Cardiff Council

Education Delivery Strategy Review

Report Ref 259925-00 PW/CF/SE

Issue V2 | 18 May 2018

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ARUP

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BSRIA Soft Landings Framework

Executive Summary

Schools comprise a significant proportion of Cardiff Council's overall estate. The city's rapidly growing school age population combined with high levels of backlog maintenance in ageing schools creates significant challenges to meet the education delivery vision of the Council.

These challenges have three aspects, namely:

    i.   The delivery of the 21st Century Schools Band A (£164m) and Band B (£284m) new build school programmes. These relate to population growth that is already in the system at primary phase. Band A is already in the delivery stage whilst Band B is due to start shortly.

    ii.   The delivery of extra school capacity to address the growth within the Local Development Plan (LDP). This involves additional new build schools to deal with this future population growth in the city.

    iii.   The commitment to tackle the condition of the remaining school estate. There is currently £68m of backlog maintenance within the estate. A significant proportion of which will not be addressed by item i above.

Arup has been commissioned to provide an external review of the proposed governance and the capacity required to ensure Cardiff Council can deliver a programme of this size and scale effectively. As part of this study, the current process of school delivery within the authority was also reviewed. This was done in consultation with a cross section of stakeholders from across the Council and its schools.

Cardiff Council have recently reviewed how they manage their school assets once operational. A new process for delivering the asset management of their schools is currently being implemented. This must address the backlog maintenance within the estate. The programme of investment in new school buildings will inevitably help to address this issue where ageing schools are replaced with new buildings. However, as new school buildings are completed, they too will require asset management. The process for integrating this into the new asset management programme is key to the successful management of the Council's maintenance liability going forward.

The conclusions and recommendations of this review are summarised below along with some lower level observations.

Governance

We have reviewed the Governance structure proposed by the Council as set out in section 4.1 of this report. We believe it provides a robust overall Governance arrangement for the education estate.

The Schools Asset Commissioning Group provides a key Governance link between the teams commissioning the new schools and those tasked with their ongoing maintenance. This link is essential to the successful Governance of the process.

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We understand that currently the budget for asset management of the schools includes funding for both suitability adaptions and back log maintenance. We would recommend that the funding for these two distinct priorities is separated so that each has a clear budget.

An inevitable consequence of the proposed programme will be the need to decommission old schools and dispose of some of the sites. Whilst it is outside the scope of this report to advise on which group within the Councils Governance structure leads this process, it is important that this is clear within the terms of reference of that group to avoid any confusion on the responsibility for this key function.

The integration of cross Council initiatives related to Digital, Sustainability and Active Travel objectives must be embedded into the Governance structure. This will ensure a holistic approach to the school modernisation programme.

Our key Governance recommendation is that the structure outlined in section 4.1 of this report, where not already in place, is fully implemented and supported with clear terms of reference for each group within that structure.

Capacity

We have reviewed the existing capacity within the Council to implement a school delivery programme of the scale proposed. Our overall conclusion is that additional capacity is required and our recommendations are as follows:

a) For a programme of this scale and speed of delivery, we recommend the Council strengthens the management of its delivery team with the appointment of a Programme Director for the Education School Organisation Programme (SOP). This person should have experience of successfully managing a capital works programme of this scale. Therefore, it may require an external appointment, potentially on a temporary basis for the period of the programme. An appointment at this level will have significant short-term revenue costs. This essential expenditure must be viewed against the scale of the programme and the benefits that such an appointment offers. The right appointment will reduce the risk of non-delivery in terms of time, cost and quality. We would recommend that the appointment is funded from the programme budget, as it directly relates to the programme.

b) We also support the Council's proposal to increase the capacity of current senior management arrangements for the Corporate Landlord function to deliver the Asset Management programme. We believe it is essential to add capacity to the team in order to deal effectively with the asset management of a major council estate, containing significant back log maintenance.

c) For clarity, we would recommend that the current SOP Project Manager title should be renamed to reflect the 'client liaison' role they perform and to distinguish them from the external project manager roles noted in item e) below.

d) Due to the scale of the programme a significant team will be required to manage the various internal/external stakeholders and the external delivery partners. From our experience on other programmes of this scale it is likely that an increase in the number of 'client liaison' roles and in the role of school programme development manager, to whom they report, will be required. We believe these roles should be internally resourced, as with the current roles, due to the extent of internal interface required.

e) From our experience of delivering programmes of this scale across the UK, and smaller programmes within Wales, we would recommend that the day to day project management and technical advice for the new build schools is externally sourced, as happens presently. This will minimise any over capacity within the education team at the end of the programme. It will provide the skills, knowledge and experience to project manage new build programmes of this scale. It will also provide the necessary resource to enable schools to be delivered concurrently, as required by the programme.

f) We would recommend that additional internal capacity is identified to produce a standardised strategic approach to IT across the school estate for integration into the programme as a matter of urgency. This can then be tailored at a school level to suit their specific requirements. It should be available for use from the outset of the programme.

g) We would recommend that the current capacity within other parts of the Council that are essential to the successful delivery of the programme e.g. legal, procurement, planning, highways etc. are urgently reviewed and supplemented where necessary before the programme commences.

h) We would recommend that additional internal capacity is identified to deal with land disposal in terms of legal agreements, decommissioning of sites, security prior to sale, insurance etc.

