
Meeting of the Cabinet – 11th September 2019

Joint Report of the Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Finance and Legal Services

Capital Programme Monitoring and Revenue Funding Bid

Purpose of Report

1. To report progress with the implementation of the Capital Programme.
2. To propose amendments to the Capital Programme.
3. To authorise a bid for revenue funding.

Recommendations

4. That the Council be recommended:
 - That current progress with the most significant capital schemes, as set out in Appendix A be noted.
 - That the Boundary Signage project be approved and included in the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 8.
 - That subject to grant funding being confirmed, £2.33m of expenditure relating to the Very Light Rail Test Track 2 be included in the Capital Programme, and that pending such confirmation expenditure up to £250,000 be authorised “at risk”, as set out in paragraph 9.
 - That the capital budget for the Leisure Centre replacement and refurbishment project be increased, as set out in paragraph 11.
 - That the Urgent Amendments to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraphs 12-13, be noted.
5. That the Strategic Director Place be authorised to continue developing an application for an extension of the Black Country Impact (BCI) project to 2023, submit the proposal to DWP by the deadline of 26th September 2019, and in the event that the bid is successful, accept the funding, enter into relevant funding agreements with partners, and deliver the funded programme expenditure, as set out in paragraph 10.

Background

6. The table below summarises the *current* 3 year Capital Programme updated where appropriate to reflect latest scheme spending profiles.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Public Sector Housing	40,857	42,421	38,427
Private Sector Housing	12,875	350	350
Environment	12,887	8,652	3,000
Transport	10,788	4,816	2,373
Regeneration	9,511	5,766	4,074
Cultural	4,398	14,500	6,755
Schools	25,910	7,975	0
Social Care, Health and Well Being	1,537	0	0
Chief Executive's	968	818	519
Total spend	119,731	85,298	55,498
Revenue	6,140	5,036	5,936
Major Repairs Reserve (Housing)	23,431	23,900	24,378
Capital receipts	26,489	18,341	9,589
Grants and contributions	23,731	10,511	153
Capital Financing Requirement	39,940	27,510	15,442
Total funding	119,731	85,298	55,498

Note that the capital programme for future years is in particular subject to government grant allocations, some of which have not yet been announced.

7. An update on progress with the Council's most significant capital schemes is shown in Appendix A. It is proposed that the current position be noted.

Environment

8. Boundary Signage

A number of highway boundary signs across Dudley borough are outdated and in need of replacement. Twenty prime locations have initially been identified for new signage. The estimated cost off the signs including installation, the removal and disposal of old signs and all traffic management costs is £53,000. This will initially be financed by prudential borrowing, which will be repaid over 2 years from advertising space sold on the signs, generated on a commercial basis. After that the income will support the council's mainstream budgets as a spend to save project.

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

Regeneration

9. Very Light Rail (VLR) Test Track 2

The Council is currently in discussion with Coventry City Council (CCC) in relation to a second, specialist test track incorporating a tight turning circle for the testing of their new engine in research and development phase as part of the Coventry VLR programme.

It is envisaged that this track (TT2) will be built at the DMBC VLR site as part of the National Innovation Centre (NIC) Building construction phase and will be an integral part of the NIC operations once Coventry have finished with the testing of their new engine (approximately 3 year timeframe).

In order for this to happen in line with the Coventry VLR and associated Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo) programme and the NIC programme, the work to complete the design, procurement and delivery on site of TT2 is going to be passed over to Dudley Council's project team.

The total works value, inclusive of research and development costs and fees is in the order of £5.76m and it is likely that £2.33m of this will be subject to work undertaken by the Council team. The works need to be completed on site by the end of December 2020 to allow for an element of engine / track testing prior to Coventry's application for a TWAo in the summer of 2021 for their proposed VLR project. Further details and responsibilities are being developed between the Council and CCC.

CCC expect to have relevant funding (West Midlands Combined Authority grant to CCC as part of the wider CCC VLR project) and governance sign off in October 2019 but some work needs to be undertaken in advance of this. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is being negotiated between the Council and CCC to cover work at risk pending the final formal agreement.

It is proposed that subject to grant funding being confirmed the full £2.33m of capital expenditure be included in the Capital Programme, and that pending such confirmation expenditure up to £250,000 be authorised "at risk". This would be in addition to expenditure that has already been incurred or approved to be incurred at risk in relation to Test Track 1 and the Innovation Centre.

