

CABINET – 16 OCTOBER 2018

UPDATED FINANCIAL & RESOURCE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE SWAN FREE SCHOOL PROJECT IN OXFORD

Report by Director of Children’s Services and Director for Capital Investment & Delivery

Introduction

1. The paper and annex is produced to provide Members with information on progress with provision of the above school to meet demand for secondary school places In Oxford from September 2019 and to ensure that the county council is in a position to respond quickly to whatever planning decision is taken by Oxford City Council on 15 October.

Exempt Information

2. Annex1 of this report contains information which relates to commercial negotiations being undertaken by the council. The public should therefore be excluded during consideration of Annex 1 because its discussion in public would be likely to lead to the disclosure to members of the public present of information in the following categories prescribed by Part I of Scheduled 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended):
3. The report contains information under category 3 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) . It is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that the disclosure could affect both the outcome of the current planning application for delivery of the school and the conduct of the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA).

Cabinet Policy Approved 21 February 2017

4. At its meeting on 21st February 2017 Cabinet approved the following recommendations:
 - (a) Approve the sale of the Harlow Centre site and buildings to the Department of Education for £1.00; and
 - (b) Make a contribution of up to £2 million towards the construction costs of the Swan School subject to conditions expressed in paragraph 16 of the report.
5. Paragraph 16 of that report set out the following conditions:

The Swan School's construction is contingent upon the Secretary of State

entering into a Funding Agreement with its sponsors. No Council resources or assets will be transferred to the DfE until such time as there is absolute certainty about the Swan School project in order that the Council is able to retain both site freehold and S.106 contributions sufficient to ensure the provision of sufficient school places. In the event that the Secretary of State declines to sign a Funding Agreement, the Council will need to reconsider its options for expanding secondary school education in Oxford although this would be challenging given that there is a need for additional school places by September 2019.

6. The project programme has slipped considerably but the stated aim is still to provide the required basic need places required for September 2019 in Oxford. The ESFA team leading the project have indicated that a revised programme of transfer of assets from the Council will be required to ensure the need for places in 2019 can be met. This requires further approval of Cabinet.
7. The detail of the requirements relate to current negotiations, are commercially sensitive and are contained in Annex 1.

Recommendations

8. Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to approve one of the alternative options set out in the confidential annex in relation to this project.

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Background papers:

Report to Cabinet 21 February 2017

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