Observations

In addition to the conclusions and recommendations above, the review also identified several operational issues that need to be addressed as the programme moves forward. These are outlined below;

Governance

Whilst a strong governance proposal is to be adopted, a clear balance needs to be struck between this over-arching process and addressing the inevitable need to get urgent approvals at SMT and/or cabinet level for changes proposed by the SOP Board. Consideration should be given to how this flexibility can be introduced into the governance structure. This will ensure that the programme is not impacted nor costs incurred due to delays caused by the internal approval process.

Provision is made within the governance structure for interfacing between the asset management and SOP teams. However, from the discussions we had with various stakeholders during this review, at an implementation level this interface could be improved, particularly at site selection and site handover stages.

We would recommend that the site selection process for new schools involves a formal sign-off by all internal stakeholders. This is a key decision relative to ensuring value for money from the programme. This should be included in the terms of reference of the SOP Board and a sign-off required for each site.

Process

Transformational changes are currently in progress for the asset management of schools and the other parts of the Council estate. These will be delivered through a refreshed approach to deliver the Council's responsibilities as Corporate Landlord with an enhanced focus on ensuring health and safety compliance. Successful implementation of this function is key, with completed 21st Century Band A projects already in this phase and additional schools currently moving into the lifecycle process. To assist with this, we recommend that the description for the 'client liaison' role includes leading the adoption of the BSRIA Soft Landings (SL) for each school. The BSRIA SL methodology (see Appendix A) is designed to assist with a smooth transition between the delivery and operational phases and, in our experience, when successfully implemented makes this transition significantly more effective. This will lead to lower costs for the Council and better outcomes for the users.

As part of the BSRIA SL process it is recommended that (as already underway for existing assets) an Asset Register for each new school is fully developed to improve this interface at handover.

Maintenance responsibilities for schools are currently being clarified with a School Building Handbook which is out for consultation. Successful implementation of this handbook is key for the asset management programme to clarify accountability of delegated/non-delegated responsibilities, including health and safety statutory compliance issues. It should be given full support.

From our previous experience of successful school delivery programmes both in Wales and across the UK, we recommend that robust Employers Requirements (ER's) are developed for each school. We understand that this approach was adopted for the Band A schools. Whilst a detailed review of this Band A documentation is outside the scope of this study, from discussions on the current scope of these ER's we believe investment in more detail going forward would help successfully manage the cost and quality risks of the programme. To maximise the value of this investment, the Technical Advisor team that produces the ER's should stay in place throughout the delivery and hand over phases of the programme. This will ensure that the requirements of the ER's are correctly interpreted and implemented.

1   Introduction

Cardiff has a large education estate with over 127 school properties. Cardiff Council have a duty to ensure that schools comply with appropriate statutory, regulatory and corporate standards.

The rapidly growing school age population in the city sits against a background of many of the existing school buildings requiring significant further investment to bring them up to an acceptable standard. This creates significant challenges for the delivery of education for Cardiff Council.

These challenges have three aspects, namely:

i.   The delivery of the 21st Century Schools Band A (£164m) and Band B (£284m) school programmes. The Band A programme is already in the delivery phase with two secondary schools and six primary schools. The Band B programme is about to start and includes four new primary schools, four new secondary schools, three additional learning needs (ALN) schools and one new combined secondary/ALN school. These programmes relate to population growth that is already in the system at primary phase.

ii.   The Local Development Plan (LDP) adopted by Cardiff Council will see the city grow significantly up to 2026. This will also generate significant increases in the demand for school places across the city over the next ten years.

iii. The commitment by the Council to tackle the condition of the remaining school estate. There is currently £68m of back log maintenance within the estate. The investment in new buildings through the Welsh Government 21st Century School programme, outlined in item i above, will address some of the condition issues of the estate. However, there is still considerable residual back log maintenance across the remainder of the estate which must be addressed.

During the 14 December 2017 Cabinet meeting the following recommendation, in the report on 21st Century Schools: Cardiff Council's Band B priorities, was agreed:

"A subsequent report to Cabinet will propose arrangements to secure sufficient capacity and appropriate governance to deliver the Cardiff Band B 21st Century Schools Programme."

Arup was therefore commissioned in January 2018 by the Education Directorate to provide an external review of the proposed governance and capacity required to ensure Cardiff Council can effectively deliver a programme of the size and scale outlined above, whilst securing value for money. The study also reviewed the proposed delivery process of the schools, as this is also key to the success of the school delivery programme. This was done in consultation with a small cross section of stakeholders from across the Council and the schools.

The report starts by summarising the scale of the programme. It then reviews the current delivery process and the governance and capacity proposals before providing conclusions, recommendations and observations.

2   Education Delivery Vision

In recent years, Cardiff has undergone an astonishing transition which has established the city as one of the best places in the UK to live. Whilst the city has undoubtedly done well, the Council recognises the need to trigger the next phase of regeneration for the city. This will ensure the quality of life currently enjoyed is retained and enhanced, and more and better jobs are available to all Cardiff residents. The provision of high quality schools is key to delivering this vision.

