

Agenda Item 39

TITLE	Growth Fund Update 2020/21
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 15 July 2020
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That there will be sufficient school places for Wokingham resident children.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Forum notes the current projected spend indicates that growth needs can be met within the £800,000 Growth Budget.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The planned programme of spend and contingency budget can both be funded from within the allocated £800,000 2020/21 budget.

Background

As noted in earlier reports, the growth fund exists to fund or part-fund the planned expansion of the number of school places in response to rising demand (known as Basic Need). New Free Schools receive diseconomy and class start-up funding from the Growth Fund. Funding of places is normally made through the formulaic arrangements, but using estimated rather than historic actual rolls. For other schools, for a new class in a normal year of entry, the Growth Fund is for planned additional places up until the point where formulaic lagged funding is available to a school. Where a new mid-phase class is agreed the current arrangement is that funding is provided for the gap between 95% of the planned additional capacity and the actual roll on the October census day, for the financial year after the opening of the school and thereafter until the roll reaches 95% of the planned additional capacity.

The growth fund estimates (Appendix A) includes allowances for planned spend in the period 2020/21. This includes for:

- the expansion of three maintained primary schools,
- for three established primary Academy / Free Schools,
- one Free Secondary School and
- pre-opening grant payments for three new primary schools (one of which also receives diseconomy funding).

Analysis of Issues

Long-term support for six growing schools continues, in line with agreed funding arrangements. This is the final year of planned support for three of these schools (Wheatfield and Grazeley Primary and the Bohunt Wokingham secondary schools). Rates for primary schools have increased though, in line with the change in AWPU to £3,011.60 per child.

New schools.

- The **Alder Grove CoE Primary Free School (formerly Shinfield West Primary School)** will open this September. The school will be run by the Keys Trust. This year all Shinfield Schools were fully allocated.
- Two further new primary schools in the **North Wokingham (Matthews Green)** and **Arborfield Strategic Development Locations (SDLs)** are now planned to open in 2021. The build contracts have been re-let to Reds 10 Ltd following the failure of the previous contractor (Dawnus). Initial pre-opening grant payments will be required in the 2020/21 financial year. Subject to any objections to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator being upheld the Council expects the Arborfield School to become the base for the Farley Hill Primary School.

Additional needs this year

The growth fund “bulge classes” contingency budget takes account of both the limited resources in the growth fund and the need for additional capacity to meet need across the Wokingham area. The classes serving children born before September 2012 (Year 3 and above) are now full, or nearly full. The numbers of these older primary age children (in Key Stage 2 Year 3 and above) continue to grow, reflecting the impact of families moving into the borough, into new homes and established residential areas.

Consequently, there is a need to be able to open new classes in older age groups to meet the Borough's statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places. These classes are likely to be in new and expanded schools, with as-yet unused capacity, because of the planning permission, funding and construction challenges that expansion elsewhere entails.

Currently, there is sufficient capacity in current Reception and Years 1 and 2. These age groups are also growing in size, and additional capacity may be required in future years.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£800,000	YES	Revenue (DSG)
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	Revenue (DSG)
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	Revenue (DSG)

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

Public Sector Equality Duty

Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

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