

CABINET MEMBER – 16 JANUARY 2019

NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR NE WANTAGE (CRAB HILL / KINGSGROVE): REPORT ON SELECTION PROCESS FOR APPROVED PROVIDERS AND APPROVAL OF PREFERRED OPTION

Report by Director for Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to approve the preferred provider to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education for final agreement.**

Executive Summary

2. The Cabinet meeting of 4 September 2012 approved a process for the identification of sponsors for new academies to meet the needs of population growth such as the one at NE Wantage. This was amended in the Cabinet meeting of 15th July 2014 to give the decision to the Cabinet member unless there are special circumstances. There are no special circumstances in this case.
3. The approved specification for NE Wantage sought providers for a new primary school. The school will be a 2-form entry, 2-11 age range primary school, with an Admission Number of 60.
4. The specification did not impose restrictions on the nature of provider – e.g. faith organisations, or existing providers – given that the local consultation was inconclusive on these issues.

Confidential Information

5. The Department for Education has instructed that any recommendation should not be made public until the Secretary of State has made a final decision on this matter.

Background

6. The agreed process has now completed the following stages:
 - a. Assess expressions of interest and then invite detailed bids from short-listed providers to show clear plans of how they will contribute to the

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raising of education standards, add diversity of choice and which best fits the local requirements and meets the needs of those within groups offered specific protection under s149 Equality Act 2010.

- b. Assess bids against criteria and rank in order of preference. Agree a preferred option to be approved by Lead Member responsible for Education.
7. Four expressions of interest were received. A scoring system was used to assess the applications. These were assessed and scored according to criteria derived from the Department for Education (DfE) Free School Presumption advice February 2016 and from the council's specification document for the new school at NE Wantage previously agreed by the Cabinet Member.
8. The applicants were:
 - a. CfBT Schools Trust: CfBT consists of 16 schools across the UK; in Oxfordshire they currently operate Oxford Spires Academy (a secondary academy) and Abbey Woods Academy in Berinsfield (a primary academy).
 - b. GEMS Learning Trust: GEMS Learning Trust was established in September 2015 with the opening of their first primary academy in Twickenham. There is one Oxfordshire school run by GEMS which opened in Didcot in September 2016. Their third school is due to open at Kingston, in 2019.
 - c. GLF Schools: GLF consists of 30 schools across several local authorities; in Oxfordshire they currently operate in Didcot and Banbury, including William Morris Primary School and the recently opened Longford Park Primary School in Banbury, and The Aureus (secondary) School in Didcot, and Aureus Primary School which opened in September 2018.
 - d. Vale Academy Trust: The Vale Academy Trust (VAT) was formed on 1st October 2013 when three local schools (King Alfred's Academy, Charlton Primary School and Wantage CE Primary School) came together to work in partnership. There are now eight academies; the three founding schools, four other primary academies that have since joined the Trust and Larkmead School in Abingdon that joined in January 2017.
9. The county council's standard practice is to short-list up to three providers, however in this case all four applicants were invited to submit detailed bids, given the close scores following the initial assessment. All providers were also asked to make a presentation to a panel consisting of officers and the Cabinet member for Education & Cultural Services. Both parts of the detailed application were then scored against specified criteria, considering information provided by the DfE about each's trust's current performance.

10. Based on the applications and presentations, a preferred sponsor has been identified. As the Department for Education requires that this be confidential until the Secretary of State has confirmed the approved sponsor, the preferred sponsor will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Financial and Staff Implications

11. There are none arising directly from this report. However, once an approved sponsor has been confirmed by the Secretary of State there will be a need for significant and on-going liaison with council officers.

LUCY BUTLER

Director for Children's Services

Contact Officer: Barbara Chillman, Pupil Place Planning Manager (07554103418)

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