The 12th October 2017 Cabinet Meeting Report for Developing the Education Estate in Cardiff, summarised the vision as follows;

"The Council and its partners outlined in 2016 a clear vision for education in the city in Cardiff 2020: a renewed vision for education and learning in Cardiff. All children and young people in Cardiff attend a great school and develop the knowledge skills and characteristics that lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens. The Council's Capital Ambition strategy has made a clear commitment to continue in the investment and improvement of Cardiff schools to make sure every child has the best possible start in life. The delivery of 21st century learning environments will ensure that there are appropriate, high quality school places for young people which meets the needs of Cardiff's growing and changing population."

The four key components of delivering this vision are summarised in Fig 1 below:

Fig 1. Summary of the key components of the Cardiff Council Education Delivery Vision

The scale of these four components are described in more detail below.

2.1   Band A phase of the Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme

The Cardiff schools Band A programme is a new build school delivery programme that is already in process. It has a value of £164m and is delivering additional English and Welsh medium school places to cope with existing

population growth. This includes two new secondary schools, Eastern High School and Cardiff West Community High School, as well as six new primary schools.

2.2   Local Development Plan (LDP) Expansion for Cardiff County Council

The LDP adopted by Cardiff Council will see further significant growth in the city's population up to 2026 which in turn will generate increased demand for school places across the city.

It is projected that ten new primary schools and two new secondary schools are required from this growth. Some temporary measures may also be required to accommodate demand from the early phases of this additional growth.

2.3   Band B phase of the Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme

This is the next phase of the school new build programme which meets population growth already in the system in the primary phase.

The Cardiff Band B 21st Century schools programme is due to commence shortly and is scheduled to run until 2024. It has a value of £284m and is proposing to deliver additional school places and new build facilities in both English and Welsh medium in the primary, secondary and special school sectors.

2.4   Asset Management Programme

Cardiff has a very large education estate, with over 127 school properties. Many these schools are in a poor state of repair. Some of the maintenance and condition issues of the estate will be addressed through the Band A and B new build school programmes outlined above. This nonetheless leaves a significant maintenance backlog of approximately £68m, of which circa £8m is Equality Act 2010 compliance. The Local Authority's current spend on school asset renewal has been circa £3m per annum. This resource is allocated on a priority basis and is predominantly limited to keeping properties safe and watertight.

External Project Management Consultants were engaged by the Council in 2017 to update the 2010 conditions surveys and their findings form the basis of the major asset management programme that will be implemented over the next 5 years. From April 2018, the Council has agreed an additional £25m of capital funding over 5 years to assist with this asset management programme, of which circa £6m will be used to implement additional ALN places across the city.

2.5   Commentary on the scale of this programme

The programme for successfully delivering the education vision of the Council and its four components outlined above will require adequate capacity and a clear governance structure. This Governance structure and the capacity provided to

deliver the programme must ensure good value for money, whilst maintaining the existing assets in good condition.

It is highlighted that investment in new school buildings will only address some condition/suitability issues. There will remain ongoing asset management challenges with the current high backlog maintenance in other school properties.

Table 1 below summarises the scale of the new build programme that is planned.

NEW BUILD SUMMARY	BAND A	BAND B	LDP	TOTAL
PRIMARY	6	4	10 +3 finance contribution	20 +3 finance contribution
SECONDARY	2	4	2 finance contribution	6 +2 finance contribution
ALN	-	3	-	3
COMBINED SECONDARY AND ALN	-	1	-	1

Table 1 – Summary of the scale of the Cardiff Council new build school programme

This table clearly illustrates the significant scale of the new build school programme that Cardiff is delivering. From our experience, this will require significant capacity if it is to be successfully delivered.

Arup has worked on a variety of school new build programmes in Wales and England, including Birmingham & Sandwell, Hertfordshire, Newport and Vale of Glamorgan, the scale of which is summarised below;

•   Birmingham & Sandwell – Eight secondary schools
•   Hertfordshire – Seven secondary schools
•   Newport – Three secondary schools
•   Vale of Glamorgan – Three secondary schools, one ALN and one primary school

These schools were a combination of new builds and part new build part refurbishment (adding complexity).

The components of the Cardiff programme that include new build schools are of a similar scale to the English school programmes and these all required significant additional capacity for their successful delivery (either internal or external). This experience has been drawn on to review the capacity requirements of the Cardiff programme.

The Welsh school programmes both involved new schools but they were not delivered concurrently as is intended for the Cardiff programme. Hence, they didn't involve additional capacity requirements. However, the Governance requirements were very similar and these have been compared as part of this review.

3   Education Delivery Process Review

The delivery process for the Education School Organisation Programme (SOP) was reviewed using the four key stages in the lifecycle process of a typical new build school. This was done in consultation with a small cross section of stakeholders from across the Council and its schools.

