



Northumberland County Council

This report is on the public agenda, but the committee will be advised to consider a resolution excluding the public from the meeting while they are considering some additional information about the issue.

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

Outcomes of the tenders for the Coquet Partnership.

Report of Councillor(s) Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People

Responsible Officer(s): Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

These proposals are most closely linked to the Council's priority for tackling inequalities (children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well), but it is also strongly linked with the priority for achieving value and making the best spending decisions.

2. Purpose of report

To update cabinet on the outcomes of the tender process for the construction of extension to the feeder primary schools in Amble and also the refurbishment of South Avenue site for the relocation of Amble First Schools and the creation of a New Special School Barndale by The Sea. The report also seeks approval to award the contracts.

An outline capital allocation for investment in Education has already been made within the Council's medium term capital programme of £42,931,672 (£1,007,031 expenditure incurred in 2022-23). Remaining budget of £41,924,641 from April 2023 to March 2028. The outcome of the tender exercises for extension works on the feeder first schools and the refurbishment of the South Avenue site now seeks to confirm the capital required for the construction and management of these proposed schemes, being £14,582,208.95 Noting the New build works at James Calvert Spence College is subject to an ongoing tender exercise with the outcomes being reported to Cabinet later in the year.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to

Note the outcomes of the tender process and approve the delegation to award the contract to Robertsons Construction for the refurbishment works on the South Avenue Site and to Portakabin for the extensions required at the feeder first schools, to the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Education.

Note in order to complete the works within the implementation timescales approved by Cabinet on 17th November 2022, a Letter of Intent was issued for works up to a capped value of £989,194.87 prior to the final award of contract. This was undertaken to prevent any increase in cost or delays in programme until the award of contract is complete in April 2024

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The previous Cabinet's decision to reorganise the Coquet schools didn't make specific reference to awarding contracts to carry out the works associated with the reorganisation.

Only way the contracts can be awarded, in time to fulfil the statutory decisions already made by Cabinet, is to seek approval at the 9th April Cabinet meeting.

5. Key Issues

5.1 On 17th November 2022 Cabinet approved the implementation of school reorganisation in the Coquet Partnership, in making their decision Cabinet also approved a capital funding allocation of £39.06m to carry out works to schools to support the implementation of the statutory proposals.

5.2 Since this time officers have working with schools to develop designs, gain the appropriate planning approvals, and tendering the works for extensions at Grange View CE, Red Row, Broomhill, and Amble Links First Schools due to the nature and scales of these projects they have been tendered as one package. A second tendered process has also been undertaken for the refurbishment works required at the South Avenue Site (former site of Amble Middle School). These works are to enable the relocation of Amble First School together with the creation of new specialist provision for Barndale by The Sea.

5.3 Following a competitive tendering exercise for the works in the feeder first schools officers were carrying out final contract negotiations when the preferred bidder went into liquidation. This then resulted in officers having to propose a direct award for these works in order to maintain the implementation timeline as agreed by Cabinet. The results of these direct negotiations are contained within the final tender report contained within the commercially confidential "Tender Outcomes Report" APPENDIX ONE.

5.4 The current market conditions faced throughout the UK are dictating difficult competitive tendering, as well as soaring prices, therefore officers sought a direct negotiation for the works at South Avenue. However, despite approaching the top number 1 ranked contractor on the NEPO 207 construction works lot 5 framework, these direct negotiations did not meet officer expectations in terms of both length of programme and competitive price. An alternative contractor that had previously

worked with the education team on a similar refurbishment project was approached to enter a direct negotiation. In order to maintain the timeline, a Letter of Intent was entered into to start on site whilst the final contract terms and negotiations were completed. The results of these direct negotiations are contained within the commercially confidential final tender report APPENDIX TWO.

6. Outcomes of the Tendering Process

- 6.1 Over the previous nine months, a full market test of the projects has been undertaken together with a full design review in order to achieve value engineering/optimisations to provide the most cost-effective solution.
- 6.2 Our Technical adviser team (AtkinsRéalis) have been reviewing the full cost breakdown from both Robertson Construction (for the South Avenue project) and Portakabin for the extension works to the feeder first schools to ensure the costs are justified and it is a fair and reasonable representation of the market. The outcome of this exercise is provided in detail within the commercially confidential "Tender Outcome Reports" contained in Appendices 1 & 2.

