

# North Lanarkshire Council

## Report

### Education and Families Committee

approval  noting

Ref JMcK/CMcC

Date 24/11/20

### Learning Estate Improvement Programme (LEIP) – Phase Two: Project Bid to Scottish Government

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#### Executive Summary

The council had the opportunity to bid for Scottish Government Funding linked to the Learning Estate Strategy (i.e. new school build programme) via the Learning Estate Improvement Programme (LEIP).

Timescales associated with the bid were extremely tight, and as a result, required a bid to be submitted ahead of committee consideration. Following receipt of the letter on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020, and following a desktop appraisal of the various projects which potentially met the criteria, and subsequent consideration by the Corporate Management Team, a bid for funding linked to the proposed Wishaw Town Hub was put forward. Wishaw was chosen as it is the only town hub where both potential sites sit within council ownership. The bid paperwork was submitted to Scottish Government on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

Scottish Government require councils to demonstrate that they have both financial and political approval for a project as part of the bid process. Evidence was provided on the CIF funding approval of elected members (financial) and it was advised that specific approval for this project would be requested via the Education and Families Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – as the committee designated for specific learning estate projects – with approval or otherwise to be reported back to Scottish Government following this meeting.

Should Education and Families Committee decide not to approve the recommendations outlined in this report, the council would withdraw the bid from the process.

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#### Recommendations

That the Education and Families Committee:

1. Approve the decision to request funding from the Scottish Government to support the delivery of a Town Hub in Wishaw.
2. Note that the council would prioritise the delivery of a new Town Hub in the Wishaw locality, alongside other approved projects, should funding be granted by Scottish Government.

3. Note that - should the funding bid not be successful - this project would return to the 'unapproved' list of projects and be subject to the prioritisation assessment along with all other projects in this position.

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## **The Plan for North Lanarkshire**

Priority All priorities

Ambition statement All ambition statements

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 In November 2018, the Scottish Government set out its plans to invest a further £1bn in the school estate. The key objectives of this investment are to: support the delivery of Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy; improve the condition and suitability of the learning estate; establish links across the learner journey where appropriate; support sustainable estate planning and improved stewardship.
- 1.2 In September 2019, the Deputy First Minister announced the publication of the new Learning Estate Strategy which was co-produced with local government and other strategic partners. This agreed the collective vision of "a Learning Estate which supports Excellence and Equity for all".
- 1.3 At the same time (September 2019), the Deputy First Minister also announced the first phase of projects to form part of the Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP). Alongside the announcement of the first phase of projects, there was a public commitment to announce the second phase of projects within a year. North Lanarkshire submitted a bid to phase one - for Chryston PS and Health Hub (as an already approved NLC project), but did not receive funding in the first phase.

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### **2. Report**

- 2.1 On 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020, Scottish Government wrote to all local authorities requesting project bids for phase two of the LEIP funding announcements. Within the prioritisation matrix linked to the Town and Community Hub programme, approved at Policy and Strategy Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020, it was recognised that the council should lever external funding to support projects where possible.
- 2.2 In order to submit a bid for funding from this programme, the council must identify which parts of the learning estate would be created, in order that the project can be assessed against the criteria outlined in section 1.1 above. A flagship project, Wishaw Town Hub was chosen as it has potential to fit the criteria.

#### **Proposed Project for Bid: Wishaw Town Hub**

- 2.3 The Wishaw Town Hub project was chosen as it: provides the best level of external investment (given the potential to include secondary, primary and early years provision); the number of pupils who would benefit; and the fit with the national Learning Estate Strategy.

- 2.4 Scottish Government require councils to demonstrate that they have both financial and political approval for a project as part of the bid process. Evidence was provided on the CIF funding approval of elected members (financial) and it was advised that specific approval for this project would be requested via the Education and Families Committee on 24th November 2020 – as the committee designated for specific learning estate projects – with approval or otherwise to be reported back to Scottish Government following this meeting.
- 2.5 Currently, council commitment is to carry out engagement with the eight town communities. There is no clear commitment to one project ahead of the others. This report therefore, seeks commitment to this project – should the bid be successful.