Fig 2 below summarises the four key stages of the typical life cycle of a new build school, namely need, scheme, delivery and operation.
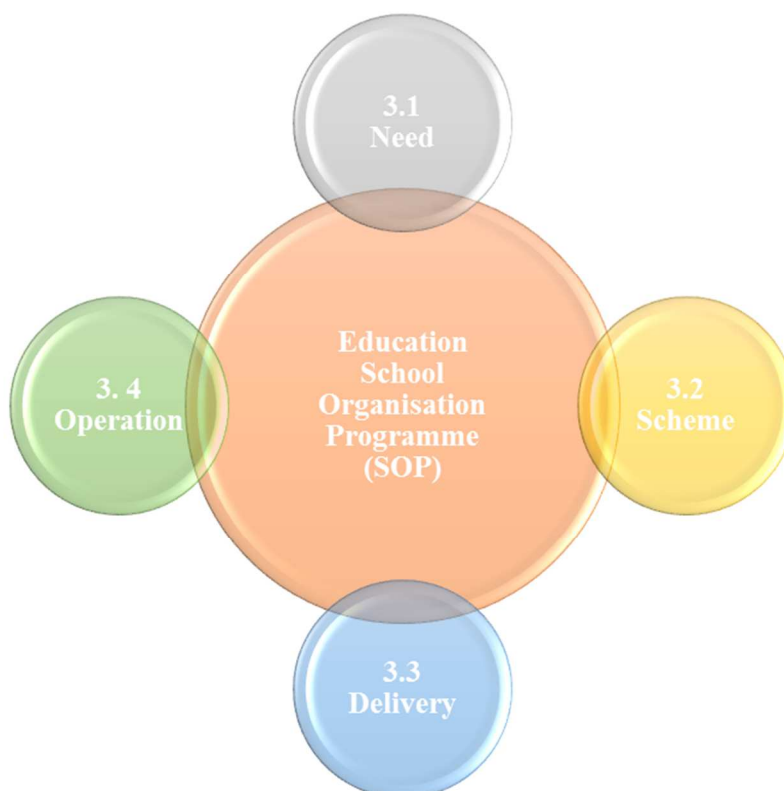

Fig 2. Summary of the four key stages in a typical school life cycle

3.1   Need Phase

This phase begins the life cycle by the identification of the need for a new school and is led by the Education Directorate. Any new scheme or modifications of existing provisions must be consulted on as set out in the School Organisation Code for Wales.

Band B schools are currently in progress with a robust estimate of cost developed via external consultants. The submission to Welsh Government for match funding for band B schools has been successful, with £284m approved in principle. For the Local Development Plan (LDP) schools in the areas of new housing, the building of new facilities is delivered or financed via Section 106.

This phase of the process seems well developed and we understand that it is operating well with adequate capacity. However, the scale of future school

provision, including the consultation requirements, will inevitably place additional demands on this function.

3.2   Scheme Phase

This second phase of the process relates to deciding the high-level details of the new schools, such as site selection and is again led by the Education Directorate. There is extensive input from other areas of the Council, such as strategic estates, planning, highways etc. through the SOP Board. Statutory consultation for this stage is an estimated nine-month process with allowance of up to one year, based on the Welsh Government guidance.

The building of new schools due to the Local Development Plan are delivered via Section 106 contributions. Primary schools are delivered generally by contract. The housebuilders will provide capital contributions for the two new secondary schools. However, the phasing, consultation and delivery will be undertaken by the Council when deemed appropriate for sufficiency in each location.

The key finding of the review of this stage was the importance of a formal sign off of the site location decision by all internal stakeholders across the Education and Economic Development Directorates. This is a key decision relative to ensuring value for money from the programme. This should therefore be included in the terms of reference of the SOP Board and a formal sign off required for each site, without exception.

3.3   Delivery Phase

The third phase of the process is again led by the Education Directorate. The delivery of the Band A schools is already in this delivery phase.

The SOP project groups undertake the internal and external consultation via the SOP Project Managers. They also manage any external resource employed in the delivery team.

For primary schools the Projects, Design, Development (PDD) team in the Economic Development Directorate is currently utilised to define the brief. Whereas for the secondary schools and additional learning needs (ALN) schools external project management and technical support is utilised.

From the review, we believe that the SOP Project Manager role should be renamed to reflect the 'Client Liaison' nature of the role and to avoid any confusion with the external project manager role.

Standardised solutions for schools has delivered considerable value for money on some of the other school programmes listed in section 2.5. From our consultation, whilst the SOP team managing this phase aspire to utilise such solutions across the new schools, there is pressure from the schools to deliver bespoke solutions. This needs careful management by the 'client liaison' role and should be a deliverable within their job description.

The site selection for a new school should be by the School Organisation Programme (SOP) Board for reporting to the Asset Management Board for a sign off through the CEX/SMT and ultimately the Cabinet.

From our previous experience of the successful delivery of the school programmes outlined in section 2.5 of this report a key success factor is the use of robust Employers Requirements (ER's). On these school programmes, this role was always completed by an experienced Technical Advisor (TA) team for each school. We understand that this approach was adopted for the Band A schools. Whilst a detailed review of the Band A procurement documentation is outside the scope of this study from discussions on the current scope of these ER's we believe investment in more detailed documents is required to reduce the risk to cost escalation and reduced quality.

Furthermore, to maximise the value of this investment, we recommend that the Council ensure the technical advice continues throughout the delivery and hand over phases of the programme. This will ensure that the requirements of the ER's are correctly interpreted and implemented.

With the scale of the Cardiff programme we believe that it is likely that an increase in the number of 'client liaison' roles and in the role of school programme development manager, to whom they report, will be required, particularly as many schools are delivered concurrently under the programme. Our experience from other programmes is that a 'client liaison' role can only effectively manage a maximum of two secondary schools at any one time (for complex schools this would reduce to one).

