

MODIFICATION TO THE OPENING DATE FOR THE FIRST PRIMARY SCHOOL AT NORTHSTOWE

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **5th July 2011**

From: **Service Director Strategy and Commissioning, Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)**

Electoral division(s): **Willingham, Cottenham, Histon and Impington**

Forward Plan ref: **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To:**

- a. Advise Cabinet of the implications of the changing pattern and pace of development on the previously agreed opening date for the first primary school to be established in Northstowe.
- b. Seek Cabinet's approval to defer the opening date for the first primary school to serve Northstowe from September 2011 to September 2016.

Recommendation: **Cabinet is asked to approve the deferral of the opening date of the first primary school to serve Northstowe from September 2011 to September 2016.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact</i>	
Name:	Alison Cook	Name:	David Harty
Post:	School Planning Officer	Portfolio:	Learning
Email:	Alison.cook@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	David.harty@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 699783	Tel:	01223 699173

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 21 February 2008, the County Council invited proposals to open and run a new primary school to serve the proposed development at Northstowe under the new school competition regulations. The notice gave an opening date for the school as January 2011 (since amended to September 2011). The planned opening date was based on the anticipated progression of development to ensure places would be available to serve the first residents in line with the Council's established practice. As with other new primary schools opened to serve to new developments, it was anticipated that its opening would coincide with the occupation of the 100th dwelling.
- 1.2 Two bids were received and following detailed assessment of these, Cabinet awarded the competition to the Diocese of Ely.
- 1.3 As Cabinet approved the proposals for the new primary school it must also approve any changes to those arrangements.
- 1.4 Delays to the planned Northstowe development make it necessary to secure Cabinet approval to defer the opening date for the first primary school.

2.0 Main Issues

- 2.1 A combination of factors has slowed the anticipated pace of the Northstowe development. These include the absence of a revised planning application; the Government's decision not to upgrade the A14; the possible inclusion of County Council-owned land West of Station Road and the overall change in economic conditions. The dates assigned to the opening of the school were always intended to ensure that no matter how quickly development commenced, the Council would be able to fulfil its statutory obligation to provide school places for the early residents of Northstowe. There has always been an expectation that changes to the pace, and/or pattern, of development would mean planned school opening dates would need to be kept under review.
- 2.2 Recent discussions between the Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and the developers indicate progress is now being made towards submission of a revised planning application. It is possible that a revised planning application could be submitted before the end of the year. If this were the case, construction could begin in 2013. Based on the anticipated pace of development and given that a new primary school facility should be in place for the 100th occupation, then the earliest likely opening date for the new school would be September 2016.
- 2.3 The Diocese of Ely is aware of the revised timescales being considered, and the need to defer the school opening date.

3.0 Alignment with Priorities and Ways of Working

3.1 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- At its meeting on 11 September 2007, Cabinet reaffirmed the Council's policy of inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in their local mainstream school where appropriate.
- The competition specification for the proposed new primary school reflected this policy position. The value and benefit of promoting inclusion within new primary schools was supported by the Diocese of Ely within their bid document.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The new school will have a defined catchment area. This will be informed by existing schools' catchment boundaries and the Council's Sustainable Travel Strategy, which promotes walking and cycling to school.
- The opening of the new primary school will coincide with the occupation of the 100th dwelling, thus ensuring places are available to serve the first children to live in Northstowe and avoiding the need for children to have to travel outside of their communities for their educational provision.

3.3 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Successful educational attainment and achievement will result in a skilled workforce that can benefit the Cambridgeshire economy.
- The school itself will become a major employer and focus of business activity within the local community.

3.4 Ways of Working

The new school will help to deliver the following County Council priorities as follows:

- The Diocese of Ely and the County Council intend that the school will be designed to maximise opportunities for co-location of services to deliver community, sport, leisure and art facilities.
- The Council's role is that of commissioner of the new primary school, rather than the provider, therefore, the need to develop effective partnership working with all of the major parties involved is crucial to the successful delivery of the new school and to ensuring that the right services are available in time to serve the first residents.

4.0 **Significant Implications**

4.1 Resource and Performance Implications

The pace of housing development will vary according to market conditions. The Council has sought to minimise the financial risk by linking the opening dates of the school to the number of housing occupations rather than a specific date. It continually reviews progress on developments and seeks deferral of

opening dates where necessary.

- 4.2 If deferrals were not sought the Council would be required to implement the original proposals without necessarily having access to the permanent site for the school or the Section 106 contributions to support the capital expenditure required. The triggers for the payment of the Section 106 contributions are linked to housing occupations.

4.3 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

Under current education legislation (the 2006 Education Act), local authorities must run a competition for every new school for which it identifies a need, unless it is able to secure approval from the Department for Education (DfE) to an exemption from competition.

The competition for the first primary school to serve Northstowe was awarded by Cabinet to the Diocese of Ely. Any changes to the approval proposals must be considered and endorsed by Cabinet.

The proposed revised opening date of September 2016 takes account of available information on the plans for Northstowe. However, due to fluctuations in market conditions it is possible that Cabinet may need to consider a further modification to the planned opening date for the school at some point in the future.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

No further comments.

4.5 Engagement and Consultation

The Diocese of Ely is aware of the need to modify the opening date for the new primary school.

The County Council will continue to meet with all major parties to assess the progress of the Northstowe development and how this could affect the opening date of the new school.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS GUIDANCE

Source Documents	Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establishing a New Maintained Mainstream School – A Guide for Local Authorities <p>Cabinet Reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">7 October 2008 – Establishment of the First Primary School to Serve Northstowe – Determination of Promoter11 September 2007 - <u>New Schools Competition Arrangements Policy and Decision-Making Process</u>	Infrastructure Service Room B202