

REPORT FOR DECISION



DECISION OF:	Cabinet
DATE:	13th November 2019
SUBJECT:	Radcliffe – Secondary School Provision
REPORT FROM:	Cabinet Member for Children & Families
CONTACT OFFICER:	Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead (Education Services)
TYPE OF DECISION:	CABINET (NON KEY DECISION)
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain
SUMMARY:	<p>The regeneration of Radcliffe is a top priority for the Council. The Radcliffe Regeneration Task Group is supporting a range of initiatives to enable Radcliffe to create for itself a new vibrant future, building on a strong distinctive identity. There has been significant residential growth from the development of brownfield sites on and close to Radcliffe which is attracting young people to live and establish their families in the town. Radcliffe now has the potential to deliver regionally significant economic growth.</p> <p>However Radcliffe does not have a secondary school, with the Radcliffe resident pupil population being served by a number of schools located across the borough, and with a high proportion of young people accessing a school place outside of the local authority area. This is restricting the opportunity for Radcliffe residents to contribute to and benefit from economic growth.</p> <p>Given the education, health and employment profile of the Radcliffe resident population, there is therefore a clear need for a fresh and different approach to supporting the residents of Radcliffe. Strong leadership from schools, and in particular secondary schools, is fundamental to this.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the pro-active action taken by the Council to secure new secondary school provision in Radcliffe.</p>

	<p>Demand for secondary school places across the borough is increasing, with limited capacity to meet current and forecast need. Coupled to this is forecast additional demand from residential growth in Radcliffe, which will put additional demands on pupil places in that part of the borough.</p> <p>Any new school must be established as a Free School, whereby a sponsor Trust operates the school.</p> <p>The Department for Education invites applications on an annual basis from sponsors interested in establishing a Free School. The Deadline for submission of applications in the current wave is 11th November 2019.</p> <p>Over the past year, the Council has engaged with Government and the Office of the Regional Schools Commissioner to establish the case for a new secondary school for Radcliffe. Subsequently officers have engaged with potential Free School sponsors on the need for new school provision, and in order to promote the submission of an application to the Department for Education to establish a Free School. This approach has now translated into an application being submitted by Star Academies.</p> <p>This report sets out the background and context to the application, and the implication for the Council moving forward.</p>
<p>OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION</p>	<p>Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endorse the submission by Star Academies of an application to the Department of Education for funding for a new secondary school for Radcliffe 2. Note that a successful application to establish a Free School will require the Council to provide the site, to be leased to the Sponsor at a peppercorn and that a further report will be submitted to Cabinet to seek this approval 3. Require the Assistant Director (Education & Inclusion) to lead the process of engagement with Star Academies in support of the application and submit a further report to Cabinet as soon as the outcome of the application is known
<p>IMPLICATIONS:</p>	
<p>Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:</p>	<p>Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes No</p>

Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	At this stage, no decision is being made so there is not an immediate risk/consequence. However, it should be borne in mind that Council assets (land) will be expected to be transferred free of charge if/when a new school is established.	MW
Equality/Diversity implications:	<p>Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010, and section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 require the local authority to assess the potential impact of any new school on existing educational provision and also impact on any groups with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The report documents the significant inequalities in the education, health and economic profile of the residents of Radcliffe.</p> <p>The provision of a high quality secondary school will contribute to measures designed to address these inequalities.</p> <p>The new school will help to minimize travel distances to school, improve accessibility to local school provision, and increase parental choice.</p> <p>The new school is not expected to have an adverse impact on any group with protected characteristics.</p>	
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes The legal provisions are set out in the report and further legal support will be required should the application be successful through the Free School Programme.	JH
Wards Affected:	All	
Scrutiny Interest:		

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Joint Executive Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The regeneration of Radcliffe is a top priority for the Council. The Radcliffe Regeneration Task Group is supporting a range of initiatives to enable Radcliffe to create for itself a new vibrant future, building on a strong distinctive identity. There has been significant residential growth from the development of brownfield sites on and close to Radcliffe which is attracting young people to live and establish their families in the town.
- 1.2 Radcliffe now has the potential to deliver regionally significant growth, but faces key challenges:
 - 1.2.1 The percentage of Radcliffe young people achieving five good GCSE's is 55.8%, for Bury as a whole it is 62.1%.
 - 1.2.2 A greater proportion of Radcliffe residents are in poor health or with limiting long term illness than for the population of Bury as a whole, and more Radcliffe children at age 4 and 10 have excess weight compared to the same borough-wide cohort, a trend that continues on into adulthood. Deaths from heart disease are significantly greater for Radcliffe residents than for Bury.
 - 1.2.3 Unemployment, including long term unemployment is greater for Radcliffe residents than for Bury residents as a whole.
 - 1.2.4 A greater proportion of Radcliffe residents live within one of the most 20% deprived areas nationally, when compared with all Bury residents.
 - 1.2.5 From a total secondary age cohort of 11,203 students in all Bury schools, 1,733 (15.5%) are resident in Radcliffe. 82% of the Radcliffe resident cohort attend a Bury school, with the balance travelling outside the borough.
 - 1.2.6 36% of the Radcliffe resident secondary age cohort travel over 2½ miles to access a secondary school place. This compares with 18% of the total Bury resident secondary age cohort travelling over the same distance.
 - 1.2.7 A high number of extra district pupils, resident in neighbouring local authority areas, have historically applied for and secured places in a Bury school. For the Radcliffe resident secondary age cohort this trend is reversed with 18% travelling outside the borough.
- 1.3 Given this education, health and employment profile, there is a clear need for a fresh and different approach to supporting Radcliffe people, and building community resilience. Strong leadership from schools and in particular secondary schools is fundamental to this.
- 1.4 The economic prospects in Radcliffe are being transformed but without a strong high performing secondary school the prospects for the children of Radcliffe to benefit from economic growth will be held back.
- 1.5 Additionally, with the current level of demand for secondary schools places across the borough, coupled to growth in demand arising from residential development across a number of locations in and close to Radcliffe, there is a strong argument for establishing new, high quality secondary school provision in Radcliffe to meet this rising demand.

