

DRAFT SERVICE PROPERTY STRATEGY 2001 - 2004

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

Author: Jim Dalton, Assistant Director: Planning
Tel: 01992 555862

Executive Member: Robert Gordon

1 Purpose of this Report

1.1 To consider a draft CSF Service Property Strategy for 2001–2004.

2 Introduction

2.1 Each service prepares a three-year Service Property Strategy, annually reviewed and updated in line with the Corporate Asset Management Plan. This document covers the strategy for 2001-2004.

2.2 The strategy presented in this report will be backed up by more detailed property plans for all the accommodation within CSF. Officers suggest that these plans are considered by the School Places, Admissions and Commissioning Panel in the light of the Select Committee's comments on this strategy.

2.3 The purpose of the CSF Service Property Strategy is to set out the service's position on property in terms of:

- (i) objectives to meet policies for service delivery;
- (ii) problems with property that impact on service delivery; and
- (iii) priorities and actions to solve the problems.

2.4 The strategy also provides the basis for securing internal and external funding.

2.5 The accommodation covered by the strategy is:

- (i) Schools (including Education Support Centres)
- (ii) Youth Service
- (iii) Children's Homes
- (iv) Family Support Centres (including Family Assessment Unit)

- (v) Youth Justice Service
- (vi) Hertfordshire Outdoors
- (vii) Music Service
- (viii) Minority Ethnic Curriculum Support Services (including Traveller Education Project)
- (ix) Office Accommodation
- (x) Wheathampstead Development Centre

2.6 The strategy covers all property used by the department with the exception of 64 leases for accommodation and land, and 22 sites held in advance of need.

A full list of premises covered is available from John Procter, 01992 555740.

2.7 The Asset Management Plan for schools, as required by the DfES, is a major sub-set of the Service Property Strategy.

3 Context

3.1 The creation of the Children, Schools and Families service gives a unique opportunity to develop property solutions for new services created by teams working across traditional organisational and professional boundaries. For example the 'Mendip Unit' at Lonsdale School, Stevenage, which opened in May 2001, demonstrates how new integrated thinking can result in accommodation being used more imaginatively across traditional service boundaries. Lonsdale is a residential special school and the Mendip Unit provides respite care for children with disabilities and other special needs at weekends and during summer holidays. During the life of this strategy, innovative property schemes will be needed at former Social Services properties, schools, and non-school educational properties to help achieve the purpose of CSF.

3.2 The starting point of this strategy is the best value review of asset management undertaken in 1999/2000. The review focussed on organisation and management. Four of the outcomes were particularly significant for this strategy:

- (i) the reviewing, updating and enforcing of standards of building specification for capital projects;
- (ii) rationalisation of the way in which planned and responsive maintenance are handled;
- (iii) the creation of new serviceability standards for property repairs and maintenance; and
- (iv) the creation of Hertfordshire Property and a clear distinction between project sponsors, who are from CSF and other service departments, and project managers who come from Hertfordshire Property.

3.3 Finally this strategy needs to embrace the asset management planning for schools that is being developed by DfES. The government's approach and processes are consistent with the County Council's; so this strategy is the over-arching document, and the Asset Management Plan for schools sits within it.

The Asset Management Plan for schools is intended to:

- (i) ensure a rigorous, 'transparent' approach in managing property;
- (ii) identify where investment is needed;
- (iii) identify the most appropriate type of funding for specific proposals;
- (iv) link to the current series of other strategic plans relating to schools and non-school properties in Hertfordshire and schools' own premises development plans.

4 CSF Property Vision

4.1 The County Council's corporate property vision is to only use property which enhances service delivery, which for CSF means ensuring that the property used by the service helps all children reach their full potential. For property that is primarily for CSF service delivery, we want to ensure that pupils, families and staff have access to learning and residential environments of high quality that maximise children and young people's achievement; and for offices, we want our accommodation to provide an attractive and safe environment for staff to work and meet clients and members of the public.

4.2 The government's proposed arrangements for 'single capital pot' funding include a discretionary element to reward authorities for high quality land and property management, including CSF service performance. It is an integral part of the CSF property vision that the service will be assessed as 'well above average' thereby assisting the County Council to gain maximum benefit from the discretionary element available.

