

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance and Resources
DATE	8 May 2024
EXEMPT	The content of the report is public, but it contains an exempt appendix. (Paragraph 8 – Estimated Expenditure on Contracts: ‘This report refers to the acquisition or supply of goods/services where disclosure to the public of the amount to be spent would be likely to give an advantage to a person or organisation seeking to enter a contract with the Council.’)
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	St Machar Grounds Improvements: Outline Business Case
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/24/134
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Sharon McNutt
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.4

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a completed Outline Business Case, setting out the findings of a recent feasibility study, to identify options for improving the grounds at St Machar Academy.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Approves in principle the recommended option within the outline business case at Appendix A, to improve the outside environment at St Machar Academy, in line with the allocation of funding for this project within the Non-Housing Capital Programme, which was approved by Council on 6 March 2024;
- 2.2 Approves the use of resources to take the improvements detailed in the preferred option; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to report back to the Committee with a full business case, within the next 12 months.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 At its meeting on 8 September 2022, the former Education Operational Delivery Committee approved the Council's School Estate Plan, and instructed officers to take forwards a detailed action plan to develop and improve the school estate. This included an instruction for officers to carry out a feasibility study, to identify options for improving the outside space at St Machar Academy.
- 3.2 The outline business case, included at Appendix 1 of this report, sets out the findings of the feasibility study, and provides an analysis of the options available for improving the suitability of the school building.
- 3.3 This project aims to address critical suitability issues which are negatively impacting the school's operations, including:
- The layout of the St Machar Academy site and restrictions on outdoor space presents challenges for curriculum delivery
 - There are three old, disused modular classroom units in the playground which require to be removed;
 - The playground is on a slope and is in poor condition in places with areas not accessible because of fenced off areas around the temporary units;
 - The Locality Inclusion Team is providing funding for an outdoor food pod to increase the options available on site for pupils however, whilst there is already sufficient indoor dining capacity to meet current and predicted future demand, there are currently no outside dining facilities or seating in the playground;
 - The school and playground are not connected directly to the sports field, and pupils must go off site to get to it for sports activities and to access the muster points located there in a fire evacuation;
 - The site is not secure and cannot be secured due to a lack of fencing in some areas and a gate which cannot be locked as it is currently designated as a fire escape route; and
 - The playing field has access and drainage issues which often make it unusable. The artificial pitch becomes flooded after periods of heavy rain, making it unsafe to use.
- 3.4 To address these issues, the preferred option identified within the outline business case is Option 4 – grounds improvements with covered dining.
- 3.5 This option will deliver improvements to the outside space and new facilities to include:
- The removal of the disused classroom units.
 - New covered outside dining facility with food pod servery to compliment existing indoor facilities and provide a wider choice of options for pupils, that can also be used as an outdoor classroom and pupil social space;;

- New sports facilities with a multiuse games area (MUGA) adjacent to the existing all weather sports pitch and improved field drainage;
- New direct access to the sports field that will incorporate a spectator seating area which can also be used as an outdoor classroom and pupil social space;
- A new outdoor classroom;
- Improved site security with new perimeter fencing to enable the site to be secured during the school day and prevent members of the public from accessing the playground; and
- Improved fire evacuation with direct safe access to the muster points in the field without the need to leave site.

3.6 Should this option be approved, a programme of work will be tendered with a view to construction work commencing in Autumn 2024, and with completion anticipated in Autumn 2025.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 At its budget setting meeting on 6 March 2024, Council approved an overall budget of £1.5m within the Non-Housing Capital Programme, for outdoor space improvements at St Machar Academy. The stage 1 estimated capital costs for the preferred option as detailed in the outline business case are within the available budget. The cost of developing the full business case will be met from this budget.

4.2 It is anticipated that any increased maintenance costs associated with the installation of the new sports pitch will be offset by revenue from an increased use of the facilities by external groups at evenings and weekends. There are no further direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education.

5.2 Section 17 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of an education authority in the performance of their functions under sections 1 to 6 of the Act, to provide for their area, sufficient accommodation in public schools and other educational establishments under their management to enable them to perform their said functions. In addition, an education authority shall maintain and keep efficient every public school, and other educational establishment under their management, and shall from time to time provide such additional accommodation as may be necessary to enable them to perform their functions under the Act and may, provide, alter, improve, enlarge, equip and maintain schools and other educational establishments within their area.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified			
Compliance	Failure to plan effectively for the school leading to the Council being unable to fulfil its duty to make adequate and efficient education provision	The recommended option as set out with the business case will help to ensure that adequate and efficient provision will be available at the school for the foreseeable future	L	Yes
Operational	The preferred option doesn't meet the needs of building users	Building users will be consulted and engaged with throughout the design development to ensure their views and requirements are highlighted	L	Yes
Financial	Inability to deliver the Council's desired outcomes within the approved budget	This will be mitigated through working with cost consultants and designers during design	L	Yes

		development stage.		
Reputational	Failure to engage with stakeholders on the planned changes to the school could lead to reputational damage for the Council.	Ongoing dialogue and engagement with staff, parents and pupils will continue throughout the project	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>The recommendations within this report support the delivery of the following policy statements:</p> <p><u>A City of Opportunity</u></p> <p>Policy Statement 2 - Review and invest in our school estate, ensuring all of Aberdeen's schools are fit for the educational needs and the challenges of the 21st century. The report seeks Committee's approval to proceed with design development for significant improvements to be made to the suitability of Ferryhill School.</p>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Prosperous People: The project will support Stretch Outcome 8 in the LOIP - <i>Child friendly city where all decisions which impact children and young people will be informed by them by 2026</i> . Ongoing stakeholder engagement will help ensure that the views of children and young people will be taken into account.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The updated School Estate Plan supports the delivery of Stretch Outcome 13 in the LOIP – Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. The proposed improvements to the school site will assist in reducing carbon emissions from the school estate.

Regional and City Strategies	This project forms part of the School Estate Plan which will support the delivery of the Council's Property and Estates Strategy and the Net Zero Routemap for Aberdeen City.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Stephen Booth, Chief Officer Corporate Landlord on 11/4/24.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	No other assessments required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Education Operational Delivery Committee, 8 September 2022: [Agenda Item 14: School Estate Plan 2022](#).

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Exempt Appendix 1: Outline Business Case – St Machar Academy Grounds Improvements

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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