- 1.6 Local authorities are no longer permitted to establish new schools and any new school must be established as a Free School.
- 1.7 The Department for Education invites applications on an annual basis from sponsors interested in establishing a Free School. The Deadline for submission of applications in the current wave is 11th November 2019.
- 1.8 Members and officers have set out to the Department of Education the need for secondary school provision in Radcliffe, and officers have worked pro-actively with the Office of the Regional Schools Commissioner to develop the case, and to then to secure the support of a strong sponsor, with a secure track record in delivering new Free Schools and operating high performing schools.
- 1.9 Having initially identified a number of potential sponsors, officers have subsequently provided support to Star Academies in the preparation of an application to the Department for Education.
- 1.10 Star Academy Trust was initially established as the Tauheedul Trust in Blackburn sponsoring a secondary school but which now encompasses twenty nine schools. It has and has established a number of Free Schools across a wide geographical footprint including Lancashire, Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, West Midlands and East London, each of which operates within a geographically based partnership. The performance of schools across the Trust in contexts which match Radcliffe's profile, is positive, with over a third of schools being judged outstanding by Ofsted.

2 **Issues**

The Free School Programme

- 2.3 Under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the 'free school presumption') where a local authority identifies the need to establish a new school in order to meet increased demand that cannot be met by existing schools, it must invite interest from potential sponsors to establish a Free School.
- 2.4 Alternatively, potential sponsors that may wish to establish a Free School in a local area are able to apply to do so by application directly to the Department for Education. The current round of applications (wave 14) must be submitted by 11th November 2019.
- 2.5 Applications through this latter route are judged against the need for school places in a local area, with emphasis on how a proposed Free School will meet local need and improve educational outcomes. The two routes therefore seek to achieve broadly the same outcome, albeit one is Council driven, with greater ability for the Council to influence the process, whilst the second is sponsor driven.
- 2.6 In addition to the level of control over the process, the key difference between the two routes is in respect of funding.
- 2.7 The 'presumption' route requires the Council to identify and provide the site on which the new school will be established, and provide the capital funding to enable construction of the new school building. Upon completion of the new building, the Council is required to transfer the land and property to the sponsoring trust. Potential capital funding sources include Basic Need funding

allocation to the Council; Capital receipts from disposal of assets; developer contributions; and prudential borrowing by the Council.

- 2.8 The Council is also required to meet the initial revenue start-up costs relating to the new school in the initial period until it is self-sustaining. This funding would be a call on the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 2.9 For the alternative route (wave 14), the sponsor must identify the site, although if the site is Council owned, the Council would be required to lease that site on a peppercorn basis. The sponsor will then work with DfE on the funding model for both revenue and capital. If the proposed school is intended to meet growth in pupil numbers, the DfE may look to the Council to contribute to the capital cost through its Basic Need capital allocation and/or developer contributions but there is no expectation that the Council meet the full capital cost.
- 2.10 The local authority has engaged with a number of Free School sponsors to promote interest and seek support in the development of an application through the Wave 14 Free School Programme. This has now translated into an application from Star Academies. The outcome from applications is anticipated by March 2020. If successful, it is anticipated that the new school would begin to admit pupils from 2022 at the latest.
- 2.11 In recognising that the wave 14 application route is a competitive process, with Government indicating that it is likely to support in the order of 30 applications nationally, the Council will need to consider whether it would wish to pursue the Free School presumption route, in the event that a wave 14 application is not successful. If this becomes necessary, a further report will be presented to Cabinet in Spring 2020 setting out the implications in doing so.