5 Information/Data

5.1 Information and data about property is gathered in line with the format specified by the DfES for the asset management plan for schools and by the DTLR for non-school properties. Each property is assessed according to:

- (i) condition
- (ii) suitability (fitness for purpose)
- (iii) sufficiency (quantity and organisation of provision in relation to demand) and
- (iv) running cost information/data.

5.2 Currently, only condition and suitability surveys have been carried out for schools. Building surveyors undertook condition surveys of all schools during 1999, and suitability surveys were undertaken through self-assessment by schools in autumn 2000.

Condition

5.3 The tables below summarise the returns from the 1999 condition survey:

(a)

Grading	% of Building Elements in Gradings D to A
D. Bad	10
C. Poor	38
B. Satisfactory	44
A. Good	8

(b)

Priority	% of Building Elements (eg roof, window walling etc) in Priorities 1-4
1. Urgent work.	17
2. Essential work required within two years.	72
3. Desirable work within three to five years.	10
4. Long term work.	1

5.4 In 1999 the total cost of work for LEA (landlord) responsibilities, assessed according to the seriousness of the grading and priority, was estimated by surveyors to be:

Category D1	£900,000
Category D2	£450,000
Category C1	£600,000
Category C2	£12,500,000

Suitability

- 5.5 The table below summarises the returns from Hertfordshire schools and shows the number of rooms/spaces with the different categories of non-suitability:

Category	Number of rooms/spaces
A. Unable to teach the curriculum.	857
B. Teaching methods inhibited.	3035
C. Management or organisation of school affected adversely.	3014
D. Pupil or staff morale or pupil behaviour affected adversely.	3400

- 5.6 This suitability data has been used in the formulation of the capital programme for 2001/02.

Sufficiency

- 5.7 In March 2001 the DfES issued guidance on assessing the sufficiency of school premises within the national Asset Management Planning framework. The capacity of schools is currently based on the 'MOE' capacity assessment method but, from June 2002, it will be based on a revised method of assessment known as 'net capacity'. Detailed guidance on the net capacity method has not yet been issued by the DfES. For 2001/2002 632 places of basic need (worth £3.8m of funding) were agreed by the DfES using the current method for assessing capacity.
- 5.8 For the next Service Property Strategy there will be data on condition, suitability, sufficiency and cost for all properties.

6 CSF Property Objectives

- 6.1 The property objectives for CSF are presented in terms of:
- (i) approaches;
 - (ii) building standards; and
 - (iii) targets.

Approaches

- 6.2 The starting point for developing CSF property is to ensure that it meets the aspirations of the Best Value Performance Plan, the CSF Strategic Plan and the other plans encompassed within the Strategic Plan. These include Quality Protects; the Education Development Plan; the Behaviour Support Plan; the Early Years Development and Child Care Plan; and the School Organisation Plan. There are property implications in all these plans that feed into the prime property objective of CSF: to procure, manage, and maintain buildings and other physical assets to provide sufficient and suitable accommodation and equipment at an affordable price. Each section of the Property Strategy, covering the accommodation within CSF, summarises the approach for developing property for that area of work.
- 6.3 The second approach is to ensure that all property processes are open and transparent, based upon data, and developed in full partnership with stakeholders. The former education service used briefings for headteachers and governors, the management partnership framework and the headteachers' forums to listen to the needs of property users. It is a CSF property objective to develop these arrangements for partnership working across the new service including the views of users, and to ensure that investment decisions are based on the data and information contained within the Asset Management Plans for schools and in comparable information for non-school properties.
- 6.4 The third approach with Hertfordshire Property is to work more effectively with the County Council's property consultants, Amey Property Services, to ensure a better service for building management, capital projects and maintenance advice. The inspection of the LEA by Ofsted, in January 2000 highlighted that in order to improve the quality of building maintenance, advice and services to schools, more effective monitoring of the contract with Amey Property Services and other providers was needed to ensure that schools receive a quality service. Promoting quality in property services is an essential aspect of this strategy so that all CSF accommodation is in good condition, fit for purpose, and sufficient to meet demand.

