Post Autumn Budget - what it means for our schools

Thursday 30 November, 2023

The Condition Improvement Fund - Academy School Capital Funding Stream Submission Deadline, 12.00 Thursday 14th December.

Several thousand eligible academy schools are currently preparing compliance and condition evidence to support applications to the DfE for vital capital works projects to ensure their buildings are safe, warm and dry for school children in the UK.

The Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) provides a much-needed funding injection to schools whose resources cannot otherwise stretch to large value capital projects such as fire safety works, new heating systems and roof renewal programmes.

Those academy trusts with less than 5 schools and 3,000 pupils on roll do not automatically receive guaranteed annual formulaic capital funding via the School Condition Allocation (SCA), instead they submit bids for essential works that are annually, three times oversubscribed.

The competition between competing trusts is fierce as the stakes are high. Successfully awarded projects, value on average over £400,000.00 with some over a £1 million, which can transform a school's estate and markedly increase the quality of the teaching and learning environment.

"How did Mr Hunt afford tax cuts when real economic forecasts got no better? He banked additional revenue from higher inflation, and pencilled in harsher cuts to public spending."

Institute of Fiscal Studies

Those schools who are not successful, will face further classroom disruption and potential school closure until funds are found to address the aged and life expired building fabric and components. The impact on morale, teacher and pupil retention and risks to Ofsted ratings are also considerable.

Schools submitting bids in December, will be hoping that this time the CIF pot keeps pace with inflation and that it is sufficient to see a return to the approximate 1,400 number of awarded schools that previous years have recorded.

The most recent number of school awards, published in May 2023, saw the number reduced by 25%, down to just 1,033. If the DfE are unable to secure a rise in CIF allocation from the Treasury the number of awarded projects could given current contract cost trends, fall to less than 800 which would represent a 42% fall and place further pressure on the estimated £15 billion backlog funding chasm.

The DfE have stated that costs relating to addressing the RAAC issue will not come from the CIF pot. Many schools will be hoping that their crumbling estate can survive another winter of leaking roofs and burst pipes and that in Spring, their bids will be successful.

For more on this subject, contact Tim Warneford on tim@warnefordconsulting.com or call 07970 466010

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