10. Black Country Impact (BCI) funding bid

BCI is a Black Country programme that addresses the barriers faced by NEET (not in employment, education or training) individuals aged 15-29 years, supporting them to secure positive outcomes including employment, apprenticeships, training and further education. Dudley MBC is the Lead Accountable Body and the programme is delivered in collaboration with all four Black Country authorities and Talent Match.

The programme, which is funded by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and European Social Fund (ESF) administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), has been running since August 2015 and delivery is currently contracted to 31st December 2021. It has been a very successful programme to date having engaged with over 12,000 participants and supported almost 5,500 individuals into employment, traineeship, apprenticeship or further education.

A call was issued by DWP on 18th July 2019 for new project applications or applications to extend existing provision. The Council and its partners were already aware that this might happen and had agreed that BCI would submit an application to extend the existing programme to the end of 2023, once the call was issued.

The current programme value is £34m grant, £17m match funding, and it is envisaged that the maximum amount of grant that will be requested from this call is £15m. This will also require the Council and delivery partners to identify a further £7.5m of match funding in order to draw down the full allocation of grant.

It is proposed that the Strategic Director Place be authorised to continue developing an application for an extension to 2023, submit the proposal to DWP by the deadline of 26th September 2019, and in the event that the bid is successful, accept the funding, enter into relevant funding agreements with partners, and deliver the funded programme expenditure.

Cultural

11. Leisure Centres

The Capital Programme currently includes £24.5m for the provision of a new Leisure Centre in Dudley and refurbishment of the existing centres in Halesowen and Stourbridge.

The creation of a new leisure centre in Dudley and the refurbishment of Halesowen and Crystal leisure centres demonstrates a significant investment in the wider regeneration of the borough by the Council and coincides with regional preparations for the Commonwealth games in anticipation of increasing demand for good quality modern sport and leisure facilities. The Leisure Centres project retains Council leisure centres in each of the existing areas of Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge.

Following Alliance Leisure, the Council's Development Partner, presenting enhanced design and costings to Corporate Board, Cabinet Summit and Informal Cabinet throughout June and July, approval was given to progress the planning application and detailed design of the Dudley Leisure Centre through to completion of RIBA Stage 4. Alliance Leisure will be presenting the Council with a detailed enabling works cost plan at the end of August in order to commence works and allow for payment of fees to Statutory Authorities to prepare the site for the potential commencement of works at Flood Street from March 2020; completion being scheduled for summer 2021. Work will be coordinated with other Town Centre regeneration projects to take advantage of the Midland Metro extension from Wednesday to Brierley Hill. The new leisure centre will be adjacent to one of the new metro stops allowing greater transport connectivity for visitors.

Further consideration of the programme phasing for refurbishing both Halesowen and Crystal is taking place, this may see Halesowen completed ahead of Crystal and will consider the merits of a temporary closure to accelerate works compared to a phased approach in order to keep parts of the centre open throughout refurbishment work. The importance of maintaining open pool access for swimming lessons is recognised for those centres being refurbished, the existing Dudley Leisure Centre will remain open until services can be switched to the new build centre on the Flood Street site.

The latest total forecast cost for the works at the 3 sites is now £31.3m. Although the brief for the new Dudley Leisure Centre is still for a Sport England Option D model with an additional studio and café, the design has been enhanced to ensure that the scheme meets planning requirements and the borough's design quality aspiration for new build regeneration projects. This has resulted in enhanced cladding and brickwork, a feature entrance and enhanced glazing and lighting being included in the revised design. As the project has evolved and surveys of the proposed site have been carried out, more information is now available regarding the Flood Street site and additional costs can be attributed to service diversions which need to be carried out but were not allowed for in the original budget costs. In addition to the increased costs at Dudley, the budget costs at all three centres were based on a timeline of carrying out detailed design work in June 2018. Build cost inflation accounts for a significant amount of the increase in costs.

The increase in costs will be funded by prudential borrowing, and the resulting increase in debt charges will need to be reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It is proposed that the capital budget for the scheme is increased accordingly.

Urgent Amendments to the Capital Programme

12. Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre and Test Track - Advance of Fees
As previously reported to Cabinet, this project will create a world class research and development centre focused on the creation of innovative very light rail vehicles. Working in partnership with Warwick Manufacturing Group (Warwick University), other higher education bodies, transport suppliers and neighbouring local authorities, the centre will lead on the development of the vehicles associated infrastructure. Phase 1 of the project will see delivery of the innovation centre and test track facility.