7. Background

- 7.1 To support the reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership Cabinet has already approved £39.06m based on indicative cost which were subjected to change following the tender exercises. This budget was increased and approved by full council when agreeing the MTFP in February 2024. The revised budget is now £42,931,672.

Reorganisation of schools in the Coquet Partnership and timeline.

- 7.2 Amble First, Amble Links First, Broomhill First, and Red Row First Schools and Grange View Church of England Voluntary Controlled School would extend their age ranges and reorganise to become primary schools with effect from 1 September 2024, in a phased way. The schools would retain Year 5 in September 2024 and would then retain Year 6 in September 2025.
- 7.3 JCSC would reduce its age range in a phased way with effect from September 2024. The school would not receive a Year 5 intake in September 2024 at which point it would have an interim age range of 10-18 years, and then from September 2025 and subsequent years the school would have a final age range of 11 to 18 years, with transition into Year 7 only from that point.
- 7.4 Barndale House School would increase its pupil numbers through expansion onto the satellite site within the former JCSC middle school building at South Avenue, Amble with effect from 1 September 2024. Under this proposal, the school would admit up to 50 additional pupils onto the school roll to be based at the satellite school at South Avenue in Amble in a phased way from 1 September 2024.

Sport and Recreation

- 7.5 There would be a positive impact on sport and recreation, with the proposed improvements to sports facilities for the schools and the wider community.

8. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

- 8.1 Note the outcomes of the tender process and agree to delegate the final award of contracts to the Executive Director of Children, Young People and Education.
- 8.2 Any other option would involve a reversal of the previous cabinet decision to proceed with the implementation of the school reorganisation project so the reason the above options are recommended are to ensure that the aims of the previous cabinet decision are achieved.

9. Implications

Policy	The consultation has been consistent with the Council's policy to review changes to schools in accordance with local wishes and needs.
Finance and value for money	Refer to Appendix 1 – Outcomes of tender report for feeder first schools and Appendix 2 -The outcomes of the tender report for the refurbishment of South Avenue
Legal	The procurement process has been carried out in accordance with the Council's finance and Procurement rules
Procurement	Advice has been obtained from Procurement within Northumberland County Council and external legal advisors to understand its obligations regarding the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
Human resources	Staff employed at Amble First School will need to relocate to the new buildings on South Avenue site. It is not envisaged that this would have a detrimental impact on the staff involved in the change.
Property	The proposed investment will address backlog maintenance issues on the South Avenue site and potentially allow for an alternative use or capital receipt for the existing site of Amble First.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	Yes - required and attached. Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is contained in Appendix 3 of the report.
Risk assessment	A full risk assessment has been carried for the projects and is contained in the Appendix 4.
Crime and disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.

Customer considerations	The proposals set out in this report are based upon a desire to act in the best educational interests of current and future children and young people in Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	NCC's approach to Carbon Reduction is set out in its draft Northumberland Local Plan. The projects' considerations for carbon reduction include; improved insulation, LED lighting throughout the buildings and more energy efficient heating solutions. In addition to new solar panels to all 4 feeder school extensions.
Health and wellbeing	This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Legal Officer.
Wards	Amble; Amble West with Warkworth; Druridge Bay; Shilbottle;

10. Background papers

None.

11. Links to other key reports already published

Cabinet report 17th November 2022 – The Outcomes of the Statutory Consultation on Proposals for the Coquet Partnership.

12. Author and Contact Details

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DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

In carrying out the development of the OBC set out in this report, the Council has acted in compliance with Data Protection Act 1998 via the Council's Data Protection Policy.

Specifically:

- Data gathered during this consultation process has been dealt with fairly - e.g. the responses from members of the public have been anonymised, whilst those responding within a public role have been identified e.g. Chairs of Governors, Dioceses and so on.
- The data and information gathered during Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultation has been used to assist in informing the recommendations set out in this report and will not be used for any other purpose, i.e. it will not be shared with another service area or any third party.
- The data and information gathered has been limited to that which would assist in informing the recommendations set out and those that will arise from this consultation.

The Council has set out how it deals with information received as part of consultation in the Council's Privacy Notice, at

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Contact/Information.aspx#privacynotices>.