

Division(s): Bicester

## **CABINET MEMBER – 13 MARCH 2019**

### **NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR GRAVEN HILL, BICESTER: REPORT ON SELECTION PROCESS FOR APPROVED PROVIDERS AND APPROVAL OF PREFERRED OPTION**

**Report by Director for Children's Services**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**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**

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 Graven Hill, Bicester. This was amended in the Cabinet meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> 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 Graven Hill, Bicester sought providers for a new primary school. The school will be initially a 2-form entry, 2-11 age range primary school, with an Admission Number of 60, but has potential to expand to up to 3 form entry.
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.

#### **Exempt Information**

4. 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**

5. 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 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.
6. Eight 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 Graven Hill, Bicester previously agreed by the Cabinet Member.
7. The county council's standard practice is to short-list up to three providers, however four applicants were invited to submit detailed bids, given the close scores following the initial assessment. The four short-listed 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.
8. The shortlisted providers were:
  - a. The Warriner MAT: The Warriner MAT was set up in 2015 and currently has one secondary and five primary schools in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. They are also in the process of moving into Warwickshire.
  - b. Kingsbridge Educational Trust: Kingsbridge Education Trust operates four schools in Milton Keynes. One of these is a new all-through school which opened in September 2018.
  - c. Bourton Meadow Education Trust: Bourton Meadow Education Trust was established in 2015 with three primary schools located in Buckingham. In September 2018 two primary schools in Northampton joined the trust.
  - d. 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.
9. 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**

10. 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

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