The proposed school

- 2.12 If the Wave 14 application is successful, the Council will work in partnership with the sponsor to deliver a new school providing an excellent education for Radcliffe children. Key objectives agreed with STAR Academies will be:-
- Sustainably good or outstanding education, with a broad, balanced, inspiring and relevant curriculum
 - A rigorous focus on educational standards to ensure that every child achieves their potential
 - An inclusive learning environment in which all pupils are supported, and can make appropriate progress
 - A strong moral ethos
 - Sharing best practice within and beyond the school
 - Strong and effective leadership and governance
- 2.13 The new school will promote inclusive practice and provide the best opportunities for the most vulnerable children. It will have a strong focus on equality, early intervention, and the provision of support to address each young person's specific needs and to enable their progress.
- 2.14 The sponsor will need to demonstrate how the needs of all children will be fully provided for, how the school will be inclusive, including details of enrichment and extended services, and the school's approach to Physical Health and Social Education and safeguarding.

- 2.15 There will be an expectation that the new school will support an SEN specialism as part of a comprehensive enhanced mainstream offer. In time it is anticipated that all secondary schools will make a similar contribution to this borough wide offer.
- 2.16 The Council will work with the sponsor to set out how the school will support the wider needs of the community and consider the role of the school in its wider context. Features will be:-
- inclusive and integrated community provision
 - a curriculum with a focus on the vocational, digital and life skills that employers need as well as academic qualifications
 - provide alternative curriculum options for those that need it
 - collaboration with FE providers to deliver 14-19 offer, with focus on vocational/technical
 - strong engagement with employers – with clear pathways to employment/apprenticeships and a commitment to understand and help to meet the future skills needed for sustainable growth
 - a school playing its full part in improving education and skills for Bury as a whole.

Capacity of a new school

- 2.17 The average size of secondary school in Bury is approximately 1,000 places which is broadly in line with national. All research suggest that schools below 600 places experience dis-economies of scale.
- 2.18 Demand generated from existing development sites on brownfield land is unlikely to support a school of 1,000 places. However, it is likely that a school of this size would be required to accommodate longer term development opportunities.
- 2.19 Therefore, consideration needs to be given to both short and longer term capacity, and the model of growth for any new school. The usual model would suggest incremental growth, initially only admitting year 7 and growing by year group over five years.
- 2.20 The school could also be established with a lower admission number commensurate with the current demand, but with the ability to increase the admission number in future years. This could see an opening admission capacity at intake of 120, providing a total school capacity of 600 within five years, but with the potential to increase the admission number at an agreed point to 200 providing a final capacity of 1,000.
- 2.21 This enables organic growth without putting too much capacity into the system, too early. It also enables a capital strategy to align with that growth although recognising that there are diseconomies of building over several phases to increase capacity over time.
- 2.22 The capital cost of construction of a 600 and 1,000 place school are £12m and £20 million respectively. The proposal to pursue an application through wave 14 of the traditional Free School Programme means that there is no requirement for the Council to commit capital or revenue resources at this stage. However the Council will be required to provide the site for the new school should the Wave 14 bid be successful.

Preferred site of a new school

- 2.23 it is proposed that the site of the former Radcliffe Riverside School on Spring Lane, which currently houses the Radcliffe sports centre and a Pupil Referral Unit is the preferred location.
- 2.24 Work has been undertaken to produce a high level masterplan for the site to inform the scope for the development of Spring Lane site, including feasibility to support wider opportunities, the site can accommodate as well as the school, community leisure provision.
- 2.25 The Council will be expected to enter into a 125 year lease with the sponsor, on a peppercorn rent basis. This would be the case both as a result of the Wave 14 Free School Programme, or the Free School Presumption route.

Admissions

- 2.26 The school's catchment is expected to be primarily the area of Radcliffe but may draw from a wider area to meet population pressures across the south of the borough, and in response to parental demand. The school will be included in the local authority's co-ordinated admission arrangements but the sponsor will be responsible for consulting on, and publishing its specific admissions policy.
- 2.27 The school will need to be flexible in how it organises classes to respond to the growth of the school age population in the area over time.

3 Conclusion

- 3.3 The demand for secondary school places across the borough is growing, and will continue to grow as a result of short, medium and longer term housing development. In the short term, demand from new housing is likely to be felt most acutely in Radcliffe where there is currently no dedicated secondary school provision. Education, health and economic data suggests that the population of Radcliffe is disadvantaged as a result of this lack of provision.
- 3.4 The Council is committed to addressing this inequity and will explore all options to enable the establishment of high quality secondary school provision to serve the community of Radcliffe and beyond.
- 3.5 At this stage in the process, the Cabinet is being requested to endorse the submission of the bid by STAR Academies.. The outcome of the application process will be known by spring term 2020.
- 3.6 At this stage the Council is not required to commit capital or revenue resources to the proposal. Any requirements for capital funding will be subject to a further report to Cabinet.
- 3.7 If the application through the Wave 14 Free School Programme is not successful, a further report will be presented seeking approval to pursue a proposal through the Free School Presumption route, and setting out the proposed funding arrangements to enable delivery of the proposal via that route.

List of Background Papers:-**Contact Details:-**

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