

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Capital Programme Committee
DATE	01 December 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	ELC Programme Progress Report
REPORT NUMBER	RES/21/287
DIRECTOR	Steve Whyte
CHIEF OFFICER	John Wilson
REPORT AUTHOR	Colin Kemp
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the progress of ELC Capital Projects. These projects will help meet Aberdeen City Council's Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan objectives by working with the Education Operations teams to help meet the Council's commitment to expand funded early learning and childcare from 600 hours to 1140 hours. The timeline for delivery was originally in 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic has since been extended to August 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Note that the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Programme of works forms part of the overall Council Capital Programme.
- 2.2 Note the significant progress made with the overall delivery of projects despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is committed to expanding the provision of funded early learning and childcare from 600 hours to 1140 hours. The timeline for delivery was originally in 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic has since been extended to August 2021. The expansion should prioritise a high-quality experience for the child to capitalise on the significant contribution that Early Learning and Childcare can make to a child's development and to closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Progress Summary

- 3.2 At the start of the new term beginning on 17 August 2021, we welcomed children and families into our new Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) facilities. The capital programme comprises of work to 27 ELC settings. In the event of any delays to building completion times, robust contingency arrangements are in place and no child is at risk of not receiving their 1140 hours entitlement.

The capital programme is comprised of 27 projects:

- 8 are new standalone facilities,
- 2 are extensions and significant refurbishments of a standalone nursery,
- 1 is an extension to a school to form a new nursery,
- 2 are significant refurbishments within an existing school nursery,
- 1 is a significant refurbishment of a non-operational building to convert it into a new nursery,
- 1 is a significant refurbishment and extension to non-operational building to convert it into a new nursery, and
- 12 are minor work refurbishments of existing nursery settings.

Programme

- 3.3 Works onsite from have continued since June 2020, health and safety measures are reviewed to ensure compliance with Scottish Government guidance.
- 3.4 The design team and main contractor continue to evaluate the impact on the programme with regard to Scottish Government guidance and the requirement to comply with physical distancing measures.
- 3.5 As of work week ending 05 November 2021, 25 projects have been completed and handed over and 2 remain onsite with projected completion dates in December 2021
- 3.6 The programme is still being impacted by supply chain issues, material shortages.

Facilities in Use

- 3.7 The ELC programme has sought to provide a local flexible early learning and childcare offer that is accessible, affordable and of high quality to families. The programme also sought to build on the provision already in place to develop that localised and flexible offer to families. This approach mitigates against geography and distance being a barrier to families accessing their ELC entitlement. An ELC project has been undertaken in every Associated School Group (ASG) to ensure that we are delivering high quality facilities to support child development and learning across the city.
- 3.8 We have received positive feedback from staff that we have created positive and enabling environments for children to learn and play. While it has been

challenging to deliver a programme on this scale against the backdrop of the pandemic, schools have fed back seeing the children enjoying the new space has made it all worth it.

- 3.9 The provision of quality outdoor learning environments has been a key ambition for the ELC expansion programme in recognition that such provision can have a positive impact on a child's development. The programme has sought to either create or enhance free flow in our ELC settings to enable children to independently access the outdoor space. Early Years colleagues have feedback this is supporting children's creativity, health, and wellbeing as they learn and explore their outdoor environment.
- 3.10 When Duthie and Hazlehead Park are completed we understand Aberdeen City Council will be the first Local Authority in Scotland to manage and run two Outdoor Nurseries.
- 3.11 The inclusion of a family room in many of our projects creates a space for skilled Early Years practitioners to offer family support in an inclusive and supportive environment. We have sought to ensure that we have created spaces that are welcoming, light and bright for staff, families and children to enjoy. The programme has sought to meet the aspirations of the Local Improvement Plan (LOIP) giving children the best start to life and investing in family support to improve outcomes for families. By working closely with colleagues in Education and in Corporate Landlord, we have sought to create facilities that contribute to this aspiration to improve the long-term outcomes for children and families.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Programme of works forms part of the Council's Capital Programme following a successful bid to the Scottish Government for early learning and childcare funding.
- 4.2 As detailed in previous reports to Capital Programme Committee, the pandemic has impacted on the delivery of various projects in the Capital programme and resulted in extended timelines for delivery. With regards to the ELC programme, officers have kept these challenges under review, and also the procurement routes available for delivery as the various projects involved have developed and been taken to market.
- 4.3 For transparency, it has been determined that all infrastructure requirements of the ELC programme should be consolidated within the Capital programme. This also now aligns with the procurement route for the supply, delivery and installation of the new furniture being arranged through the main contractor for the ELC construction works.

