

# Building schools fit for the 21st century

The government's Building Schools for the Future initiative is a golden opportunity for facilities managers and FM suppliers, argue **Jane Wiggins** and **John Houlihan**.

**B**ack in 1997, the government decided that education provision in the UK needed a complete review and overhaul. As part of this exercise, the Asset Management Plan (AMP) was developed which would, over the following three years, provide central government with an up-to-date record of the school stock, in terms of capacity versus occupancy, general condition and suitability for purpose.

The results were not good. It became apparent that the school stock had not been maintained to anywhere near the standards required and that a lot of the schools built in the 1950s and 1960s were no longer suitable for providing education in the 21st century. To those readers with children attending state schools, this will be of no surprise. The government only had to ask any parent of a child at state school their views on the school buildings to get the same view.

## GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Building Schools for the Future was therefore conceived as a delivery mechanism to support the policy decision of rebuilding the entire secondary school stock in a programmed fashion over at least the next 15 years.

## BOX 1: WILL THE NEW SCHOOLS IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES?

CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) cites two pieces of evidence that the built environment has an impact on learning outcomes:

- a study in 2000 by PricewaterhouseCoopers showed that capital investment has a strong influence on staff morale, pupil motivation and effective learning time; and
- the design of a playground has reduced the number of lunchtime assistants from eight to five, allowing resources to fund other core activities.

According to the Audit Commission *Report of PFIs in Schools*:

"The newness of PFI schools means that there is no research available to assess any effects yet on the educational outcomes of children who attend them. But it was certainly the case that the majority of users of both PFI and traditionally funded schools in the Audit Commission sample believed there was a link between environment, pupil behaviour and 'productivity'."

The scheme was launched in February 2003, with wave one Local Education Authorities announced in February 2004, and waves two and three announced in November 2004. Between 1997 and the end of 2004, the government increased its capital spending on school facilities from £700 million to more than £5 billion, with the intention of committing a further £2 billion per year until the programme is completed.

Previous attempts to address the need for new and better schools have been somewhat piecemeal, with individual LEAs putting together Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes, some of which have been reasonably successful, whilst others have not. It was imperative to get this right across the country, so it was going to require a more strategic approach to the issues of funding, design and procurement.

Building Schools for the Future is about increasing educational attainment and not just about building new schools. In other words, the programme is about high quality, safe and secure learning environments, allowing staff to concentrate on their role as educators. Although it is accepted that properly designed, user-friendly buildings go a long way to encouraging people to learn (see box 1), the scheme is only one part of a total educational review currently being undertaken.

There are a number of developments in secondary education at the moment, aimed at providing young learners with the correct curriculum and further education opportunities to ensure they are up to the requirements of potential employers in the future. Not least among these developments is the Tomlinson 14-19 agenda, which seeks major changes in secondary schools, supported by sustained investment and driven by powerful and effective leadership, reform of teaching and learning, and new partnerships beyond the classroom.

The provision of information communications technology (ICT) is a significant element within this programme. These new secondary schools will be around for at least the next 30 years, so apart from being inherently flexible in their general design to accommodate future changes to the way education is delivered, they must also be capable of easily keeping pace with the ever-changing trends in IT.

## LOCAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

The Department for Education and Skills initiative, Partnerships for Schools, in consultation with key private sector companies, has developed a contract model to facilitate the delivery of this national programme.

The core of the model is focused around the creation of a joint venture between the local authority and a

private sector partner, which will be known as a local education partnership (LEP). The LEP will be responsible for procuring and delivering the schools under the Building Schools for the Future programme, as well as other services previously agreed during the process to appoint the private sector partner. These other services can be wide-ranging and are really only limited by what was indicated in the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) enquiry notice. The LEP will, in effect, be a limited company, with the private sector partner holding 80% of the shares, with the remainder split equally between the local authority and Partnerships for Schools/the DFES.

Diagram 1 shows the agreed LEP model to be used by authorities in creating their partnership. There are a couple of exceptions in the wave one LEAs, due to ongoing commitments. The model has been developed in conjunction with updated procurement and legal processes to enable these projects to be brought to the point of financial completion in a much quicker and less costly fashion than previously experienced. The model shows that, once created, the LEP will deliver the individual school projects via a mix of traditional contracts and PFI. It should be noted that, with regards to PFI, it is intended that the LEP will form a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to facilitate the delivery.

The actual delivery of the Building Schools for the Future programme within an authority will be split into two to three phases, depending on the size of the portfolio and national programme commitments. Not every secondary school will be rebuilt, and those in a good condition or relatively new may be subject to a degree of refurbishment or upgrading.

#### PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS

Key qualities required by local authorities when selecting their private sector partner are:

- the ability to be a long-term partner and to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire investment programme;
- the ability to deliver value-for-money solutions for a sample of the phase 1 secondary schools, which will demonstrate the partner's ability to put in competitive proposals for future phases; and
- the ability to fund the setup and annual running costs, estimated as £500,000 per annum.

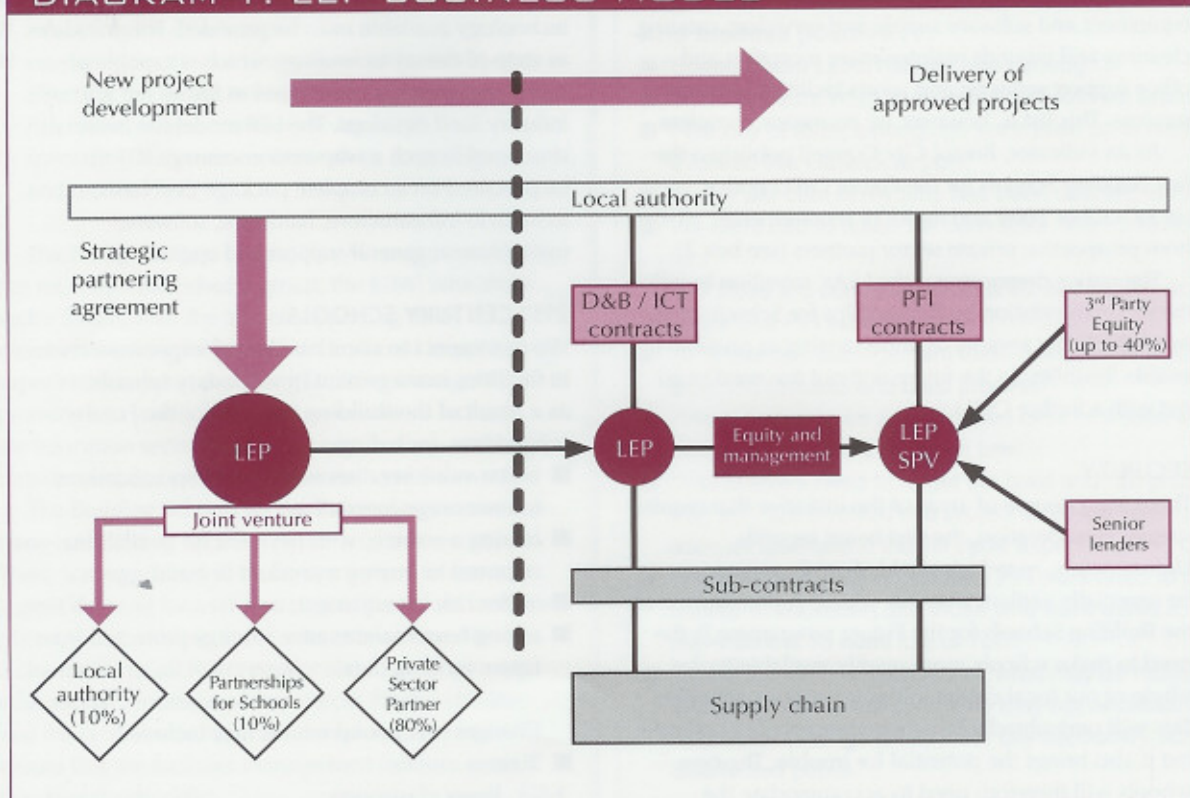
It is intended that private sector partners will be appointed for between 10 and 15 years and be proactive in the development and delivery of a strategic investment programme, including the provision, integration and management of the supply chain.

There is, however, no pre-conceived idea of who will or should be a private sector partner. It does not have to be a major construction company or a firm of professional or educational advisers. It could be a major facilities management supplier which has the scope, ambition and resources to provide and effectively manage the required supply chain. This is a huge opportunity for the facilities management sector to demonstrate its abilities.

