

Division(s): Bicester West

Also: Bicester North, Bicester Town

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN EDUCATION AND FAMILIES – 5 SEPTEMBER 2016

New School for SW Bicester: report on selection process for approved providers and approval of Preferred Option

Report by Director for Childrens' Services

Introduction

1. 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 SW Bicester. This was amended in the Cabinet meeting of 15 July 2014 to give the decision to the Cabinet Member unless there are special circumstances. There are no special circumstances in this case.
2. The approved specification for SW Bicester sought providers for a new secondary school. The school will be a 600 places 11-16 age range secondary school, with an Admission Number of 120 when it is at full size.
3. 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.
4. The specification proposed that the school has a particular focus on sports, health and wellbeing, both for its own pupils and also shared with the wider community.
5. The specification includes 8 places reserved for specialist resourced SEN provision, primarily for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs and the providers were invited to identify how they would work with the county council to deliver this provision.

Exempt Information

6. 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. Where disclosure of information is forbidden by a government department or a court order the authority has no choice but to exclude the public

Background

7. The agreed process has now completed the following stages:
 - a. Assess expressions of interest and then invite detailed bids from three or fewer providers to show clear plans of how they will contribute to the 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 for Children, Education and Families.
8. Six expressions of interest were received. These were assessed according to criteria derived from the Department for Education (DfE) Academy / Free school presumption paper February 2014 and also from the council's specification document for SW Bicester previously agreed by Cabinet. A scoring system was used to assess the strongest applications. Five applications were received and this was shortlisted to three but one of these subsequently withdrew.
9. The shortlisted providers were:
 - a. **The Cheney School Academy Trust.** Cheney School has been judged Good by Ofsted in its last 2 inspections. It has sponsored Bayards Hill Primary School in Oxford and is also the sponsor for the new primary school to be built in Barton, Oxford.
 - b. **The White Horse Federation.** This organisation originated from a group of outstanding schools in Swindon. It currently has 12 schools across Swindon and Wiltshire and one in Oxfordshire. The group contains primary, secondary and special schools. It opened a new primary school in 2012. It has established a strong record of improvement in all of its schools. Those which were failing have rapidly improved to good and several are outstanding.
10. The shortlisted providers were asked to complete a more detailed application form and make a presentation to a panel consisting of officers and the Cabinet member for Children Education and Families. Representatives from Cherwell District Council were also invited to be present. The providers were again scored against specified criteria.

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.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation is submitted in Annex 1 as confidential information.

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