- 4.4 The financial envelope for the ELC Capital programme can therefore be updated to be:

	£m
Original ELC Capital programme budget	23.040
* Other infrastructure funded through ELC revenue grant	2.908
Spend to date	23.849

*** Figures being discussed with finance with regard to spend to date and re-setting the original Capital Budget to include Revenue funding contributions.**

- 4.5 As the programme of works nears completion, we are in a better position to estimate the monetary impact of COVID. Extracting the costs across the whole programme of works, as of the end of August 2021, the estimated cost is circa £1.1m.
- 4.6 As a result of the covid impact on internal and external staff resources across the full ELC Programme, at the present time it is impossible to predict the actual final costs of each project. This task is on-going and the project team are working with their appointed cost advisors and the appointed contractor to close out each project's final costs.
- 4.7 In the meantime, the ELC Programme Board are continuing to monitor and to adjust resource allocations.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The legal implications arising out of the recommendations are referred to within the body of the report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	<p>Late delivery will impact on the level of learning provision which can be provided.</p> <p>The statutory duty for local authorities to provide 1140 hours is now August 2021.</p> <p>The risk is that the time limit introduced is not met</p>	L	<p>This is being mitigated through early planning, clear governance arrangements and close working between teams across Aberdeen City Council to ensure that the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare is being planned for across all teams.</p>

Compliance	Not meeting the statutory date for delivery.	L	All teams are working towards delivering the projects as soon as possible taking cognisance of work restrictions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.
Operational	Covid-19 pandemic restrictions impacting on work practices.	M	All teams are working towards delivering the projects as soon as possible taking cognisance of work restrictions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.
Financial	<p>The expansion of funded Early Learning and Childcare will require very careful budget monitoring and financial planning to mitigate the risk of funding being insufficient to realise the expansion.</p> <p>Government exercising their statutory powers to manage their Covid-19 health response including future lock downs</p>	H	<p>Cost checks will be carried out throughout the design stage to monitor estimates against the allocated budget. These will also be reported monthly to the ELC Programme Board.</p> <p>Costs are reviewed and adjusted to cover potential additional costs associated with compliance with current Government guidance. Value engineering exercise carried out to keep costs within the approved budget.</p>
Reputational	The reputational risk of not being in a position to offer sufficient 1140 hours places to meet demand from August 2021.	L	This is being mitigated through early planning, clear governance arrangements and close working between teams across Aberdeen City Council to ensure that the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare is being planned for across all teams.
Environment / Climate	Environmental assessments will be considered prior to confirming any sites for expansion or extension and feasibility studies will be undertaken where appropriate	L	This level of scrutiny and by following of Aberdeen City Council's Building Performance Policy will ensure that environmental risks remain low.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement Programmes in the Policy Statement include working with our partners to ensure the city has the required infrastructure; completion of school estate review (P1) and development of estate strategy for next 5-10 years (P2); work with the Scottish Government to provide flexible and affordable childcare for working families on the lowest incomes; commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city;	The projects outlined in this report is part of Aberdeen City Council's Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Programme. The expansion of ELC requires an investment in our Early Years Estate as well as an investment in staffing to ensure we are providing high quality provision that meets the needs of children and families in all localities. To this end, the proposals within the report support the delivery of childcare education learning targets.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The project outlined in this report is part of Aberdeen City Council's Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Programme. The expansion of ELC requires an investment in our Early Years Estate as well as an investment in staffing to ensure we are providing high quality provision that meets the needs of children and families in all localities. To this end, the proposals within the report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 – 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026. The investment in our estate is interlinked with the investment in our workforce. To staff the expanding estate the Early Years team will contribute to the diversification of the local economy by offering flexible pathways into the Early Years Sector and increasing the number of people employed in this growth sector.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposal within this report supports the LOIP Stretch Outcome 3 – 95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2026. The project(s) outlined in this report will be designed to support outdoor learning and the free

	flow of direct access to the outside environment. Outdoor learning, exercise and play benefits pre-school children by encouraging them to be physically active. This will help address many of the health challenges outlined in the LOIP. Children will have daily access to outdoor play and will regularly experience outdoor play in a natural environment as part of their ELC funded offer. Outdoor learning will significantly contribute to a child's development and wellbeing.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 13 – No one in Aberdeen will go without food due to poverty by 2026. To deliver the 1140 funded hours necessitates the building of several new ELC settings and a reconfiguration and extension of current provision. Increasing the accessibility of provision will contribute to transforming the lives of families across Aberdeen City. There are gaps in the provision in our three Priority Areas, which are home to the highest proportion of pre-school children and the highest concentration of families living in poverty. Every child attending a funded early learning and childcare (ELC) session will receive a healthy meal. The accessibility of provision will lead to an increase in the uptake of the ELC funded offer and help ensure that no child in ELC will go hungry.
Regional and City Strategies Strategic Development Plan; Local Development Plan	The proposals in this report will impact on the consideration of future regional and city strategies with respect to education and learning.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes Legislation which places a range of statutory duties on the Council, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.	The statutory duty for local authorities to provide 1140 hours by August 2020 has been revoked and the new date is August 2021.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required.

Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
--	--------------

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Item 10.02 Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan; Education and Children's Services Committee 14th September 2017
- 9.2 Item 4(b) General Fund Revenue Budget - 2.1.3; Council Budget Meeting 5th March 2019

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Project Milestones

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Colin Kemp
Title	Principal Architectural Officer
Email Address	ckemp@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	01224 523861