The LEP model allows for either of these scenarios:

- **"integrator"**: private sector partners that do not come with a preferred supply chain but seek to drive value for money by market testing the supply chain for each new project; or
- **"integrated"**: private sector partners that bring a

DIAGRAM 1: LEP BUSINESS MODEL



## BOX 2: BRISTOL COUNCIL'S OJEU NOTICE

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ■ School furniture               | ■ Educational equipment          |
| ■ Sports equipment               | ■ Energy supplies                |
| ■ Construction work              | ■ Demolition work                |
| ■ Telecommunications             | ■ Computer equipment             |
| ■ Computer software              | ■ ICT strategic planning         |
| ■ Catering supplies              | ■ Real estate services           |
| ■ Helpdesk services              | ■ Systems support services       |
| ■ Software consultancy           | ■ Facilities management services |
| ■ General management consultancy | ■ Business consultancy           |
| ■ Procurement consultancy        | ■ Architectural services         |
| ■ Engineering services           | ■ Project management             |
| ■ Security services              | ■ Cleaning services              |
| ■ Technical services             | ■ Office support services        |
| ■ Reception services             | ■ Administration services        |
| ■ Community services             | ■ Grounds maintenance            |
| ■ Sports field maintenance       | ■ General waste services         |
| ■ Child day care services        | ■ Recycling services             |
| ■ Sports field operations        | ■ Caretaker services             |

preferred supply chain with that they work over a number of phases, using this long-term supply chain relationship (and the high volume of pipeline work) to drive value-for-money solutions.

Diagram 2 shows a typical private sector consortium structure. A consortium may well consist of these members, although any one of them could be the "lead".

The typical facilities management services that will need to be provided through the LEP include building and M&E repairs and maintenance; security services; IT equipment and software supply and servicing; catering, cleaning and grounds maintenance; reception and office support services; and sports facilities operator services. This list is, however, by no means complete.

As an indicator, Bristol City Council published the first Building Schools for the Future OJEU notice on 5 October 2004 and listed 36 requirements from prospective private sector partners (see box 2).

The notice demonstrates the LEAs' intention to follow the recommendation by Partnerships for Schools and make the OJEU enquiry as wide-ranging as possible to enable flexibility in the future without the need to go out with a further OJEU.

### SECURITY

There are a couple of areas of the initiative that require special consideration, the first being security. Unfortunately, in today's world, there is a need to be especially vigilant with our young. A prerequisite of the Building Schools for the Future programme is the need to make schools more readily available to the whole of our local communities for various activities. This will undoubtedly bring together people of all ages, but it also brings the potential for trouble. The new schools will therefore need to accommodate the

seemingly opposing needs of accessibility and security. Vandalism has been for some years a problem in most of our schools and, again, the design and operating procedures need to be able to mitigate this risk as much as possible. It is certainly recommended that LEPs bring a security expert into the bid team. Without wishing to exaggerate these types of threats, schools should also have a regularly updated major events file (including a business continuity plan and emergency procedures), with all the relevant site details, contacts, drawings, video of key areas and so on.

### ICT

Secondly, the importance of ICT provision cannot be overstated. Pedagogy (the art and science of teaching), technology and facilities are intrinsically linked. Each affects the other, and each has undergone major changes in recent years. Traditional learning has undergone a major revolution, with more variety and new ways to facilitate learning. Learning by doing encompasses active, hands-on, problem-based and project-orientated learning scenarios. Developments in the technology available have not only affected the traditional corporate office workplace of the facilities manager. The use of wireless technology, web-based projects, smartboards, haptic technology and digital projectors will become commonplace in the schools of the future. Facilities managers working in these new learning environments need a strategy for providing facilities that respond to and support changing technology and curriculum developments.

If the aim of Building Schools for the Future is to ensure that young learners are educated to the best standards available, whether through formal examinations or vocational studies, then the best technology available must be provided. This translates as state-of-the-art technology, which is capable of being upgraded and developed as fast as the ICT industry itself develops. The LEP model has been structured in such a way as to encourage ICT to be procured on a complete package-deal basis, to include infrastructure, hardware, software, maintenance, general support and upgrading.

### 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

We can expect to see a number of improvements in facilities management in secondary schools as a result of the Building Schools for the Future programme, including:

- better value services with output specifications to encourage innovation;
- buying a service, with payment for availability – as opposed to buying a product or building;
- better risk management; and
- a long-term maintenance strategy protected from future funding cuts.

