

**ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN CAMBRIDGE :**  
**RESPONSE TO PARENTAL REPRESENTATION**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **14 December 2010**

*From:* **Executive Director: Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)**

*Electoral division(s):* **Cambridge**

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

*Purpose:* **To advise Cabinet on the proposed action to be taken to respond formally to the parental representations received in support of additional Roman Catholic primary school places in Cambridge.**

*Recommendation:* **That Cabinet endorse the proposed action to be taken to respond formally to the parental representations received in support of additional Roman Catholic primary school places in Cambridge.**

<b><i>Officer Contact:</i></b>		<b><i>Member contact</i></b>	
Name:	<b>Sian Phillips</b>	Name:	<b>David Harty</b>
Post:	Education Officer	Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Learning (0-19)
Email:	<a href="mailto:sian.phillips@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">sian.phillips@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>	Email:	<a href="mailto:David.Harty@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">David.Harty@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Tel:	01223 699796	Tel:	01223 699173

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Since May 2007, the County Council has had a specific duty to respond formally to parental representation, under the Education Act 1996, (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006) in furtherance of its duty to promote choice for parents and secure diversity in the provision of schools.
- 1.2 The competition for the new primary school in Gunhild Way, Cambridge, for which proposals were received from the Roman Catholic (RC) Diocese of East Anglia and the Queen Edith Community Federation Group, was won by the Federation Group. This decision was made by Cabinet on 28 September 2010.
- 1.3 However, the competition process showed strong parental demand and support for additional RC primary school provision in the south of the City. Cabinet, therefore, agreed that the letters of support received, and the petition that was presented in relation to the Diocesan bid, should be judged to be a formal parental representation under the duty referred to in 1.1, above.
- 1.4 In order to take this matter forward, officers were asked to produce a timetabled plan for future action on the establishment of additional RC primary school provision in Cambridge, in consultation with the Diocese of East Anglia. It was agreed that this plan should be produced within four weeks of the date of the September Cabinet meeting, and presented to the 4 November 2010 meeting of the Children and Young People's Policy Development Group (CYP PDG), with a further report back to Cabinet on 14 December.

## **2.0 CURRENT POSITION**

- 2.1 Officers met with a representative of the RC Diocese of East Anglia, on 11 October 2010. The potential for establishing additional RC provision in the south of Cambridge was discussed and the difficulty of making such provision in the short term was acknowledged. The availability of capital funding during a period of significant financial restraint, and the identification of appropriate sites in a historic city such as Cambridge, were recognised as particular difficulties.
- 2.2 Nonetheless, the production of a timed action plan was seen as helpful in establishing the scheme as a priority for the County Council and for the Diocese, and in addressing the barriers to development. The Diocesan representative did, however, advise that realistic timescales should be adopted, in order that the expectations of Catholic parents should not be unfairly raised.
- 2.3 The actions agreed at that meeting, which formed the key components of a timed action plan, were presented to the CYP PDG on 4 November. These actions were broadly endorsed by the PDG, but the following points, which are of relevance to the timescales proposed in the action plan, were also made:
  - The County Council should undertake a specific parental survey of demand for additional RC school places in Cambridge, and not simply rely on expressions of support in response to a competition for a new school.
  - It would be appropriate for Cambridgeshire to develop an explicit policy on its general approach to supporting the establishment of denominational schools, before determining the way forward on the establishment of additional RC

primary school provision in the south of Cambridge.

2.4 The Schools White Paper, “The Importance of Teaching”, was also published on 24 November 2010. This includes important information relating to the government’s approach to the establishment of new schools, which is of relevance to this issue. Further information on this is provided in section 3.2, below.

2.5 The action plan considered by the PDG has, therefore, been amended to take account of these developments, and the version attached as **Appendix 1** is recommended for approval by Cabinet.

### **3.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Resources and Performance**

3.1.1 There is recommended provision in the CYPS revised capital programme for a County Council contribution towards an increase of ten places per year, from September 2012, at St Laurence RC Voluntary Aided Primary School in the north of Cambridge.

3.1.2 However, there is no provision in the capital programme for any additional RC provision in Cambridge, in response to this parental representation.