It was estimated that the existing approval included in the Capital Programme for Phase 1 of the project would be spent by the end of April 2019. As such, an additional approval was required for the period June 2019 – September 2019, estimated to be £225,000. In order that works could progress a decision (ref. CEX/09/2019) was therefore made by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise, in consultation with the Chief Officer Finance and Legal Services, and Strategic Director Place on 27th June 2019 to approve a further £225,000 expenditure for fees in advance of LEP and ERDF funding.

13. Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension - Associated Costs

The line of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension (WBHE) was agreed in 2005 at which time the Council entered into a legal agreement with Centro to support the delivery of the scheme. The legal agreement is still binding. The legal agreement states that the Council will fund the Complementary Measures along the route including pedestrian crossings. At today's prices the commitment made in 2005 equates to £3m.

A section of the Metro will be built in the Dudley Town Centre Conservation area and therefore in order to ensure the urban realm is appropriate in style and quality it has been agreed that the Metro WBHE Board that the Council will fund the uplift in material in this area. Working with Midland Metro Alliance (MMA)'s Urban Design team the Council has identified other public realm interventions which are required along the Metro corridor.

The total cost of these capital works is estimated to be £9.109m. The current spend profile is: 2019/20 £0.050m; 2020/21 £1.087m; 2021/22 £3.435m; 2022/23 £4.168m and 2023/24 £0.369m. Whilst other sources of funding (including Integrated Transport Block) will be sought to fund these works, it is currently assumed that these works will be funded by prudential borrowing.

Given the spend profile detailed above, based on a debt repayment period of 25 years, the annual debt repayments are estimated to be: 2020/21 £3,000; 2021/22 £58,000; 2022/23 £233,000; 2023/24 £446,000 and 2024/25 onwards £465,000. The above debt repayments will be built into the Council's revenue budget through the Medium Term Financial Strategy process. In addition to the above, it is estimated that the annual cost of maintaining these assets will be approximately £250,000. This is currently estimated to be required from financial year 2023/24 onwards.

The costs identified above may be funded from surpluses generated by the Enterprise Zone.

In addition to these works, the Council is also negotiating with WMCA to the transfer of land required for the Metro with the value of £3million.

To enable timescales associated with the necessary Legal Agreement between the Council and WMCA to be completed a decision (ref. PLA/29/2019) was made by the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise and the Cabinet Member for the WMCA, in consultation with the Chief Officer Finance and Legal Services and Strategic Director Place on 5th August 2019 to agree to fund the works associated with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension and to include the expenditure in the capital programme, and to write to Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and confirm that the Council will fund both the Complementary Measures and the Urban Realm Uplift costs before 2nd September in order that TfWM can instruct MMA to include these interventions in the works.

Finance

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

Law

15. 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

16. These proposals comply with the Council's policy on Equality and Diversity.
17. With regard to the Metro extension interventions and complementary measures, the purposes of many of the works are to improve the access and use of the Metro by all.
18. With regard to Children and Young People:
 - The Capital Programme for Schools 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.

Organisational Development / Transformation

19. The proposals in this report do not have any direct organisational development / human resources or transformational implications.

Commercial / Procurement

20. The Boundary Signage project will generate advertising income on a commercial basis.

21. The Metro will realise many key benefits to the borough including:
- Supporting our housing regeneration priorities through improved connectivity to areas of housing development opportunity;
 - Supporting economic regeneration by improving accessibility to major employment sites including Castle Hill; Dudley Town Centre; our emerging DY5 Enterprise Zone; the Merry Hill Centre; Brierley Hill Town Centre as well as improving access to key visitor attractions such as the Black Country Living Museum and Dudley Zoological Gardens;
 - Encouraging modal shift from private car by delivering a high quality and reliable public transport service;
 - Supporting an integrated transport network through providing seamless interchange.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

22. With regard to the Metro extension, the importance of good quality public spaces on the wellbeing of people, including those with mental health issues is starting to be recognised. Evidence suggests that engaging in active travel and pleasant public realm can reduce levels of depression and anxiety, increase self-respect, self-worth and self-esteem. This is consistent with building stronger, safer and more resilient communities in line with the Dudley Vision and to protect our residents' physical, and emotional health for the future.
23. The Leisure Centre programme of work will ensure that Dudley offers quality leisure facilities with state-of-the-art gyms. The investment will support the health and well-being agenda as the Council recognises the important role that leisure plays in improving the health and well-being of communities. The centres will be accessible for all with a range of classes, facilities on offer. Competitive pricing will also be an essential element.

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List of Background Papers

Relevant resource allocation notifications.

