

Developing a self managed project

Many schools are looking at managing projects themselves rather than engaging a consultant. We set out below some of the things that need to be considered, arranged and managed. This list is not exhaustive but we hope it will help you evaluate what you need to do and balance the savings which can be made against the risks.

Exactly what do you want done?

Keeping costs down and getting value for money is a concern for all of us. Defining and specifying the project before you start is essential. You can get contractors to quote but you have to have a basis for comparing those quotes and ensuring that they are on a like for like basis. For example getting somebody to quote to paint all the outside seems a simple request but different contractors could interpret that in several different ways from the level of preparation to the quality of the paint. All paint is not the same and all painting contractors do not do the same job. They used to paint the Forth Road Bridge continually because by the time they got to the end the paint at the beginning was in need of redoing. By changing the method of preparation and the paint it now only needs doing once every 25 years. Whilst initially it was far more expensive they believe that over 25 years they will make a big saving. Money available at the time will always be restricting factor but unless you specify exactly what you want the only way you will know if it was value for money will be at the time it next needs doing.

Some old adages which are worth bearing in mind:

"If it seems too good to be true it probably is"

"There are no free dinners" - the company you use can only stay in business if it can pay its workers and make a profit.

"Everything seems easy when it works" - do you have the necessary support if things go wrong

"Most contractors tend to promise more than they can deliver" - have you got time to constantly monitor them and badger them.

"Additions to an agreed contract are always expensive" - make sure you are clear about what you want and fully detail it.

Suitability for purpose. You need to ensure that you are clear that the project will achieve the ends you want. If you are adding to existing systems do they have the capacity to deliver e.g. heating can the boiler cope or electrics will the main supply be sufficient or the ring main be correctly rated.

Ensure you know who will be picking up the cost if things go wrong

If you manage a project it is unlikely that you will have any indemnity insurance (the same would be true if a Governor or member of the school community did it in a private capacity) you need to be clear with the contractor(s) who is liable for what.

Things to consider:

Do you need **planning permission**; if any part of the building is listed you will need listed building consent.

Asbestos - the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 assume that asbestos is present unless you have documentary evidence to the contrary. If in any doubt you must carry out checks in the area you intend to work. For further reading and regulations [click here](#).

Have you notified **Building Control** of your plans and does the work meet **building regulations**.

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 require that there is a principal designer who is responsible for planning, managing and monitoring health and safety and liaising with the contractor to plan and monitor health and safety during the project. Whoever manages the project takes on that role and responsibility. It is also worth noting that if there is more than one project being undertaken at the same time there can only be one principal designer responsible for all health and safety on the site. To read more [click here](#).

Have you checked that your project will not compromise the structural integrity of the building or damage any hidden or buried services?

Have you ensured that somebody has responsibility for arranging any auxiliary work such as isolating/repositioning the security or fire alarm installation?

Are all post project requirements in place such as redoing any risk assessments like fire or legionella.

Ensuring **contractors** have necessary **expertise and insurances**.

Clear agreements about assessing work completed, quality of work, staged payments, valuations, snagging, retentions and certification/documentation to be provided on handover.

Are you and the contractors conversant with the latest legislation and HSE requirements?

If the project involves the playground area do you need Section 77 approval from the LA?

Have you the right to do what you want or do you need agreement from Trustees, Landlords, the LA, the Diocese, the EFA, the DofE?

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list but simply a check list to help you decide if the project you propose is self manageable. We often hear that schools have a governor or parent who has volunteered to manage a project which can be very helpful but it is important to understand that volunteers no matter what their day job or expertise never have any insurance and it is vital that the school understands its duty to protect them should anything go wrong.

If you want any further advice or to talk through any issue about a project please contact your responsible body or peter@dbeservices.co.uk

DBE Services is able to suggest professional advisers for schools who can offer advice.