Building Standards

- 6.5 The standards to which property is constructed and maintained are set by the County Council, central Government and by legislation.
- 6.6 The Corporate Asset Management Plan sets out standards that provide a basis for assessing property performance and ensuring consistency across projects and programmes. These standards are currently under development as part of the Best Value Review of Asset Management. These developments are being supported by the Building Research Establishment.

- 6.7 These standards will also encompass those set by the Disability Discrimination Act and Health and Safety legislation. In addition, residential accommodation for children (provided by schools and children's homes) needs to comply with Care Standards Act (Draft standards are due to be published in June 2001).
- 6.8 The DfES issues School Premises Regulations, Building Bulletins and other guides, which set out required and desirable standards for schools. Hertfordshire strives to meet the required standards and where possible the desirable ones.
- 6.9 The Property Unit provides the Health and Safety functions and, via the Standards Fund, supports security improvements (on a prioritised risk basis) across CSF properties.

Targets

- 6.10 There are a number of key targets across CSF promoted by this Service Property Strategy:
- (i) to complete all building projects within time and cost;
 - (ii) to complete a second round of condition surveys for all school by October 2002 and for non-schools by June 2001;
 - (iii) to have dealt with all items identified as conditions D1, D2 and C1 in the 1999 Survey by September 2002;
 - (iv) to ensure all future condition survey items identified as D1, D2 and C1 are dealt with within 18 months;
 - (v) to develop a transparent, fair rolling programme of planned repairs and maintenance based on Asset Management Planning and circulate this to all schools for the 2002/03 programme;
 - (vi) to spend 80 per cent of the schools 2002/03 repairs and maintenance programme on a planned basis. The remainder will be retained for allocation on AMP principles for contingencies as they arise;
 - (vii) to ensure there is suitability data on all CSF properties, including schools, by July 2002;
 - (viii) to audit all properties to assess compliance with regulatory requirements for vehicle/pedestrian segregation, and to institute a programme of works to rectify any shortcomings, by July 2002;
 - (ix) to complete existing works programmes to install equipment to control dusts and fumes in science and technology areas, to comply with Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations, by 2003/4;
 - (x) to produce sufficiency information to meet the requirement of DfES by means of accurate, up to date, computerised plans for all schools by July 2002;
 - (xi) to maintain the level of unfilled places in primary schools in 2001 and 2002 at no more than 5 per cent;
 - (xii) to reduce the level of unfilled places in secondary schools in 2001 from 8 per cent to 6 per cent and to maintain this level in 2002;
 - (xiii) to procure 95 per cent of the maintenance work in the 2002/03 programme by means of measured term contracts;
 - (xiv) to 'join-up' condition, suitability and sufficiency information to formulate capital and revenue property expenditure for the 2003/04 programmes and

beyond.

7. Priorities and Actions

7.1 Priorities for property actions are in three categories

- (i) Essential work necessary to ensure that a property can continue to be used
- (ii) Essential work necessary to meet legislative requirements
- (iii) Work to realise the CSF property vision; develop inter-agency property use; implement the Best Value Performance Plan and CSF Strategic Plan; and meet the targets set out in paragraph 6.10 above.

7.2 Whenever there is a high health and safety risk to users or another emergency situation that would take a building out of use, remedial action takes top priority.

7.3 The legislative requirements that will have great impact on CSF service property during the lifetime of this strategy will be the Disability Discrimination Act and the Care Standards Act.

7.4 Possible capital schemes arising from priority 7.1 iii. above are divided into the following categories for consideration by the Capital Panel.

- (i) where there is insufficient accommodation for a CSF service need;
- (ii) where there is a robust business case demonstrating that accommodation is sufficient but inappropriate for current requirements;
- (iii) where on the basis of Asset Management Plan data a scheme is needed in the relatively near future to overcome issues of condition, suitability or sufficiency;
- (iv) schemes that would not be seen as a priority for major capital funding at present.

7.5 Most of the high priority schemes inevitably address existing problems of insufficiency and therefore a separate budget heading exists in the 2001/02 major capital programme to deal with the most serious suitability issues.

7.6 The above priorities will ensure that investment decisions for capital and revenue programmes, based upon the data and information contained within the Asset Management Plans for schools and comparable information for non-school properties within the Children Schools and Families Department, meet the property aspirations of the service.