Whilst a skills audit was outside the scope of this review, it is likely that some of the staff currently in the Projects, Design, Development (PDD) team would have the experience and skills to undertake the 'client liaison' role with some training. We believe that this resource would be better deployed in these roles rather than developing the briefs for the new primary schools. The brief development for the primary schools could instead be undertaken by the external TA team. In our opinion, the use of external resource will ensure there is no resource over capacity within the Council at the end of the programme and will also allow adequate suitably skilled resource to be cost effectively obtained to deal with the simultaneous delivery of the numerous schools in the programme.

It was also noted during the review that no standardised strategic approach to IT for infrastructure/managed service was currently in place across the school estate. This can then be tailored at a school level to suit their specific requirements. From our experience, this is a critical success factor for a school programme and additional capacity should be made available urgently to develop this approach for the programme and make it available at the outset of the programme.

3.4   Operation Phase

This is a key phase of the Education Delivery Strategy as the facilities come into use. Since April 2000, school governing bodies have been delegated the budget and responsibility for all revenue recurrent repairs and maintenance for school

premises. Only capital expenditure has been retained by the Council for schemes over £10,000.

This is different for Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, where each Diocese has a responsibility to contribute to the upkeep and development of the fabric of the building.

We understand that the maintenance responsibilities for schools are currently being clarified with a School Building Handbook, which is out for consultation and aims to clarify accountability of delegated/non-delegated responsibilities including health and safety statutory compliance issues. In our opinion, the successful implementation of this handbook is key to the success of the asset management programme, with clarity of responsibility essential.

Transformational changes are currently in progress for the asset management of schools. This will be through a refreshed approach to deliver the Council's responsibilities as Corporate Landlord. There will be an enhanced focus on ensuring health and safety compliance. Successful implementation of this function is key as completed 21st Century Band A projects are already in this phase and additional schools are currently moving into the lifecycle process. To assist with this, we recommend that the role description for the 'client liaison' role includes leading the adoption of the BSRIA Soft Landings (SL) for each school. The BSRIA SL methodology (see Appendix A) is designed to assist with a smooth transition between the delivery and operational phases. In our experience, when successfully implemented, it makes this transition significantly more effective. This would lead to lower costs for the Council and better outcomes for the user.

We also recommend that an Asset Register, in a common format, is developed prior to handover to improve the asset management interface. This should be a requirement of the ER's for each school.

An inevitable consequence of the proposed programme will be the need to decommission old schools and dispose of some of the sites. Therefore, there is a need for capacity within the Council to deal with this land disposal in terms of legal agreements, decommissioning of the site, security prior to sale, insurance etc. Whilst it is outside the scope of this report to advise on which group within the Councils Governance structure leads on this, it is important that this is clear within the terms of reference of that group to avoid any confusion on the responsibility for this key function.

The Schools Asset Commissioning Group oversees the prioritisation of the School Asset Renewal Programme and the commissioning of works against an agreed programme. A skills audit was outside the scope of this review. However, it is likely that some of the staff currently in Projects, Design, Development (PDD) team would have the facilities management experience and skills to assist in this role with some training and this could assist with the capacity shortfall in this area.

We understand that currently the budget for asset management of the schools includes funding for both suitability adaptions and back log maintenance. We would recommend that the funding for these two distinct priorities is separated so that each has a clear budget.

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4   Governance and Capacity Review

This section outlines the proposed governance and current capacity Cardiff Council has available to deliver the school programme and comments on its adequacy.

4.1   Governance

4.1.1   Governance description

Figure 3 below summarises the proposed transitional governance structure and reporting procedures which the Council are in the process of implementing.
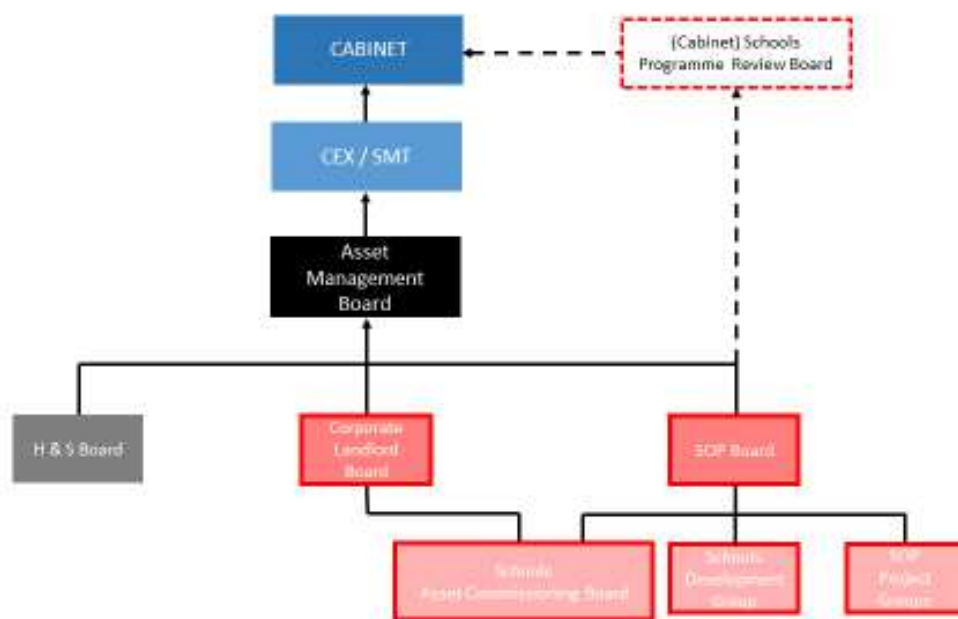

Fig 3 Proposed transitional governance structure and reporting procedures

The key governance groups relating to the education estate are outlined below;

Schools Development Group

This group formulates proposals for the strategic development of the school estate in the context of the Councils Place Strategy for the City.

