

Title of Report:	Property contracts and contractors in schools
Report to be considered by:	Resource Management Select Committee
Date of Meeting:	11 November 2010

Purpose of Report: To update the committee on action undertaken since last meeting and to propose a revised survey of schools

Recommended Action: Committee agree to the recommendations

Reason for decision to be taken: To progress a satisfaction survey

Other options considered: None.

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme(s):	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CPT13 - Value for Money
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CPT14 - Effective People
<input type="checkbox"/>	CPT15 - Putting Customers First
<input type="checkbox"/>	CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Keith Chopping - (0118) 983 2057
E-mail Address:	kchopping@westberks.gov.uk
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	28/10/10

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Steve Broughton
Job Title:	Head of Property and Public Protection
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Implications

Policy: None.

Financial: None.
If there are any financial implications contained within this report this section **must** be signed off by a West Berkshire Group Accountant. Please note that the report cannot be accepted by Policy and Communication unless this action has been undertaken.

Personnel:	None.
Legal/Procurement:	The specification of the Maintenance Term Contract (MTC) will be developed through the MTC working group which includes representatives of schools
Property:	There are resource implications for Property services to advise schools of increased to costs to original estimates and for undertaking an additional satisfaction survey
Risk Management:	None.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	N/a For advice please contact Principal Policy Officer (Equalities) on Ext. 2441.
Corporate Board's Recommendation:	to be completed after the Corporate Board meeting

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Resource Management Select Committee raised a number of resolutions when they met on 18 May 2010. This report provides a response and update on work being undertaken.

2. Update

- 2.1 Action has been taken by the Property service to direct minor works away from the main Maintenance Term Contract (MTC) in order to minimise costs and make use of more economical Handy Person services.
- 2.2 The provision of greater information to schools regarding the costs and invoicing associated with work undertaken has been maximised within the current MTC. This has been a consideration of the working group formed to establish a new and improved MTC to further improve cost information to schools.
- 2.3 The Property Service has commenced two service improvement projects; Quality Management System and Asset database. Both were identified in the Property Review 2009 as being important to improving the service.
- 2.4 School representations on the MTC working group have helped to shape the new contract specification to meet the needs of schools. Accordingly, with regard to resolution 4 it is being suggested that another satisfaction survey is deferred for 12 months in order to allow for the introduction of a revised MTC and other Property service improvements to be implemented.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That members note that the resolutions arising from the committee meeting held on 18 May 2010 are being addressed.
- 3.2 That a new survey to gauge satisfaction with contracts and contractors in schools is deferred for 12 months to allow implementation of a new MTC and contractor(s) and implementation of other Property Service improvement projects.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The Resource Management Select Committee determined a number of resolutions when they met on 18th May 2010 and are as follows:

- (1) Property Officers would give consideration to not providing minor services to schools with concentration given to major works and emergency services in the new contract.
- (2) Minor works requested by schools in the existing Kier contract [current Maintenance Term Contractor] should be redirected, possibly to the handyman service. This element should be retained if minor works continue to be offered in the new contract.
- (3) Andy Green [*Maintenance Manager*] would set up a process to ensure that schools approve the final amount invoiced for works undertaken, before payment was made by the Council.
- (4) Steve Broughton would produce a new school survey to help inform future services with assistance provided by the Select Committee. The survey would take place later in the year when it was hoped that progress would have been made and a more positive return would be received. A covering letter would go from Councillor Barbara Alexander to support the survey.

2. Update

2.1 The actions taken associated to the resolutions are as follows in order of the resolutions above:

2.2 Resolution 1

- (1) The inclusion of minor works within a new MTC is being considered by the review working group. There may be occasions where small/minor works are requested from the MTC e.g. work is needed very quickly and some provision may need to be retained within the contract to accommodate this. Many schools have now made their own arrangements for caretakers or otherwise use the Councils handy person service, accordingly the use of the MTC for minor works is no longer a common occurrence.

2.3 Resolution 2

- (1) Customer Services (Children and Young People Service) manage the Property Helpdesk on behalf of Property Services and receive requests from schools for work required from the MTC. Where the type of work requested would indicate reference to the handyperson being more appropriate this is advised.

- (2) This has been in practice for some time and accordingly, as noted in item 1 above, the use of the MTC for minor works is now uncommon. A school may still choose to select the MTC rather than the Handyperson where they feel a quicker response is needed.

