

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL IN ALCONBURY WEALD**

*To:* **Children and Young People Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **10 March 2015**

*From:* **Adrian Loades, Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services**

*Electoral division(s):* **Huntingdon**

*Forward Plan ref:* **2015/001** *Key decision:* **Yes**

*Purpose:* **a) To advise the Committee of the outcome of the process adopted by the Council to discharge the statutory requirement, under the Education Act 2011, to seek an Academy or Free School sponsor for the first primary school to serve the Alconbury Weald development; and**  
**b) to seek the Committee's endorsement of the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust as the Council's preferred sponsor for this new primary school.**

*Recommendation:* **Members are asked to:**

- a) Endorse the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust as the Council's preferred sponsor for the first primary school to serve Alconbury Weald.**

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## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Council as the local Children's Services Authority, has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state funded sector. To achieve this, the Council has to keep the number of school places under review and to take appropriate steps to manage the position where necessary. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also requires local authorities to adopt a strategic role, with a duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school provision.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare for parents to work or to undertake education or training which could lead to employment (section 6) and secure free early years provision for all 3 and 4 year olds (and up to 40% of 2 year olds who meet nationally set eligibility criteria) of 15 hours a week, 38 weeks a year, of early years education.
- 1.4 Huntingdonshire District Council is in the process of developing its Local Plan to replace its Core Strategy (adopted in 2009). It identifies sites for development and infrastructure up to 2036 and includes supplementary vision documents that aim to guide growth within every village and town within the district. Submission of the Plan to Government is due to take place in summer 2015 to be followed by a public examination in late 2015, and adoption by spring 2016.
- 1.5 One of the development sites is Alconbury Weald. It comprises approximately 580 hectares in two main elements: the Airfield at Alconbury and the area of neighbouring farmland. A total of 5,000 new homes are expected to be built on the site in addition to an Enterprise Zone which will deliver up to 8,000 jobs.
- 1.6 In response, the Council has identified the need to establish 3 primary schools with early years' facilities and one secondary school to serve the development. The first primary school is required to open in September 2106.
- 1.7 The 2011 Education Act sets out the following requirements for Local Authorities with regard to the establishment of new schools:
  1. The Council has to seek proposals for the establishment of an Academy or Free School, and specify the date by which proposals must be received.
  2. Following the published closing date by which proposals should have been submitted, the Council must contact the Secretary of State for Education, to outline the steps it has taken to secure applications for the establishment of an Academy or Free School, together with details of any which have been received.

Only if no Academy or Free School proposals are received, can the Council seek the Secretary of State's permission to begin a

competition process to establish a maintained school under the provisions set out in the 2006 Education Act.

## 2.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The Alconbury Weald development is forecast to generate demand for around 1700 primary school places (the equivalent of 8.1 FE). The table below shows the forecast demand for places for Reception aged children (4 year olds) in the first 5 years. It has been compiled using the latest forecast data received for the new development.

<b>Demographic Forecast for number of Reception Places Required.</b>					
<b>Alconbury Weald</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Forecast Demand for Reception Places	10	19	32	47	65

- 2.2 The new school will open in September 2016 with places for children in all age groups as follows:

<b>Key Stage 1</b>			<b>Key Stage 2</b>			
<b>Reception</b>	<b>Yr 1</b>	<b>Yr 2</b>	<b>Yr 3</b>	<b>Yr 4</b>	<b>Yr 5</b>	<b>Yr 6</b>
20	10	5	5	5	5	5

There will, however, be flexibility to admit above the PAN in all year groups should there be the need for more places from residents of Alconbury Weald.

## 3.0 ACADEMY/FREE SCHOOL SPONSOR PROCESS AND OUTCOME

- 3.1 The main elements of the sponsor selection process date back several years as they were established in response to the requirements of the 2006 Education Act. The process was reviewed and updated in 2012 to take account of the requirements of the 2011 Education Act, receiving Cabinet approval on 17 April 2012. More recently, some slight adjustments have been made to take account of the Council's new decision-making arrangements. The process consists of six main stages:

1. Development and publication of a specification detailing the requirements and expectations of the potential academy or free school sponsor together with a background document which provides the context for the need for the school and the area in which it will be established.
2. Invitation to potential sponsors to submit applications within a set timeframe.
3. Assessment and scoring of the applications.

Only applications deemed to have met a certain standard will be shortlisted and taken forward to the next stage.

4. A public meeting at which the applicants are asked to present their proposals and answer questions from the audience. Applicants are requested to prepare a presentation which should take no more than 15 minutes to deliver.
5. Assessment and scoring of the way in which the applicant presented their proposals and responded to questions from the audience at the public meeting followed by an interview with a joint officer and Member panel during which the applicants will be asked a series of questions. This usually lasts around 1 hour. The panel is also provided with a summary of any written comments or feedback received following the public meeting.