SOP Project Groups

These groups lead the new school project delivery for the Education Directorate.

School Organisational Programme (SOP) Board

This board provides high level governance for the Council's School Organisation Programme to ensure effective use of available resources in delivering the objectives agreed by Cabinet for the development and maintenance of the school estate in Cardiff.

The other key groups that relate to the delivery of the education vision are;

School Asset Commissioning Group

Once the new school buildings are completed they move into the operational phase of the lifecycle process. This key interface is administered by the School Asset Commissioning Group highlighted in orange in Fig 3. This group will oversee the prioritisation of the School Asset Renewal Programme and the commissioning of works against an agreed programme.

Asset Management Board

As part of the governance structure, the School Organisation Programme (SOP) Board (and the other boards highlighted in Fig 3) report to the Asset Management Board which contains the Director of Education and Director of Economic Development and is chaired by the Chief Executive. This board reports to the CEX/SMT and ultimately to the Cabinet every quarter.

4.1.2   Governance Review

The Council have a governance structure with a broad range of skills across Directorates to deliver the Council objectives and education vision.

During the review, past issues with governance appear to have been identified and rectified in the proposed governance structure in Fig 3.

The major weakness highlighted in the review was the interface between the Education and Economic Development Directorates at hand over of the new school buildings. The School Asset Commissioning Group terms of reference should include the management of this interface to ensure a smooth transition between the delivery and operational phases.

An inevitable consequence of the proposed programme will be the need to decommission old schools and dispose of some of the sites. It is important that the roles within this disposal process are clearly defined within the terms of reference of the groups within the Governance structure to avoid any confusion on the responsibility for this key function.

The programme of delivering the education vision through the construction of new buildings requires a clear governance structure to deliver a programme of this scale and ensure good value for money whilst maintaining existing assets in good condition. This proposed governance and the associated reporting processes are a sensible approach. They should be fully implemented, including finalising the terms of reference for each group.

The terms of reference of the groups identified in Fig 3 should ensure that the Council wide initiatives of Digital, Sustainability and Active Travel objectives are integrated into the delivery process to ensure a holistic approach to modernisation, as highlighted by some of the stakeholders consulted during this review.

4.2   Capacity

The Education Directorate has developed a team to manage the large Cardiff school estate. However, the introduction of this major programme, as summarised in section 2 of this report, introduces a significant additional work stream which we don't believe can be delivered within this existing capacity.

From our experience on similar new school delivery programmes in England, as outlined in section 2.5 of this report, we believe that the team managing the delivery of the school projects will need to be significantly supplemented, with an increase in the number of 'client liaison' roles and in the role of school programme development manager, to whom they report. We believe these roles should be internally resourced, as with the current roles, due to the extent of internal interface required.

We also believe that the team will need additional leadership in the form of a senior appointment to direct the programme. This person will need experience of delivering a new build school programme of this scale and an external appointment maybe necessary. Relative to the financial size of the programme, the revenue costs for such a post, for the life of the programme, are relatively small and would provide stronger assurance of getting value for money from the overall budget.

As noted in section 3.3 we believe that the current SOP project manager title should be renamed to reflect the 'client liaison' role (for clarity) and that the programme will need additional resource of this type to deliver the number of schools planned. Whilst a skills audit was outside the scope of this review, it is likely that some of the staff currently in Projects, Design, Development (PDD) team would have the experience and skills to undertake the 'client liaison' role with some training. In our opinion, this resource would be better deployed in these roles than developing the brief for the primary schools. The brief development function for primary schools could be undertaken by an external TA team as currently happens for the new secondary schools. In our opinion, the use of external resource for this short-term role will ensure there is no resource over capacity within the Council at the end of the programme and will also allow adequate suitably skilled resource to be cost effectively obtained to deal with the simultaneous delivery of the numerous schools in the programme.

With the extent of back log maintenance within the remaining estate there is also a need to supplement the capacity of the team undertaking the asset management of the estate. Hence, we would support the current Council proposal to increase the capacity of senior management for the Corporate Landlord function to deliver this Asset Management programme. As noted in section 3.4 it is likely that some of the staff currently in Projects, Design, Development (PDD) team would have the facilities management experience and skills to assist in this team with some training and could assist with the capacity shortfall in this area.

An inevitable consequence of the proposed programme will be the need to decommission old schools and dispose of some of the sites. Therefore, there will be a need for additional capacity within the Council to deal with this land disposal in terms of legal agreements, decommissioning of sites, security prior to sale, insurance etc.

In addition to the need to increase the capacity of the SOP team and the Corporate Landlord function other parts of the Council will need to increase their capacity for the essential roles they undertake for the successful delivery of the programme. There will inevitably be a need for increased capacity in some teams such as but not limited to legal, procurement and highways.

5   Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1   Conclusions

5.1.1   Governance

We have reviewed the Governance structure proposed by the Council as set out in section 4.1 of this report. We believe it provides a robust overall Governance arrangement for the education estate. This includes the methodology proposed for the incorporation of the major new build school programme and the ongoing management of all school building assets.

