

Report for: Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Panel – 29 September 2020

Title: Management of the Schools’ Estate

Report authorised by: Ann Graham, Director of Children’s Services

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Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/

Non Key Decision: Noting

1. Introduction

1.1 The Corporate Landlord service manages a capital programme of minor works across the schools estate, focused on ensuring the basic condition and statutory compliance of the Council’s maintained¹ schools (schools directly under the ownership/responsibility of the Council) in the borough.

1.2 Typically, the Corporate Landlord works carried out in schools include mechanical & electrical works, fire safety, fire compartmentation, removal of asbestos, compliance, and replacement of boilers, roofs and windows. Approximately 65% of these works are planned and the rest are reactive or emergency works, particularly relating to boilers. There are three significant sources from where works derive:

- a) **building Condition Surveys** - these identify urgent & emergency H&S works required to the schools identified by the consultants who undertook the condition surveys (commissioned by the Schools Programme within the Major Projects Team on behalf of the AD for Schools and Learning) and passed to corporate landlord to deliver the works;
- b) **compliance works** – statutory compliance works as required as identified by legally required testing for water, gas, electrics, asbestos & fire;
- c) **reactive works** – works identified by the schools or the team during site visits to the school and therefore unplanned works to keep schools safe and operational.

1.3 In 2019/20 the Corporate Landlord Service was typically allocated £1m which included a carry forward of £797K from the previous year, bringing the total 2019/20 budget allocation to £1.797M. In years previous to 2019/20, the allocation had typically been £1M. During this financial year, the team expanded to what it is today, moving from 8 officers to 14 qualified officers to reflect the

¹ The maintained schools in Haringey are our community and foundation schools. Voluntary controlled (church), free and academy schools have their estate managed by the relevant diocese or trust.

demand requirement to undertake necessary works and resolve significant Health and Safety issues in a timely way. On 27 May 2020, a Corporate Landlord Budget update was presented by the Head of Estates Improvement to Children's Services Directorate Management Team (DMT) to advise that the historical budget allocation of £1m per annum was insufficient to maintain the Schools estate from year to year. Consequently, Children's Services DMT agreed to allocate a total of £6.6m to address the detailed programme of maintenance and repair works identified for delivery in financial year 20/21. This figure represents a much more realistic allocation if we are to be able to respond effectively to the issues across the estate in any given year.

- 1.4 The Team consists of the Head of Estate Improvement, building surveyors/project managers, a Technical Services Manager, a Compliance Officer, a Fire Safety Officer, project officers, a Mechanical & Electric (M&E) Surveyor and M&E Inspector.

2 The Council's Schools estate and action being taken to address maintenance issues

- 2.1 The school estate is made up of primary schools (some with associated nurseries), secondary schools, special educational needs schools (SEN), children's centres and alternative provision sites (for children who do not attend mainstream schools as a result of exclusion but do not fall wholly within the SEN bracket).

- 2.2 In total there are 62 sites that are local authority maintained. As of September 2020, a further site has been added, the former Octagon building in Commerce Road N22, which has returned to council ownership after being an outsourced alternative provision service under TBAP for a number of years.

- 2.3 The estate is a mixture of relatively modern construction (up to 30 years old) and aged Victorian stock, with the majority being the latter. There have been historical issues with levels of maintenance/repair and replacement works across the whole school estate. Windows and roofs can present significant health & safety hazards (particularly when window glazing and roofing tiles are no longer secure within their frames/fixings).

- 2.4 These issues are mostly due to the age of the buildings and an historic lack of investment in the maintenance/repair over time. This is mostly obvious where there are still timber windows in the original single glazed Georgian barred style which can be very expensive to repair or replace and where access to roofs on the older stock can be very difficult and costly as well as disruptive to the day to day running of our schools during term time. However, there have been no reports of widespread significant issues with the building structures that Corporate Landlord have been made aware of to date.

- 2.5 Mechanical & electrical (M & E)

M & E refers to heating systems and plant equipment – a number of the heating and hot water systems in place in our schools are old and, as such, the Corporate

Landlord Team is dealing with poorly maintained, poorly serviced plants and systems; coupled with parts have been cannibalised for use on sister boilers/plant instead of boilers/plants being fully replaced. There is inefficiency due to age and the systems require significant works to replace and bring plant rooms back into line with current standards.

2.6 Statutory compliance

Our school buildings in most respects are out of statutory compliance on a number of sites. The risks of non-compliance can be severe and can result in part or full closure of a school and the mitigating measures to prevent closure can be expensive where systems are not adequate – particularly fire detection. The inadequate systems have potential for serious consequences in terms of harm or lives lost to users and legal penalties for council officers (and potentially head teachers and chairs of governors) should the worst happen. Furthermore, some of our schools have not historically fully understood their role and responsibilities in terms of the statutory compliance testing and surveying.

2.7.1 To address this, a Schools Premises Management Handbook has been developed which clearly sets out the roles and responsibility of the schools as tenants and the Council as the landlord. A communications plan is being developed which will set out the various means of engagement with key stakeholders, including Head Teachers, School Site Managers, School Business Manager and Board of Governors. This Handbook is expected to launch in September 2020.

2.8.1 However, having the Handbook is only one solution and will not necessarily mean schools have money to do all the necessary statutory compliance testing required to ensure the Schools are safe.

2 Corporate Landlord repair and Maintenance Programme

3.1 Both the Corporate Landlord and the Major (Capital) Projects teams have programmes in place to address the issues arising from historical lack of maintenance and repairs in our schools as outlined in this briefing. These are covered by both planned programmes of works and reactive maintenance. Any immediate health and safety hazards to the elements are picked up in the reactive works as a rule.

3.2 In addition to reactive works, the planned programme of works (with a reactive works contingency budget) for the schools this year is in the region of £5 million.

3.3 Statutory compliance

A general issue with the compliance is that our schools may struggle to fulfil their statutory duties in the event that budget constraints present themselves. That said, all of our schools do receive Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) from the Department for Education (DfE) and are expected to pay for minor repairs and maintenance from this funding, as well as any discretionary spending on their premises.

3.4 Should schools not carry out the statutory compliance tests required, there would be little way of ascertaining the remedial works that the Council is responsible for carrying out. In the event that the Council agreed to set a revenue budget aside to support the schools, the revenue cost would be in the region of £400K. (there is

£500K in the capital budget for this year for works arising from compliance testing) but it would give the schools a baseline position where we have compliance testing in the schools up to 85-95%. It would likely take up to a year to achieve in full. In this scenario, the schools would have time to plan their budgets for subsequent years.

3.5 To this end, the Assistant Director for Children's Services, Finance colleagues and the Head of Organisational Resilience are exploring the potential for identifying a Council revenue budget to enable Corporate Landlord to respond to situations where schools may struggle to fulfil their statutory compliance duties for the initial financial year only (2020/21). In any case, the Corporate Landlord Team continues to offer Schools with the necessary support and guidance to ensure that the School's estate is managed in a collaborative manner.

4 Conclusion

4.1 There has been an historic lack of investment in our schools estate. In the last 18 months, this has begun to be addressed through the creation of officer capacity to manage the estate, additional funding to increase the historic funding that had not seen an increase for a number of years, through the creation of a Schools Handbook to clearly set out rolls and responsibility and through ongoing work with schools, including heads, school business managers and chairs of governors so that schools are empowered to take up their own responsibilities and commitments. This work is very important progress and is ongoing in the gradual improvement of our estate which is supported by a robust capital programme of works running to millions over the coming years.