The panel membership is drawn from the following:

- the Chair of the CYP Committee;
  - the CYP Spokespersons for each of the political parties;
  - the local County Councillor(s) for the area in which the school will be established;
  - the Head of the Schools Intervention Service;
  - the 0-19 Strategic Policy and Place Planning Manager; and
  - the Head of Service, 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation (Chair).
6. The panel discusses each of the proposals in detail, taking account of what they have read, seen and heard from which a combined score for each application is derived.

- 3.2 On 10 October 2014, the Council published both a local and a national press announcement setting out the need for a new primary school to serve the Alconbury Weald development. Potential sponsors were invited to submit proposals by 22 December 2014, to establish and run the school as either an Academy or Free School. The Background Information document and the detailed School Specification document produced to support potential applicants/sponsors in developing their proposals are available on the Council's website through the following link:

[http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20059/schools\\_and\\_learning/347/school\\_changes\\_and\\_consultations/9](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20059/schools_and_learning/347/school_changes_and_consultations/9)

The documents were also sent to the Department for Education (DfE).

- 3.3 Four proposals were received by the 22 December 2014 deadline from:

- Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust
- The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust
- The Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust
- Urban and Civic in partnership with Huntingdonshire Academies Secondary Partnership

Copies of the executive summaries of the applications are available to either view or download from the Council's website through the above link.

- 3.4 A public meeting was held on 27 January 2015 when representatives from the four potential sponsors presented their proposals and answered a range of questions. The audience included local members and members of the assessment panel.

Questions raised related to:

- How the sponsors would work with the existing local schools in the area
- How the opening of the new school might affect admissions to the existing local schools, specifically Alconbury Church of England Primary School and Abbots Ripton Church of England Primary School
- How the sponsors would manage the challenges involved in opening a new school in a new community that was yet to be established
- The potential sponsors' vision for the leadership and management of the school and curriculum delivery.

- 3.5 The joint member/officer Assessment Panel met on the 2 February 2015 to interview and assess each potential sponsor's application against the criteria detailed in the School Specification document. The interview panel comprised two of CYP Spokespersons, together with both of the Local Members for Huntingdon and four officers.

A copy of the assessment criteria used by the Panel, together with the details of the membership of the panel is provided in **Appendix 1**.

- 3.6 The Assessment Panel was unanimous in its view that the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust should be awarded the opportunity to establish and run the school in preference to any of the other three potential sponsors. The particular strengths of their proposal were:
1. They were able to clearly evidence that they have the strength and depth in their leadership and governance infrastructure together with the knowledge, experience and necessary primary educational expertise to deliver and maintain high quality teaching and learning.
  2. They demonstrated a clear and up-to-date understanding of the local context and evidenced their on-going commitment the role

the new school would play in wider school to school support and partnership working in the locality, citing some relevant examples.

3. They had developed a very detailed curriculum delivery plan with clear aims and content across Key Stage 1 and 2 of the primary curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
4. They had established and were able to evidence the effectiveness of their systems and processes for monitoring pupil progress, including those pupils eligible for the pupil premium and of using the resulting data to support and improve attainment in the core subjects.
5. They demonstrated that they had robust mechanisms in place to deliver improvement within a school, as required, and evidenced this with good examples where interventions had improved Key Stage 2 results.

3.7 All the information used by the Assessment Panel to reach its recommendation to Committee, together with the outcome of Committee's consideration of the proposals, will be forwarded to the DfE by 11 March 2015.

3.8 Officers have been advised that the proposals will be considered and a decision made by Regional Commissioner and his head teacher reference group on 19 March on which potential sponsor they will recommend that the Secretary of State enters into a funding agreement with.

#### **4.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

##### **4.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

4.1.1 Providing access to local and high quality education and associated children's services will enhance the skills of the local workforce and provide essential childcare services for working parents or those seeking to return to work. The school and early years and childcare services are providers of local employment.

##### **4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

4.2.1 If pupils have access to local schools and associated children's services, they are more likely to attend them by either cycling or walking rather than through local authority-provided transport or car. They will also be able to more readily access out of school activities such as sport and homework clubs and develop friendship groups within their own community. This will contribute to the development of both healthier and more independent lifestyles.

##### **4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

4.3.1 Providing a local school will ensure that services can be accessed by families in greatest need within its designated area.

#### **5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Resource Implications**

- 5.1.1 New academy schools receive a combination of Council and Education Funding Agency (EFA) funding. The main funding will be based on the local formula applied to all schools, but will need to include diseconomies funding to reflect the costs incurred whilst the new school fills to capacity.