From our discussions with various stakeholders there have been issues previously with the transition of the asset management process, specifically at the hand-over stage of new and refurbished buildings. The Schools Asset Commissioning Group provides this key Governance link between the teams delivering the new schools and those tasked with their ongoing maintenance. It is essential to the successful Governance of the process.

An inevitable consequence of the proposed programme will be the need to decommission old schools and dispose of some of the sites. Whilst it is outside the scope of this report to advise on which group within the Councils Governance structure leads this process, it is important that this is clear within the terms of reference of that group to avoid any confusion on the responsibility for this key function.

The integration of cross Council initiatives related to Digital, Sustainability and Active Travel objectives must be embedded into the Governance structure to ensure a holistic approach to the school modernisation programme.

We understand that currently the budget for asset management of the schools includes funding for both suitability adaptions and back log maintenance. We believe that the funding for these two distinct priorities should be separated so that each has a clear budget.

We also have some observations on the practicalities of the successful implementation of this Governance structure and these are summarised in section 5.3.

5.1.2   Capacity

We have also reviewed the current capacity within the Council to implement a school delivery programme of the scale proposed. Our conclusion is that additional capacity is required, particularly in the areas below:

a)   From our experience of other school delivery programmes across the UK we believe that the current management team of the programme needs supplementing with the appointment of a Programme Director for the Education School Organisation Programme (SOP) to deliver a programme of this scale, with its proposed speed of delivery.

b) From our review of the current delivery process we support the Council's proposal to increase the capacity of senior management for the Corporate Landlord function to deliver the Asset Management programme. From our experience, it will be essential to add capacity to the team dealing with the asset management of the council's estate, given its scale, and the significant back log maintenance.

c) It is our view that the current SOP Project Manager role title has the potential to cause confusion with the external project manager roles noted in item e) below.

d) Due to the scale of the programme a significant team will be required to manage the various internal/external stakeholders and the external delivery partners. From our experience on other programmes of this scale the current capacity will need to be significantly supplemented, with an increase in the number of 'client liaison' roles and in the role of school programme development manager, to whom they report. We believe these roles should be internally resourced, as with the current roles, due to the extent of internal interface required. One potential option would be to utilise staff currently in the Projects, Design, Development team (PDD) as they are likely to have a similar skill set to that required for this role.

e) From our experience of delivering programmes of this scale across the UK, and smaller programmes within Wales, the day to day project management of the new build schools is normally externally sourced. This minimises any over capacity within the education team at the end of the programme and provide the skills, knowledge and experience to project manage new build programmes of this scale without the need for any training of the internal staff that would have to move into the team to deal with the scale of this programme. It will also provide the resource to enable schools to be delivered concurrently as required by the programme. We understand this is how the Band A schools were delivered by the Council.

f) From the feedback, we received during the review and from our experience on other programmes, a standardised strategic approach to IT across the school estate needs to be developed for integration into the programme as a matter of urgency. This can then be tailored at a school level to suit their specific requirements. It should be available for use from the outset of the programme.

g) With the scale of the programme, from our experience, other parts of the Council will also need to increase their capacity for the essential roles they undertake for the successful delivery of the programme. There will inevitably be a need for increased capacity in teams such as, but not limited to, legal, procurement and highways.

5.2   Recommendations

5.2.1   Governance

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a) We recommend that the structure outlined in section 4.1 of this report, where not already in place, is fully implemented and supported. Clear terms of reference for each group within that structure should be developed.

b) We recommend that the funding for the two distinct priorities of back log maintenance and suitability adaptions should be separated so that each has a clear budget.

c) We recommend that there is clarity in the Governance structure regarding which group leads the school disposal process (an inevitable consequence of the new build school programme). The various roles in the process should be included within the terms of reference for the groups in the Governance structure in Fig 3.

5.2.2   Capacity

a) We recommend the Council strengthens the management of its delivery team with the appointment of a Programme Director for the Education School Organisation Programme (SOP). This person should have experience of successfully managing a capital works programme of this scale. Therefore, it may require an external appointment, potentially on a temporary basis for the period of the programme. An appointment at this level will have significant short-term revenue costs. This essential expenditure must be viewed against the scale of the programme and the benefits that such an appointment offers. The right appointment will reduce the risk of non-delivery in terms of time, cost and quality. We would recommend that the appointment is funded from the programme budget, as it directly relates to the programme.

b) We recommend that the Council expedites the appointment of additional senior management capacity for the Corporate Landlord function to deliver the Asset Management programme for the Council estate.

c) We recommend that the current SOP Project Manager title should be renamed to reflect the 'client liaison' role they perform and to distinguish them from the external project manager roles noted in item e) below.

d) We recommend an increase in the number of 'client liaison' roles and in the role of school programme development manager, to whom they report. We also recommend that consideration is given to the reallocation of existing staff into this role, with the staff potentially drawn from PDD as their skills are likely to be transferable.

e) We recommend that the day to day project management and technical advice for the new build schools programme is externally sourced, as happened on the Band A school programme.

f) We recommend that additional internal capacity is identified to develop a standardised strategic approach to IT across the school estate. This can then be tailored at a school level to suit their specific requirements. This resource should be made available at the beginning of the programme.