### **Why Wishaw?**

- 2.6 The bid submitted requested funding for a Town Hub rather than a Community Hub – this provides a higher level of investment due to the number of pupils who would be included in this proposal. The reason for nominating the Town Hub in Wishaw, rather than any other town, is due to the ownership of potential town hub sites (as presented to Policy and Strategy Committee) within this locality.
- 2.6.1 Within Airdrie, Bellshill, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Motherwell – at least one of the proposed locations is not within council ownership which affects our ability to control the timescales linked to delivery. Within Coatbridge and Shotts, the proposal is to invest in existing assets – this does not meet the criteria for the LEIP.
- 2.6.2 Within Wishaw – both potential locations are within council ownership and therefore, irrespective of the site chosen, the timescales for development and delivery can be controlled.
- 2.7 It is recognised that the council should but cannot specify which primary school will be included within the new town hub – as this is linked to site selection. Should the hub be located at the site to the North (to the west of the existing high school), St Aidan's PS would likely be included within the scope. Should the hub be located at the site to the South (Wishaw Sports Centre), St Thomas's PS would likely be included in the scope. This is still subject to community engagement as part of the agreed next steps.
- 2.8 It was concluded that the risk of including a project with elements of uncertainty was warranted, given the benefit the proposal could generate. This project fits well with the wider principles of the national Learning Estate Strategy and the collaborative place-based approach to delivering investment in local communities.

### **Commitment to community engagement**

- 2.9 It is accepted that, not being able to specify the schools which would be included in the project, makes the project harder to assess. However, it should also demonstrate to both elected members and local communities - the commitment to community engagement in order to determine the correct location for this proposal, potentially at the expense of leveraging external funding. This commitment was made clear to Scottish Government as part of the bid submission and explained why the council is not in a position to specify the schools at this time.

### **If bid is not successful**

- 2.10 It should be recognised that consideration put before Education and Families Committee for a Town Hub in Wishaw is driven by the potential ability to lever in

additional external funding. There is an opportunity to receive Scottish Government funding and it is appropriate for North Lanarkshire Council to be considered to receive funding from the LEIP.

- 2.11 However, it should also be recognised that, should the project not be successful in attracting external funding, that the advantages linked to consideration of this project, at this time, would be significantly reduced. As such the project would return to 'pre bid status' where it would again be considered and assessed against all other schools which share the same 'pre-1996 build' status.
- 2.12 Committee should therefore be aware, that approval of this project is tied to the ability to lever external funding, and that if this funding is not secured, there would be no desire to commit to this project at this time. Education and Families Committee will be updated on the success or otherwise of the bid, and the status of the project as a result, to ensure clarity on the status of this proposal in relation to the Town and Community Hub programme following the response from Scottish Government.

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### **3. Equality and Diversity**

#### **3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty**

There is no impact linked to this proposal at this time. A full assessment will be carried out at the appropriate time.

#### **3.2 Equality Impact Assessment**

There is no impact linked to this proposal at this time. A full assessment will be carried out at the appropriate time.

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### **4. Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial Impact**

There should be a positive financial impact to the council if this bid is successful. The Learning Estate Improvement Programme (LEIP), as outlined within the letter from Scottish Government states that: *"To support this investment the Scottish Government has developed, in collaboration with COSLA and local authority colleagues, an outcomes based funding model which will provide funding to local authorities on the achievement of agreed outcomes in relation to condition, energy efficiency, digital and economic growth. The premise of this funding will be on a 50:50 "like for like" basis to support the delivery of the outlined outcomes, as in line with the first phase of the LEIP."*

The financial cost of the project will not be known until it is understood: which schools are to be included; which additional facilities are to be included; which site is to be used. However, to satisfy bid requirements, the council was required to submit high level costs linked to the project. Therefore, estimated costs – for the learning estate elements only, were included in the bid submission: in the region of £69m - £73m.

It is worth reiterating that these costs only relate to the elements of funding linked to the Learning Estate (i.e. school(s) replacement). These figures do not include any additional 'zones' which would not be considered as part of the Learning Estate strategy but would be considered in the scope of a new Town Hub.

#### 4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

A successful bid – resulting in the delivery of a new Town Hub, would be subject to the normal legislative requirements of any new school programme: statutory education consultation, planning, roads, building standards consents etc.

#### 4.3 Environmental Impact

The required energy outcomes to meet Scottish Government funding demonstrate that there should be a positive environmental impact on this aspect of the proposal – should the bid be successful.

#### 4.4 Risk Impact

There are risks associated with the bid quality – due to the uncertainty outlined in sections 2.7 and 2.8. Wider risks associated with the development and delivery of the proposal, would be assessed as part of the project plan – should the bid be successful.

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### 5. Measures of success

5.1 Should the funding bid be approved: the progression of this project to be developed to deliver a new Town Hub within Wishaw following community engagement.

5.2 Should the funding bid not be approved: A clear understanding of why the bid was not successful, and stakeholder understanding on the resulting status of the project.

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