5.1.2	Funding:	Funding Body:	Detail:
	Local Formula Funding	EFA	Based on the Council's local formula. Funding recouped from the Council and allocated by EFA (some factors based on county averages in initial years)
	16-19 Formula Funding	EFA	Based on National 16-19 Formula
	Pupil Premium	EFA	Based on National Pupil Premium funding rates
	Funding for Education Services	EFA	Based on National Education Services Grant (ESG) funding rates
	Insurance Grant	EFA	Additional funding available to support insurance costs
	Diseconomies Funding	Local Authority	Funding from the Growth Fund to recognise costs whilst the school fills to capacity.
	Pre-opening Revenue	Local Authority	Funding from the Growth Fund prior to opening to support costs
	High Needs Pupil Top-Up Funding	Home Local Authority	Top-Up funding for pupils with statements of SEN

- 5.1.3 Where a new school (other than a free school) is opening, local authorities are required to estimate the pupil numbers expected to join the school in September to generate funding through the Authority Proforma Tool (APT). Local authorities should also estimate pupil numbers for all schools and academies, including free schools, where they have opened in the previous seven years and are still adding year groups. These estimates should be adjusted each year to take account of the actual pupil numbers in the previous funding period. For academies an allocation of funding is recouped from each local authority and following formula replication by the EFA an annual grant allocated.

- 5.1.4 Alongside the main formula funding, the Council is required to have a centrally-retained Growth Fund to fund post start-up costs and any diseconomy of scale costs for new schools provided to meet basic need and to support schools anticipating growth, including academies.

The fund has been created from a top-sliced from the schools block distribution total prior to budget setting. The amount in the fund and the criteria for its allocation are agreed by Schools Forum. The EFA

will continue to fund start-up and diseconomy costs for new free schools.

- 5.1.5 Pre-opening funding for Primary Schools is currently £50,000 and is calculated on the basis of 1 term prior to the date of opening. Post-opening diseconomies funding is provided at the rate of £125 for each new mainstream place created in the primary phase on an annual basis, plus an additional allocation to reflect the number of year-groups that the school will ultimately have that do not yet have pupils.
- 5.1.6 Final revenue funding amounts for new schools will vary depending on numerous factors. As the majority of the funding will come directly from the EFA their application of the local formula factor and national factors is key to determining these amounts.
- 5.1.7 The methodology for funding new schools is subject to change dependent on local and national policy changes and as such will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 5.1.8 Section 106 funding has been secured from the developers, Urban and Civic to meet the capital costs of building the new school.

## **5.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

- 5.2.1 There are specific statutory requirements which have been followed in seeking a successful sponsor for the new primary school under the provisions of the Education Act 2011. The process adopted by the Council is compliant with the requirements of the Act.
- 5.2.2 The Council will grant a standard 125 year Academy lease of the whole site (permanent school site) to the successful sponsor based on the model lease prepared by the DfE as this protects the Council's interest by ensuring that:
  - The land and buildings would be returned to the Council when the lease ends.
  - Use is restricted to educational purposes only.
  - The Academy is only able to transfer the lease to another educational establishment provided it has the Council's consent.
  - The Academy (depending on the lease wording) is only able to sublet part of the site with approval from the Council.

## **5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.3.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) 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.
- 5.3.2 The accommodation provided for delivery of early years and childcare and primary education will fully comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and current Council standards.



## **5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications**

- 5.4.1 The process adopted by the Council for consideration of Academy or Free School proposals makes provision for a public meeting at which members of the local community can meet the potential sponsors and ask them questions about their proposals. The public meeting took place on Tuesday 27 January 2015. It was attended by around 40 people.

## **5.5 Public Health Implications**

- 5.5.1 The school will be accessible to pupils as either pedestrians or cyclists. If children had to attend schools some distance away (more than 2 miles) they would be provided with free transport by the Council in accordance with its statutory duty.

## **5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

- 5.6.1 Both of the local Members for Huntingdon, Councillor Peter Brown and Councillor Peter Ashcroft attended the public meeting and participated in the joint officer/member panel.

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessment Panel Evaluation Document</li><li>• Assessment Panel Interview Questions 2 February 2015</li><li>• Notes of Public Meeting 27 January 2015</li><li>• Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust Application</li><li>• The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust Application</li><li>• Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust Application</li><li>• Urban and Civic and Huntingdonshire Academies Secondary Partnership Application</li><li>• Background Information Document October 2014</li><li>• School Specification Document October 2014</li><li>• Cabinet Report – Establishing New School: New Legislation, Policy and Strategic Implication (17 April 2012)</li><li>• Establishing a New Maintained Mainstream School – A Guide for Local Authorities (DCSF February 2010)</li><li>• Cabinet Report - New Schools Competition Arrangements Policy and Decision-Making Process (11 September 2007)</li><li>• New School Revenue Funding Policy 2015/16</li></ul>	<p>Alison Orrell</p> <p>0-19 Place Planning and Sufficiency Officer</p> <p>OCT1213 Shire Hall Cambridge CB3 0AP</p>