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g) We would recommend that the current capacity within other parts of the Council that are essential to the successful delivery of the programme e.g. legal, procurement, planning, highways etc. are urgently reviewed and supplemented where necessary before the programme commences.

h) We would recommend that additional internal capacity is identified to deal with land disposal in terms of legal agreements, decommissioning of sites, security prior to sale, insurance etc.

5.3   Observations

In addition to the conclusions and recommendations above, the review also observed several operational issues that we feel it is essential are also addressed before the programme moves forward. These are outlined below:

5.3.1   Governance

Whilst a strong governance proposal is to be adopted, a balance needs to be struck between this over-arching process and addressing the inevitable need at times within the delivery programme to get urgent approvals at SMT and/or cabinet level for changes proposed by the SOP Board. Consideration should be given to how this flexibility can be introduced into the governance structure. This will ensure that the programme is not impacted nor costs incurred due to delays caused by the internal approval process.

Provision is made within the governance structure for interfacing between the asset management and SOP teams. However, from the discussions we had with various stakeholders during this review, at an implementation level this interface could be improved, particularly at site selection and site handover stages.

We would recommend that the site selection process for new schools involves a sign off by all internal stakeholders. This is a key decision relative to ensuring value for money from the programme. This should be included in the terms of reference of the SOP Board and a formal sign off required for each site.

5.3.2   Process

Transformational changes are currently in progress for the asset management of schools and will be delivered through a refreshed approach to deliver the Council's responsibilities as Corporate Landlord. There will be an enhanced focus on ensuring health and safety compliance. Successful implementation of this function is key, with completed 21st Century Band A projects already in this phase and additional schools currently moving into the lifecycle process. To assist with this, we recommend that the role description for the 'client liaison' role includes leading the adoption of the BSRIA Soft Landings (SL) for each school. The BSRIA SL methodology (see Appendix A) is designed to assist with a smooth transition between the delivery and operational phases and in our experience when successfully implemented makes this transition significantly more effective. This leads to lower costs for the Council and better outcomes for the user.

As part of the BSRIA SL process it is recommended that (as already underway for existing assets) an Asset Register for each new school in a common format is fully developed to improve this interface at handover.

We understand that maintenance responsibilities for schools are currently being clarified with a School Building Handbook, which is out for consultation. Successful implementation of this handbook is key for the asset management programme to clarify accountability of delegated/non-delegated responsibilities including health and safety statutory compliance issues. It should be given full support by the Council.

From our previous experience of successful school delivery programmes both in Wales and across the UK we recommend that robust Employers Requirements (ER's) are developed for each school. We understand that this approach was adopted for the Band A schools. Whilst a detailed review of this documentation is outside the scope of this study, from discussions on the current scope of these ER's, we believe investment in more detail would reduce the risk to cost and quality delivered by the process. To maximise the value of this investment, the Technical Advisor team should stay in place throughout the delivery and hand over phases of the programme to ensure that the requirements of the ER's are correctly interpreted and implemented. Whilst a skills audit was outside the scope of this review, it is unlikely that sufficient suitably skilled internal resource will be available to undertake this work and any spare resource that is available would be better utilised in the additional 'client liaison' roles that are required (see section 5.2.2). The use of external resource will ensure there is no resource over capacity within the Council at the end of the programme and will also allow adequate suitably skilled resource to be cost effectively obtained to deal with the simultaneous delivery of the numerous schools in the programme.

Appendix A

BSRIA Soft Landings
Framework

A1

Adopting BSRIA Soft Landings framework with a Council Champion through the delivery process would assist in highlighting Asset Management operational considerations.

- The Soft Landings Framework is a joint initiative between BSRIA (Building Services Research and Information Association) and UBT (Usable Buildings Trust). It is an open-source framework that is intended to '…smooth the transition into use and to address problems that post-occupancy evaluations (POEs) show to be widespread'. It was first published in 2009 and was updated in 2014 to align with the RIBA 2013 work stages.

- The term 'soft landings' refers to a strategy adopted to ensure the transition from construction to occupation is 'bump-free' and that operational performance is optimised.

- This transition needs to be considered throughout the development of a project, not just at the point of handover. Ideally the Council would commit to adopting a soft landings strategy in the very early stages so that an appropriate budget can be allocated and appointment agreements and briefing documents can include relevant requirements. This should include agreement to provide the information required for commissioning, training, facilities management and so on, and increasingly should include requirements for Building Information Modelling (BIM).

- To ensure that a soft landings strategy is implemented properly from the outset, it may be appropriate to appoint a soft landings champion to oversee the strategy. Facilities managers should also be involved from the early stages.

- The framework includes five key stages:

  ➢ Inception and briefing

Ensuring that the needs and required outcomes are clearly defined.

  ➢ Design development and review

Reviewing comparable projects and assessing proposals in relation to facilities management and building users.

  ➢ Pre-handover

Ensuring operators properly understand systems before occupation.

  ➢ Initial aftercare

Stationing a soft landings team on site to receive feedback, fine tune systems and ensure proper operation. Typically, this will last four to six weeks, but may be longer for complex buildings such as hospitals and may be shorter for simple buildings such as shops.

  ➢ Extended aftercare and post occupancy evaluation.

Outstanding issues are resolved and post occupancy evaluations are fed-back for future projects. It is suggested that this period lasts for three years. In year one, problems are identified, training provided and systems fine-tuned, with regular reviews. In years two and three, performance is reviewed, and post occupancy surveys carried out, but with reviews becoming less frequent.