Progress with Major Capital Schemes

Public Sector Housing

New Council Housing

Works commenced on site March 2017, completing in phases by 2019/20, for 130 new homes in a mixed tenure development at Middlepark Road, Russells Hall of which 42 will be new Council homes. All 42 Council homes are now completed and the private sale scheme will complete late Summer 2019.

Uplands Road – 6 affordable homes commenced, due for completion October/November 2019.

Stewarts Road – 14 affordable homes commenced on site end July – due for completion August 2020.

Portway Close – 8 affordable homes due to commence September – due for completion summer 2020.

Planning permission granted on Kinfare Rise (3 homes) and Worcester Road (10 homes).

Further schemes to be progressed to planning stage are under consideration:

The Broadway, Norton (10 bungalows);

Redfly Lane and Consort Crescent (9 homes);

Hinbrook Road (12 apartments and possibly 2 houses).

Other feasibility sites currently being investigated for both affordable homes and potential private sales.

A new development framework is being progressed for tender during September.

Private Sector Housing

Homes for Sale

This will deliver 59 homes for sale at market prices and 20 affordable homes (25% of the homes being developed) for rent by the Housing Revenue account (HRA).

Work has now completed at Wenlock Gate (Wrens Nest Road) – a development of 8 new homes with 4 for private sale (all 4 sold).

King William Street (Red House Mews) – 15 homes completed (13 private and 2 affordable). The remaining 5 homes are due for completion September. 5 sales plots are legally complete, and all 16 plots sold or reserved.

Mere Road (Mill Grange) – 4 homes handed over (all private). Ongoing completions for remaining plots throughout August to October 2019. 2 sales pots are legally complete. 10 out of 14 plots sold or reserved.

Beechwood Road (Castle Court) – 8 homes complete (all private). Ongoing completions for remaining plots throughout the year into January 2020. 2 sales plots legally complete, with all 25 plots sold or reserved.

Environment

Lister Road Depot Redevelopment

The project is being delivered in three distinct phases as follows.

Phase 1 – Demolition and new car parking area. Commenced and onsite, due for completion August 2019.

Phase 2 – Demolition, new vehicle storage buildings, welfare facilities, revised car parking and road layout. RIBA Stage 5 designs in progress, works due to commence October 2019, completion Spring 2020.

Phase 3 – Demolition and build of new accommodation block. Design works to RIBA stage 4 due to commence Autumn 2019, with works completion estimated to be late 2021.

Stevens Park, Quarry Bank

The Round 2 Heritage Lottery award was announced and the funding agreements signed at the end of January 2018. Work is proceeding on detailed designs in order to tender the contracts in Autumn 2019. Building work is due to be completed by the end of 2020 when the Emily Jordan Foundation is due to lease the building from the Council. It will be delivering horticultural training, cycle repairs and metal recycling for people with learning difficulties plus a community café.

There will also be new toilet facilities and improvements (subject to further funding bids) may include a new cycling hub supported by 'Wheels for All', a nationally recognised programme delivering a quality cycling activity providing fun and stimulating cycling for all children and adults with disabilities and differing needs.

Saltwells Nature Reserve Wardens' Base

Green Care and Corporate Landlord Services have had a number of meetings and conversations to agree the general design and location of the base, which already has planning approval, and to ensure the design is still fit for purpose. In addition to this it has been agreed that some of this project will be delivered by Green Care, such as any soft landscaping and the installation of any bike stands etc. as Green Care can deliver this in house which should help to keep the cost of this project down.

Corporate Landlord Services are currently negotiating with Western Power and South Staffs Water, in relation to the installation of utilities and are allocating resources to process the detailed design and project manage the scheme. Tender document preparation is currently underway and it is hoped that these, along with the final design, will be completed over the autumn period so the tender process can start early in the new year.

Transport

Street Lighting (Invest to Save)

Almost 4,400 street lighting lantern conversions to LED technology on main roads have been completed. This is approximately two thirds of the total works. The programme will continue to progress throughout 2019/20. In addition, over 500 lanterns have been purchased, ready to be installed over the next few months. New columns and lanterns will be programmed for installation during this year. In addition, external contractors have installed around 240 of over 370 12 metre columns forming part of this project.

Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide

Funding has been received from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to implement measures that will aim to improve air quality at key locations on the A461 and A491 corridors. The measures include the upgrading of a number of traffic signal installations with more efficient equipment that will assist in improving traffic flow on the Key Route Network. These capital improvements will be complemented by an upgrade in the bus fleet that serve these areas thereby reducing vehicle emissions and this element will be implemented by Transport for the West Midlands and bus operators. Work to upgrade the traffic signal equipment commenced on site on the A461 in July 2019 and is progressing well, with overall completion programmed for December 2019. Spend is forecast to be within budget.

