

## CABINET – 20 JUNE 2023

### CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS – JUNE 2023

#### Report by the Director of Finance

#### Recommendations

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:
  - a) approve the addition of the expansion of Wood Green School, Witney (£4.3m) to the capital programme.
  - b) approve the addition of £2.6m to the capital programme to support the council's Tree Policy.

#### Executive Summary

2. The Capital Programme was approved by Council in February 2023. This report sets out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that will be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in July 2023.

#### Introduction

3. The Capital Programme sets out how the Council will use Capital expenditure to deliver the Council's priorities as set out in the Strategic Plan 2022-25. The Capital Programme is updated quarterly and fully refreshed annually as part of the Budget and Business Planning Process to ensure that it remains aligned to the latest priorities, reflects the latest cost projections and profile for delivery, and incorporates the current funding position.
4. On occasion, time critical variations to the Capital programme are recommended to Cabinet. This report sets out a change request to a school project that is part of the agreed Pupil Place Plan. It also requests that funding for Climate Action including Tree Replacement agreed as part of the capital pipeline<sup>1</sup> in February 2023 is now added to the firm programme so that the purchase of new trees in line with the council's Tree Policy can proceed.

#### Pupil Places Plan

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<sup>1</sup> As set out in the Capital & Investment Strategy **pipeline capital schemes** support the council's priorities, have an agreed need, a confirmed alignment with the council's capital prioritisation framework and a basic mandate. These were agreed to be priority schemes, with agreed funding, but were subject to further development and an approved initial business case before they were added to the firm programme.

Wood Green School Witney

5. Wood Green School is a secondary school managed by Acer Trust. Rising secondary-aged pupil numbers require the expansion of the school by 1 form-of-entry (1fe) from 7fe to 8fe.
6. The project scope includes new build and refurbishment required to facilitate the expansion to 8fe and also refurbishment/remodelling of adjacent accommodation.
7. The estimated project budget prior to the feasibility stage being completed is £4.3m. The council is currently holding £3.3m of Section 106 funding which specifically names Wood Green School in the agreement. The council will fund the works associated with the expansion. A further £1.0m costs relating to the adjacent refurbishment/remodelling will be met by Acer Trust who have access to funding from the DfE to meet these costs.

## **Environment & Climate**

8. In April 2022, the Council approved the new [Tree Policy for Oxfordshire](#). This makes a commitment to replace trees when they are removed and commits to the planting of two trees for every one removed.
9. The capital programme pipeline agreed in February 2023 includes £3.0m funding for Climate Action including Tree Replacement. It is now proposed to add £2.6m of that total to the firm programme to support the cost of supply, planting & aftercare for 3 years of 1,100 standard trees per year for four years. The priority will be to find planting opportunities in established residential streets where the Council is responsible for the Highway.
10. Standard trees take five to seven years before they are of a height and quality to be planted within the streetscape. This investment will create confidence in the nursery supply chain and provide security to the specialist nursery sector to continue growing trees that the council will purchase.
11. The scheme adheres to the council's Tree Policy commitment and enables the opportunity for enhanced community driven projects as well as replacing trees that have had to be removed 'in-year'. The new trees are expected to contribute to climate adaptation, increase canopy cover in residential areas and improve health and wellbeing for Oxfordshire's communities.
12. A Tree Aftercare & Planting Service will be created to support and maintain the council's investment. As part of that two three FTE in – house teams will be established to deliver planting and aftercare including watering as required to ensure that the trees remain healthy.
13. There will be a detailed engagement programme with community action groups and town and parish councils to allow them to have ownership of projects / plans for planting, including during the initial phase when the trees are becoming established. In the longer term the aim is to build expertise and capacity within the council to work with other organisations to enable further tree planting and to generate income through different

highway functions, such as Section 38 & Section 278 works as well as internal highway projects.

## **Financial Implications**

14. Where funding is not available in the capital programme pipeline agreed in February 2023 the updates to scheme costs set out in this report will be funded by additional Section 106 contributions or existing funding for Basic Needs so the overall programme remains fully funded.
15. If Section 106 contributions are not received within the planned timeframe it may be necessary for the Council to temporarily fund capital expenditure through Prudential Borrowing. The Council has a Prudential Borrowing reserve to help manage the revenue impact of additional prudential borrowing.

Comments checked by:  
Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance

## **Staff Implications**

16. There are no staffing implications arising directly from the report.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

17. There are no equality and inclusion implications arising directly from this report.

## **Legal Implications**

18. In year changes to the capital programme must be approved by Cabinet in accordance with Financial Regulation and in particular paragraph 5.1.1(iv) permitting Cabinet to agree resource inclusion into the capital programme via a periodic Capital Report to Cabinet, based on the recommendation of the Strategic Capital Board (chaired by the section 151 officer). Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

**LORNA BAXTER**  
Director of Finance

Background papers: none

Contact Officers:  
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June 2023