

Wards Affected:

Wolverton

ITEM 1**DELEGATED DECISION****20 FEBRUARY 2018****PROPOSAL TO EXPAND THE NUMBER OF PLACES AVAILABLE AT THE RADCLIFFE SCHOOL**

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Nolan, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

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Executive Summary:

In order to make significant changes to a maintained school the Council must follow a process prescribed by law. This process is in four stages:

- 1) Publish a statutory proposal
- 2) Formal consultation (four weeks)
- 3) Decision
- 4) Implementation (if appropriate)

Before commencing this statutory process the law provides that there is a strong expectation on schools and the council to carry out an early consultation exercise with interested parties about the principle of the proposal.

Between 25 September 2017 and 24 November 2017 the council carried out an early consultation in relation to a proposal to expand the number of pupil places available in Year 7 at The Radcliffe School by up to 3 forms of entry. The school would eventually be able to cater for an additional 90 pupils per year group in year groups 7 to 11. Additional pupils would be admitted into Year 7 only each year, to increase the capacity of the school gradually.

This paper reports the results of the early consultation process and recommends that the council does not start the statutory process but keep the position under review to gain greater clarity about the need for places, parental preference and the quality of local provision.

1. Recommendation(s)

That the statutory process be not started at this time but kept under review to gain greater clarity about the need for places, parental preference and the quality of local provision.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Following an increase in the demand for additional primary school places, Milton Keynes is now anticipating an increasing year on year demand for secondary school places. The council plans to open a new secondary school to address this demand in September 2020. The school will be sited in Whitehouse, in the Western Expansion Area and will be built to accommodate up to 12 forms of entry (360 children per year group).
- 2.2 Projections show that this new provision may not be sufficient to address the total demand for places however there are a number of significant factors, many of which are beyond the council's control, which will influence what that demand will be (see Annex A). Having enough places is vital, but likewise having too many places is inefficient and impacts adversely on some schools. In that context it is important to consider carefully whether to expand places further, where those places might be and when that should happen.
- 2.3 In order to prepare for the possibility that more places may need to be provided the council has started to look at the options available, starting first with areas of Milton Keynes which projections show will be most likely to require further places. The Radcliffe School, located in Wolverton, provides education for children aged 11 to 19 years. Projections show there are already more children living in the catchment area compared to the number of secondary school places available locally, however current surplus in other areas means that those children can access other local provision. This surplus is, however, expected to decrease.
- 2.4 The council therefore approached the governing board of The Radcliffe School regarding its appetite to expand and explored the viability of expanding the school. The governing board responded that it was happy to explore an expansion proposal and an initial viability study indicated that additional accommodation could be provided on the current site to enable admission of an additional 90 children per year group.
- 2.5 The published admission number for Year 7 is currently 210. If the proposal were to go ahead, the school would have capacity to increase its published admission number up to 300.
- 2.6 An informal consultation was carried out between 25 September 2017 and 24 November 2017, a period of nine weeks including the October half term break, to enable stakeholders to consider the proposal from an education perspective. Notification of the consultation was sent to a range of stakeholders associated with the school and the consultation was available online, alongside an electronic response form, in order to give stakeholders the opportunity to submit views and discuss the proposed change in principle. Two drop-in sessions were also held at the school during the consultation period. A full record of the consultation process is attached at Annex B.
- 2.7 There were 16 responses to the consultation; ten were from parents and staff of The Radcliffe School, three were from parents of children attending St Mary and St Giles CE School, two responses were from local residents and one response was from the Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council. A total of

eight people attended the drop-in sessions. Annex C provides a summary of the key themes of support and concern and MKC officer responses.

- 2.8 The Radcliffe School was re-inspected by Ofsted on 21 September 2017 after a commitment to the early consultation had been made. The report was published on 6 November 2017. The school was judged to be 'Requiring Improvement'. In contrast to the previous inspection, the effectiveness of the 'leadership and management' which was previously judged to be 'good' was now judged to be 'Requiring Improvement'. MKC officers are now working closely with the governing board and senior leadership to address the issues identified as soon as possible.
- 2.9 The Radcliffe School is full in most year groups and is predominantly accessed by children from the local catchment area. Whilst the majority of children living in catchment do list the school as one of their four preferences, indicative admissions data for entry into Year 7 in September 2018 shows that only 47% of local applicants have listed the school as their first preference.
- 2.10 Given the close proximity of the new school in Whitehouse and the current level of parental preference at The Radcliffe School, it is likely that a number of children living in the catchment area for The Radcliffe School will secure places at the new school in September 2020. Whilst this may help to alleviate the pressure for places in this area, the extent to which this occurs cannot be accurately forecast at this time, particularly as the operator of the new school has yet to be determined by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

3. Options

(a) Option 1 – Do nothing

The School Place Planning Forward View projects a need for additional secondary school places within the local area. If no further action is taken, the council could eventually fail to meet its statutory duty to secure sufficient school places.

(b) Option 2 - Publish a statutory proposal to expand the number of places at The Radcliffe School

The council would explore the feasibility of expanding the accommodation and commence a wider statutory consultation. Any decision would be subject to the grant of planning permissions which would be considered separately. If agreed, it is envisaged that this proposal could be implemented in September 2020.

(c) Option 3 – Pause at this time, and keep the position under review to gain greater clarity about the need for places, parental preference and the quality of local provision. This is the recommended option

Given the number and complexity of the variables set out in Annex A, this option would provide an opportunity to review the school's improvement progress, and to better understand the potential impact of the new school due to open in the Western Expansion Area, once the provider is known. This option also supports the feedback provided throughout the consultation.

4. Implications

Policy

4.1 Ensuring sufficient school places within the education system is fundamental to delivering the council's vision that our residents have access to all the services they need and have the support to access opportunities and enjoy a healthy and good quality of life.

4.2 Resources and Risk

(a) Capital

If the expansion project were to go ahead, the total cost for providing the additional accommodation is estimated to be in the region of £9.6m. This would be funded by Basic Need grant provided by the Department for Education and Section 106 funding from local housing development.

(b) Revenue

Schools revenue funding is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and therefore if this proposal were to go ahead, there would be no impact on the council's General Fund.

Y	Capital	N	Revenue	Y	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	Y	Asset Management

4.3 Carbon and Energy Management

Capital works linked to this proposal would be delivered in line with the council's Carbon and Energy Management Policy and support the principles of maximising energy efficiency and carbon reduction in buildings, equipment and vehicles and would use the most sustainable or renewable energy sources.

4.4 Legal

If Options 2 is approved, the next step will be for the council to publish a statutory proposal under The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and 'Making prescribed alterations to maintained schools – Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers April 2016'. The proposal will appear on the council's website, as a notice in the press and outside the school. The notice invites the reader to request a copy of the full proposal. Following publication there is a formal consultation period of four weeks (length prescribed in law) within which comments and representations can be made to the council. Once that representation period expires, the council has two months to determine whether the change should proceed.

If Option 3 is approved, there would be no legal implications.

4.5 Other Implications

N	Equalities / Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Annexes:

Annex A – Summary of the main variables and how they might impact

Annex B – Summary of the findings of the informal consultation period

Annex C – Summary of the key themes of concern and MKC officer responses

Annex D – Informal consultation on proposal to expand The Radcliffe School