3.1.3 The Department for Education (DfE) is currently reviewing its approach to capital funding for schools. Until the outcome of this review is known, it will not be possible to be clear on funding availability. The review is expected to report by the end of 2010.

#### **3.2 Statutory Requirements and Partnership Working**

3.2.1 The current statutory requirements relating to the provision of a response to a parental representation are set out in section 1.1, above.

3.2.2 The new DfE Schools White Paper, referred to in section 2.4, states that ... “where there is a need for a new school, the first choice will be a new Academy or a Free School.” The White Paper also states that the DfE “will legislate in the forthcoming Education Bill to simplify significantly the bureaucratic competition process currently required to open a new school.”

3.2.3 Any new statutory requirements will have to be taken into account, and until there is clarity, it will affect the ability to make progress. The DfE’s advice is, therefore, being sought on the implications of these statements for the establishment of new Voluntary Aided religious denominational schools.

3.2.4 Officers will maintain regular communication with the RC Diocese of East Anglia on this issue, and with the headteacher steering group that advises on provision to meet demographic pressures on primary school places in Cambridge.

#### **3.3 Climate Change**

3.3.1 It is too early to identify specific climate change implications, but, if additional denominational provision were made, the expectation would be that, in a city environment, the majority of children should be able to walk or cycle to school.

### 3.4 **Access and Inclusion**

- 3.4.1 The County Council is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs are able to attend their local mainstream school where possible, with only those children with the most complex and challenging needs requiring places at specialist provision.
- 3.4.2 This would be an expectation of any additional denominational school provision that was established.

### 3.5 **Engagement and Consultation**

- 3.5.1 The information relating to partnership working, in section 3.2 above, is of relevance here. If any proposals are taken forward formally, the relevant consultation requirements will be followed.

Background Papers : none

**ACTION PLAN**

<b>Action</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Broad Policy Issues</b>			
1. Develop an explicit policy relating to Cambridgeshire's approach to supporting the establishment of additional religious denominational provision in the County.	Sian Phillips (SP) Cambridgeshire County Council	January/February 2011	An initial report would be presented to the 20 January 2011 CYP PDG. This item would then be brought forward for decision to the 22 February Cabinet meeting.  This will need to take into account the approach to the establishment of new schools outlined in the DfE Schools White Paper, issued in November 2010.
2. Seek clarity on the availability of, and routes for, capital funding for religious denominational schools, in the light of recent changes to the Department for Education's approach to the establishment of new schools.	SP	January 2011	The DfE is currently reviewing its approach to capital funding for schools. Until the outcome of this review is known, it will not be possible to be clear on funding availability. The review is expected to report by the end of 2010.
<b>Specific Tasks relating to RC Provision</b>			
3. Provide information on the boundaries of the two RC parishes covering Cambridge City, and on the radius within which a potential site for an RC school might be sought.	Paul Rossi, Diocese of East Anglia	December 2010	
4. Explore the availability of sites in the City with the County Council's Strategy and Estates Section and Cambridge City Council.	SP	March 2011	A detailed search was undertaken in order to identify sites for provision to meet the demographic pressures on primary school places in Cambridge. When the Council's general policy approach is known, this search will be revisited with relevant colleagues in the County and City Councils.
5. Undertake a parental survey to obtain detailed information about the	SP	March 2011	

Action	By Whom	Target Date	Comments
<p>pattern of demand, if the Council's general policy approach is supportive of additional RC provision in Cambridge.</p> <p>(This would include whether organisational solutions, such as the possible establishment of an inter-church school or joint development with a current community school, would be acceptable, not just single-denominational RC provision.)</p>			
6. Provide clarity on the contribution that the Diocese would be expected to make to the establishment of a new RC school in Cambridgeshire.	SP	June 2011	Currently, there is an expectation that there should be a contribution of 10% of the capital costs of establishing a new voluntary aided denominational school from the responsible body. However, a decision on this matter cannot be made until there is clarity on the government's future approach to capital funding and on the Council's own approach to supporting the establishment of further denominational schools.
7. When the information set out in the actions outlined above has been obtained, produce costed proposals for Member consideration.	SP	June 2011	