Regeneration

Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative

The Townscape Heritage (TH) programme is funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund which offers grant assistance to carry out repair, reinstatement and refurbishment works to historic buildings, as well as a programme of complementary education and community engagement activities. The Phase 2 TH programme, which is operating with a grant budget of £1.178m from the HLF and £300,000 matchfunding from the Council, commenced in February 2017. It will run for 4 years and focuses on buildings in the town centre's historic core.

The work at 203/204 Wolverhampton Street has been completed. Grant offers have been confirmed for neighbouring properties at 208 and 209 Wolverhampton Street, but works will need to be re-tendered following the withdrawal of the contractor. Other projects identified as priorities within the bid include 204a Wolverhampton Street (tenders being analysed), 216 Wolverhampton Street (tenders being analysed) and 14 New Street (tender documents being finalised). These projects are being progressed with the private owners with a view to work starting on site this year. Other projects in discussion with owners include Fountain Arcade (amendments to planning approval being applied for) and Plaza Mall (tenders for work being sought) and these projects are progressing well. A further project is being discussed for the Crown, involving external work, and these proposals are being developed by their architect.

Activities are also being progressed and developed in conjunction with teams in Adult and Community Learning, Museums and Communications and Public Affairs, with events such as a maintenance training day held in June, Black Country Day in July, Heritage Open Day to be held in September and the continued development of the volunteer training programme. The Geological Trail has now been launched and is available in leaflet and webpage form and we continue to do reprints of the Heritage Architectural Trail. We are also liaising with Dudley College to facilitate training in conservation skills.

The TH programme is being progressed in line with the Action Plan.

Corbyn Road Extension

Revised tenders were received at the end of June, assessed for value for money and approval given for the successful contractor starting on site on the 12th August, The project is scheduled to complete at the end of January 2020.

Low Carbon Place Strategy

The council has been awarded approximately £2.5m European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) to deliver a project that will reduce carbon emissions. This a joint project between Housing and Corporate Landlord Services, that will reduce carbon emissions from 940 council owned homes as well as corporate buildings such as the Council House. £2.5m of match funding to be met from existing HRA budgets.

The first 70 Council homes are due to have new central heating systems and smart thermostats installed during August. The smart thermostats will link to a monitoring platform that will be used by the council's 'winter warmth' team to target behavioural advice. Potential faults with the heating system will also be highlighted, allowing for proactive scheduling of repairs.

Procurement documentation for the energy efficient retrofit of council buildings has been drafted. The intention is to appoint a contractor early in 2020 with works starting summer 2020.

Very Light Rail (VLR)

Track Works:

Two Very Light Rail test tracks are to be installed between Castle Hill Bridge and Cinder Bank with a test passenger platform located at the Cinder Bank end of the tracks. Full track length will be approximately 2km. The eastern track will be bedded on stone ballast and western track bedded on concrete track form system, the western track to form a later phase of work. The track route is on a disused Network Rail (NWR) freight track-way which is subject to a collaboration agreement with NWR who will also operate the test track. A planning application was submitted on 10th November 2017 and determined with reserved matters on 25th January 2018.

The track project is currently out to tender and due back mid-September 2019.

National Innovation Centre (NIC):

A planning application for the proposed new building for the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC), including a pedestrian foot bridge link to Tipton Road and links to future metro line, car parking, rail vehicle test track sidings and linking lines into the VLRNIC engineering hall was submitted on 12th December 2017 and determined with conditions to be discharged on 2nd March 2018.

Building regulations conditional notification was received on 22nd February 2018 and Conditional Approval received on 25th May 2018.

Phase 1 advance enabling site works and surveys commenced in December 2017 and are now complete albeit additional minor surveys may be undertaken if scheme design development dictates.

The Phase 1 main works (including Metro Retaining Wall, see below) are due to commence after contract award and are forecast to complete in Spring of 2021.

The funding of the VLR project is currently under review by the LEP and further detail will be reported to the next meeting of Cabinet.

Metro Retaining Wall

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) approved funding of £4,335,000 on 27th November 2017. It is estimated that this will be expended between November 2017 and May 2020.

The design works stage commenced in October 2017 and is currently under review based on recent changes made to the alignment of the new metro line and the Station Road Tram Stop. Approval of the revised design by the WMCA is now expected by the end of August 2019.

