

Answer from Cllr Vicky McGurk to question from Councillor John Slater (asked at Executive Board 12th November 2020).

Further to your query regarding the budget increase on the Avondale Primary School Kitchen extension, remodel and refurbishment Capital Scheme within the Schools Capital Programme, the budget for which had increased during the quarter by £150k (from £113k to £263k) following approval of the Schools Capital Programme report by the Exec Board at its meeting on 12th September, I write to explain the budget variation.

Typically all of the school schemes are funded through school condition allocation or basic need funding which are both grant funds from the DFE and require no borrowing from the council.

The issue in initially setting the budget for the scheme is that each scheme is initiated based on desktop data at a pre design stage, then if it is approved at this point, it is then added to the programme.

Only then is the scheme developed further and then tendered to get a fixed/firm price – as such this is why some schemes then require budget adjustment, either increases or decreases.

The process is summarised as below:

- Asset management/development plan is submitted for consideration on the capital programme, AMP data is normally desktop data.*
- At this point the scheme is added to the capital programme in order for the scheme to be initialised and a code produced in order to progress the stages of work (initial budget based on desktop data).*
- Once the scheme has been incepted, a feasibility study and statutory surveys can progress*
- Once feasibilities and surveys are carried out then concept design can begin, this is where the scheme can be subject to scope change.*
- Once the concept is developed, technical design and a tender package is produced with a pre tender estimate.*
- The scheme is tendered and we arrive at a fixed price.*

This hopefully explains the reason for the gaps between the initial budget/project inception and that arrived at in a fixed/final price as this is subject to feasibilities, surveys and potential change in scope.

Avondale, for example started off in the initial budget as a kitchen refurbishment scheme with replacement of some of the kitchen equipment, but following the feasibility study and survey, this progressed into asbestos works, provision for allowing more children to access the servery at one time due to the volume, additional seating for children while they have lunch, structural works, equipment replacement, ventilation/heating upgrade, lighting and remodel of space.

I hope this answers your query and I can assure you that I will continue to monitor the progress of the capital programme and challenge and investigate all variations against budget.

17/11/20