding Programme is a 10-year programme, announced in 2020 with 100 schools and academies selected to participate across the country in 2021; which included successful nominations from Hartshill School, Kineton High School and Southam College.

This latest round aims to prioritise 300 schools and academies with buildings in very poor condition which need to be refurbished or replaced taking into account their age, construction type and condition, for delivery during the course of the next three to four years.

Academies and aided schools will be nominated by their respective Trust and Diocesan Authority with maintained schools nominated by the local authority, which for Warwickshire amounts to 79 schools for consideration.

In terms of qualifying criteria, schools nominated for consideration must meet the DfE definition of rebuilding need, that being in priority order:

1. Structural or safety issues that mean a building is not fit for use or is likely to become unfit for use imminently because it poses a risk to users.
2. Severe deterioration in the main building fabric (external walls, roofs, windows or doors) meaning that the most efficient way of returning a building to good condition is to rebuild it or carry out a significant refurbishment.
3. Mechanical and electrical systems that are close to failure and could cause a building to close in the near future, but only if there is another need in the building fabric that makes a refurbishment or rebuild most efficient overall.

With regards to scale, DfE stipulate a minimum 1,200m² threshold of severe condition need. This threshold can comprise of several teaching blocks within a school, or one single building to meet the total; DfE see this as a means to a fair and equal comparison to be made between schools.

Further to scrutiny of the latest condition data held by the Council for its maintained schools, in particular of all building components identified as category 'D' which the RICS determines as "life

expired and/or serious risk of imminent failure”, Property Services applied their professional view and local intelligence to provide a shortlist of nominations.

Education Services in collaboration with the Strategic Asset Management Team input further to the shortlisted nominations with the result being a collective endorsement to proceed with making nominations on behalf of the seven schools listed above.

The Council does not need to prioritise the order of nominations as the DfE will undertake this exercise based on estate management information they currently hold.

DfE acknowledge it will take several weeks before any announcement is made so no timescale has yet been forthcoming.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications to Warwickshire’s Capital Programme as gross project costs associated with all successful bids will be fully funded by DfE capital grant, management and monitoring of these funds will be overseen by the DfE in collaboration with the Council.

As an indication of potential investment, were the Council successful in securing funds to rebuild the equivalent of 1,200m² at each of the seven schools nominated (notwithstanding the combined floor area amounts to 21,931m²) estimated costs including abnormals could total £30m to £35m.

Added value will be achieved as the replacement of dilapidated school buildings with new will reduce the Council’s long-term maintenance backlog and provide sustainable accommodation that is more cost-effective in terms of running costs thereby making sizeable revenue savings.

If the County Council is successful in the application a subsequent portfolio holder decision will be needed to add the scheme(s) to the Council’s capital programme. At this time, we will also know the detailed terms and conditions of the grant which will allow understanding of how the financial risks associated with the project will be managed e.g. responsibility for cost over runs. The subsequent report, prior to the acceptance of the grant, will document the financial risks and the extent to which these have been mitigated.

Environmental implications

Further to the Council’s declaration of a Climate Change Emergency all successful bids and their emerging designs will require the consideration of carbon neutral build methods to ensure the environmental impacts of delivering and operating new school buildings are reduced where possible.

This will be reaffirmed through the DfE technical team currently reviewing their own specification with regards to adopting appropriate design principles that aspire to net-zero carbon school buildings.

Report Author	Neil Aldridge
Assistant Director	Chris Baird
Strategic Director	Strategic Director for Communities
Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education

Urgent matter?	Yes
Confidential or exempt?	No
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of background papers (If applicable)

School Rebuilding Programme guidance from DfE is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme>

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Jeff Morgan

Corporate Board – Strategic Director People and Strategic Director Resources

Legal – Nichola Vine, Strategy and Commissioning Manager Legal and Democratic

Finance – Brian Smith, Finance Lead (Children’s and Education Services)

Equality – EDI Team

Democratic Services – Nichola Vine, Strategy and Commissioning Manager Legal and Democratic, Deb Moseley Team Lead Democratic Services

Councillors – (For consent to Urgency) Cllr Adrian Warwick