Tenders for the retaining wall have been received and are being evaluated. All tender sums are within the available budget and proposed timescale. An instruction for the works is planned to be issued by the end of August 2019.

The Metro Retaining Wall construction is due to commence at the end of September 2019 and is forecast to complete in Spring of 2020.

CCTV Control Room

Work to replace the public space CCTV cameras and relocate the control room from Sedgley to 8 Parsons Street in Dudley by early 2020 is on programme. Work to install network fibre is in progress and due to be complete by the end of August. The proposed control room space has now been vacated by temporarily relocating colleagues from the Youth Offending Service to 3 St. James's Rd. prior to a permanent move to the Switch building on Castle Street. CCTV Control Room will shortly be measured by the furniture company prior to off-site construction of essential control panel furniture for installation later in the work programme. Tenders for essential building work are due for return at the end of August, for a start on site at end of September and completion at the end of November 2019. WM Police have also been asked to comment on their priority locations which will enable the Council to consider the pros and cons of increasing the number of public space cameras across the borough.

Dudley Interchange

The Council has allocated £3m towards a total project cost of £18m. The remaining funding will be secured through a £10m contribution from the WMCA Transforming Cities Fund which has been approved and a potential £5m contribution from the Black Country LEP. The bid for the LEP funding is imminent and will be made by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM). Project co-ordination meetings are being held on a monthly basis with TfWM.

Former Dudley Museum and Enhancement to Dudley Town Hall Catering Provision

Following approval to proceed, design work to refurbish the former museum and provide new dining and bar facilities for Dudley Town Hall is in progress. Discussions with Historic England are in progress with a view to securing planning consent in December 2019. Detailed design will then commence prior to procurement of contractors with a view to starting works in March / April 2020. Works are then scheduled to complete around September / October 2020. Corporate Landlord Services took over the existing bar at the Town Hall in July and are successfully working with Hall management supporting a range of exciting engagements.

Cultural

Stourbridge Crematorium

Due to further delays in the design phase of the project, the upgrade of the cremators and enhancement works to the chapel will not commence now until early 2020. A start date for the project will be set over the coming months with spending forecast to be within budget.

Schools

Schools Basic Need Projects

The identification of the next phase of projects to be funded from Basic Need capital grant has been agreed, with Brierley Hill Township secondary school places as a priority. The plan is to expand both Wordsley and Crestwood Secondary Schools to meet projected growth by 2020 with an additional 300 pupil places for each school. Statutory consultations for the proposals has been carried out with satisfactory outcomes for both therefore we are moving forward with gaining Planning Permission and completing full design. To ensure that there is appropriate accommodation for additional pupils September 2019 there is the need to provide temporary mobile accommodation at Crestwood School.

Planning permission has been approved for both schemes and the drawings and specifications are being worked on ready to go out to tender.

Numbers for both primary and secondary school places continue to be closely monitored and processes are in place to recommend the next wave of capital projects to address any projected growth across both sectors.

Priority Schools Building Programme

As reported previously, the Council has received formal confirmation from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of a revised grant allocation of £2,515,000 for the rebuild of the Key Stage 1 block at Huntingtree Primary School. The project has commenced on-site and is progressing well.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Projects

We are in the process of re-profiling our special school and mainstream provision to bring it more closely in line with the current SEND pupil cohort and the special provision capital funding is a key component in this process.

In having just undergone an Ofsted/Care Quality Commissioning (CQC) inspection into SEND in the local area our plans were shared with the inspection team. We want to take into account feedback on planned use of the funding before confirming projects.

Healthy Pupil Capital Fund

As reported previously, the Council has been allocated £226,000 from the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund (HPCF) to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by improving and increasing availability to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions. Funding is provided from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, also known as the "Sugar Tax".

Officers assessed options on how best to disseminate the funding with the integration of a deprivation factor across the maintained school estate to address areas with most need. Community, foundation and voluntary controlled schools were informed of the grant allocation and asked to apply to the Council for funding towards a project that they believe met the fund criteria.

Bids have now been assessed and following some small amendments all schools have been successful in their bids. The schools have now been informed that they need to move forward with their projects and on receipt of their paid invoices, the Client & Commissioning Team will arrange for their allocation to be transferred to them. Schools will be contacted in the Autumn Term for an update on progress.

Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

Social Care ICT

The Successor Programme is reaching the end of its design and build stage and is about to enter implementation. This will focus on business readiness and user acceptance testing before a period of cross-over activity and go-live into 2020. Plans are being confirmed for both Adults' and Children's services.