

Agenda Item: 7

Report to: Schools Forum  
Date: 22 November 2019  
Title of Report: Services to Schools – Building Maintenance  
By: Matthew Powell - Programme Manager - Property  
Purpose of Report: To provide Schools Forum with an update of the Building Maintenance 2020/21 buyback service

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**Recommendation:** Schools Forum are asked to note the proposals outlined in this report for the new Building Maintenance buyback service available from April 2020.

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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform Schools Forum about the Building Maintenance buyback service provided by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to Local Authority Maintained (LAM) schools, academies, free and voluntary aided schools.

## 2. Background

2.1 The current Building Maintenance buyback service expires at the end of March 2020. The original five year buyback agreement commenced in 2014 and, as agreed with schools, was extended for one additional year for 2019/20.

2.2 During this year, the building maintenance team has undertaken a reorganisation with the property services and functions reverting from the Orbis shared service delivery back to a dedicated sovereign led service for East Sussex.

2.3. Over the past six months, the Maintenance team has been working with a team of Business Managers from a number of East Sussex schools to develop the new service offer to better meet the needs of the schools and academies.

2.4 Integral to the new delivery model – and universally requested in feedback from schools - is the continuation of a centrally managed budget that each participating school contributes to. This central pot can be accessed by all participating schools and used to fund larger scale works should the needs arise, which would not always be possible if the budgets were allocated on an individual school basis. Schools are also delegated funds for day to day minor maintenance items and servicing of equipment to maintain buildings in a good state of repair. This delivery and funding model ensures the continued maintenance of all schools and academies.

2.5 Currently over 90% of the LAM schools buy back the schools building maintenance service. Details of the current Building Maintenance buyback service are viewable via the

Webshop system and attached in Appendix 1. Each school that buys into the service has also recently received a letter detailing the new and improved service offer.

### 3. Communication and Service Offer Development

3.1 Earlier in the year the Maintenance team carried out a service review exercise that included a questionnaire circulated to all schools. This generated 51 responses with a summary of the feedback provided in Appendix 2.

3.2 The feedback was mixed with observation that the existing service is valued by schools although the shift to the shared service delivery with Orbis partners had not provided added value.

3.3 These results were explored in more detail with further feedback from schools gathered at the Business Manager Forums held across the county. These results and feedback have directly helped to shape the new service offer and provided clarity in the future delivery requirements including the preferred contract structure and length.

3.4 A Partnership working group consisting of school and ESCC representatives has now been established, and is chaired by Lisa Eglington, Business Manager and Data Protection Officer, Little Common School.

3.5 The Partnership working group has met twice since the Business Managers forums. At these meetings, the group agreed the main areas of service improvements, which a summary is listed below:

- Definitions of Capital and revenue budgets and how this can be spent
- Clarifications of responsibilities for implementation of maintenance requirements
- Clarification of the Building Maintenance - Centrally Managed Scheme for Structural Maintenance – Option 1, Primary, Secondary and Special Service Code: BM01-3, BM01-4, BM01-5
- Clarification of the Buildings Maintenance Service - Option 2 (for Local Authority maintained schools that are not part of the centrally managed service for structural maintenance) Service Code: BM01-1
- Clarification of the ESCC Maintained Schools no BM01 or Centralised Services buy-back
- Clarification of the Buildings Maintenance Service (for Voluntary Aided Schools) Service Code: BM02
- Clarification of Buildings Maintenance Service for Academies and Free Schools Service Code: BM03
- Partnership Working Group roles and responsibilities
- Statutory compliance responsibilities
- Building Maintenance, Advisory and Compliance Visit Record

3.6 These improvements have culminated in the creation of the new Property Services 2 Schools Building Maintenance Handbook as provided in Appendix 3

3.7 The Partnership agreed an initial three year contract with the option to extend for a further two years. This mirrors other larger contracts purchased by schools.

3.8 The historic service and charging model does not accurately reflect the service provision. Through consultation with the working group we are implementing a new charging model from April 2020. The buyback pricing mechanism will be based on pupil numbers on roll (NOR). Pricing based on this calculation is a fairer and better way to charge with the schools involved in the creation of this new service agreeing it is an open and transparent costing model. Whilst this may increase charges for some schools, we are confident that the price is a competitive one and offers excellent value for money.

3.9 As a wider school community, purchasing the service allows all schools that participate to access a larger pot of funds to undertake works on schools which would not otherwise be available.

3.10 As with the previous traded offer, the wider benefits of the majority of schools buying into the full structural service can only be realised if the wider school community commits to this approach and continues to buy into the service. This access to the larger fund allows much more work to take place as a collective across the county as a whole. If there is a significant variation in buyback, the final costings may require adjusting to reflect the reduced take-up which will affect the funds available to the community of schools.

#### **4. Proposals**

4.1 The Maintenance team encourages all East Sussex schools to continue to support the new Building Maintenance offer. This allows the continuity of a highly valued service to schools and the future reassurance that the structural integrity of all schools is maintained to a high standard.

4.2 The Partnership working group will become an integral part of the schools Building Maintenance process. This ensures that the school maintenance community develops, ensuring transparency on projects, spend and need across the East Sussex family of schools.