Changes to school premises may include:

- Size:
  - larger classrooms;

### INFORMATION

*Building Schools for the Future: a new approach to capital investment* (2004), DfES

*PFI in schools* (2003), The Audit Commission

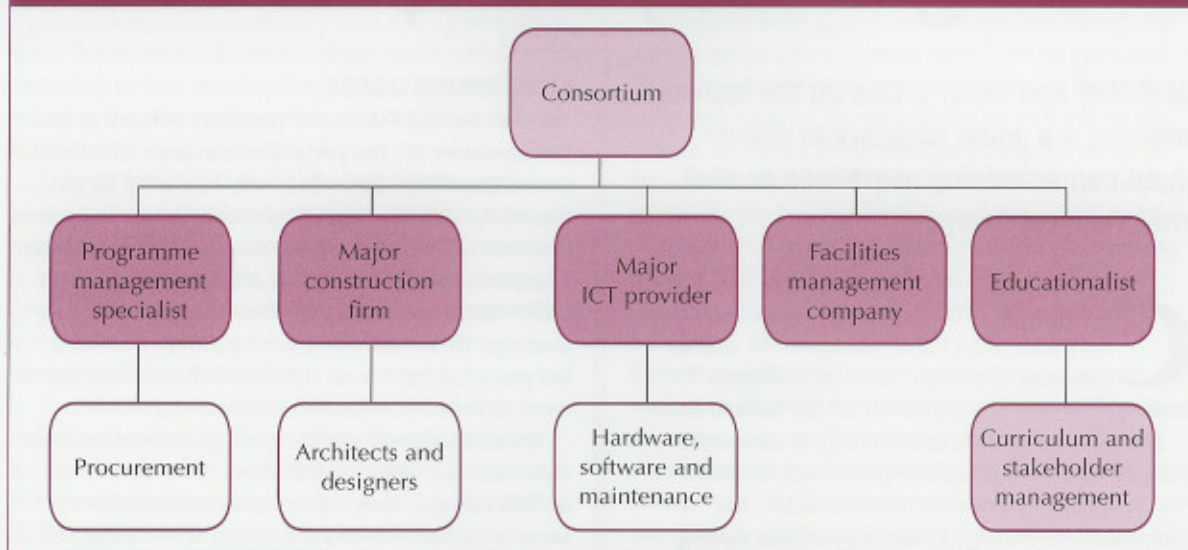
*21st century schools: learning environments of the future* (2004), Building Futures, CABE & RIBA

*Schools for the future: exemplar designs, concepts and ideas* (2004), DfES

### USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bifm.org.uk  
 www.cabe.org.uk  
 www.dfes.gov.uk  
 www.p4s.gov.uk  
 www.augmentis.net

DIAGRAM 2 TYPICAL PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNER CONSORTIUM



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- larger dining halls; and
- more storage.

■ Environment:

- improved heating and ventilation; and
- improved natural light.

■ Layout:

- more adaptable; and
- wider corridors.

There are a number of ways for the facilities management industry to meet these ideals, including:

- delivering innovation (not least by bringing in valuable learning from other sectors);
- keeping the contracts simple;
- educating the client; and
- educating facilities managers in the issues affecting the sector, such as whole-life costs, risk management, vandalism, security, specialist equipment, relationships to pedagogy and technology.

The British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) has recently established a group, the BIFM education sector forum, with the aim of supporting BIFM members working in the sector. The forum aims to share experience, support practising facilities managers and promote best practice. The forum covers all facets of the education sector from primary to tertiary, and both state-funded and private educational establishments.

The Building Schools for the Future programme is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for facilities managers. There is now – and will be for some years to come – great demand for a whole range of first-class facilities management services in the education sector. This is a chance for us all to get passionate about improving educational processes and resources for our children and the facilities managers of the future. We must ensure that the facilities management industry gets this opportunity right.

FM

## COMMENTS ABOUT FACILITIES MANAGEMENT IN PFI SCHOOLS

These are examples of user reactions to facilities management in PFI schools:

### The positive . . .

- "Toilets are cleaned three times a day."
- "The food is of much higher quality."
- "Windows were cleaned once a year, now it is once a day."
- "All equipment is properly maintained for the first time."
- "I no longer have to wear three pairs of socks."

### And the less positive . . .

- "Support from LEAs has not been enough."
- "We're not sure what to do with these kitchen areas."
- "First day of term, belongings were piled up in reception area and it looked like Gatwick airport."
- "Ninety per cent of my time has been devoted to PFI."
- "We have had to teach the contractor how to do his job."

And these are comments from a BIFM member working as a facilities manager in a PFI school:

- "The facilities management team needs to be involved in the design brief, bid process and build process."
- "There needs to be an appointed clerk of works, who is independent, with full access to the design brief."
- "The builders need to forget the build and run process and remember that they are involved in a project of 25–30 years and take into account quality and the life cycle aspect of a PFI contract."
- "Companies taking on school's PFI work need to understand the culture of education and those who work within it. Teachers never leave school so need lots of TLC!"
- "Understanding is needed that what may be robust in offices and other similar environments may not necessarily be the right fixtures and fittings for an inner city secondary school with 20% disaffected pupils."