2.4 Resolution 3

- (1) The MTC review working group will consider how the new MTC can incorporate a specification for individual invoicing to enable these to be forwarded to schools for information. However as schools do not currently have access to the Council's finance and procurement system, *Agresso*, they are unable to approve invoices directly. Accordingly Property Services have been given authorisation, by schools, to undertake this on their behalf and this will need to remain until access to *Agresso* by schools is enabled.
- (2) Individual invoicing on a job by job basis is not possible under the current contract. However where the Maintenance Manager identifies an irregular invoiced amount through sample invoice checking, the school will be advised of the increased costs having first established that they are justifiable and reasonable.

2.5 Resolution 4

- (1) There are two anticipated outcomes required of a survey in this case:
 - (a) To gauge the level of satisfaction of the level and quality of the service provided; and
 - (b) To ascertain the needs of the service users to define a satisfactory MTC and Property service.
- (2) The previous survey undertaken received an overall response rate of 50%. The committee felt that this was not a satisfactory rate of return however, this did not take account of schools not responding because they were not users of the service. The responses that were received were largely repetitive of the survey results undertaken during the review of the Property Service undertaken in May 2009.
- (3) Improvements to the service have been undertaken and more significant changes are currently being implemented. It will take some time however for these changes to be noted by the majority of schools subject to the amount of work carried out at each school. Many issues raised by the schools refer to the MTC which as noted already is under review. A new MTC will not commence until April 2011 following which a period of time will be required for the benefits of a new contract to be realised, again, depending upon the frequency of use by each school.
- (4) A working group was set up in 2010 to review the MTC and consider the needs and specification for a new one to commence in April 2011. To ensure that any new contract reflects the needs of schools, the group has included representative membership from both primary and secondary schools as well the Schools Operations and Administration Group (SOAG).

- (5) As the MTC has largely been the focus of criticism of the Property service and the performance and level of service provided is inherent with the provision of the MTC, it is considered that this group will provide the necessary guidance to improving the Property service overall.
- (6) Other service improvements will be gained through the introduction of a new Asset Database and a Quality Management System which will see further improvement in service consistency, transparency and communication. Both projects have now commenced.
- (7) These improvements and the new MTC will need time to be implemented for the service delivery to be realised by schools. Accordingly it is suggested that another satisfaction survey should be deferred for a period of 12 months.
- (8) Cllr Barbara Alexander, Portfolio Member for Education, has also suggested deferring the survey in light of the current economic climate. Cllr Alexanders' email to the Chairman of the Resource Management Select Committee refers and is shown in Appendix A.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The use of the MTC for minor work has been reduced to a minimum, however there remains some reference to the contract where some works are deemed to have a degree of urgency to which the Handy Person or caretaker service cannot respond.
- 3.2 The invoicing arrangements with the current MTC have been improved but not sufficiently to enable schools sight of every invoice prior to payment. However the Maintenance Manager does identify abnormalities in costs from original estimates and consults with the school as appropriate.
- 3.3 A further satisfactory survey is considered to be more beneficial if deferred for 12 months to allow the implementation of the new MTC and other Property service improvement projects.

Appendices

Appendix A Email from Cllr Barbara Alexander to Chairman of RMSC

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: Cllrs:

Keith Chopping, Portfolio Member for Property

Barbara Alexander, Portfolio Member for Education

Officers Consulted: Andy Green, Maintenance Manager, Property and Public Protection

Mark Lewis, Education Assets Manager, Children and Young People

Appendix A

Email from Cllr Barbara Alexander, Portfolio Member for Education, to Cllr Jeff Brooks
Chairman, RMSC dated 15th June 2010

Dear Jeff

I write to you as chairman of the Resource Management Panel

At the last meeting of this panel, I was instructed to ask Property to repeat the survey of schools' opinion of the service offered to them by property as you felt that the response to the original survey had not been adequate (I understand it was about 50%, and since our 10 secondary schools and some primaries do not buy in to the service, this figure is perhaps not an accurate reflection). As Portfolio Member for Education, I was asked to put a covering letter with the survey, in the hope I could persuade the heads to reply.

In view of the current uncertainty over finances, I have decided not to proceed with this action at present, until the situation becomes clearer. I feel it would be a waste both of money and of valuable officers time, when they have to deal with other far more critical items at present.

I felt it only right to inform you of this, and hope you find it acceptable

Regards

Barbara