

Central Bedfordshire Council

EXECUTIVE - 9 December 2014

New School Places in Stotfold and Leighton Linslade and 2014/15 refresh of the Council's School Organisation Plan and New School Places Programme

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Key Decision

Purpose of this report

1. To report the outcome of the statutory consultation to expand Roecroft Community Lower School, Stotfold and to recommend approval of the proposal and commencement of the capital project. The school is located within the Stotfold and Langford Ward.
2. To seek Executive support for proposed consultations to provide new Lower School places in Leighton Buzzard from September 2015. The schools referred to within the report serve the Leighton Buzzard South Ward.
3. To report to the Executive the implications arising from the 2014/15 refresh of the Council's School Organisation Plan and New School Places programme.
4. To provide the Executive with advice on new area guidelines published by the Education Funding Agency on behalf of the Department for Education for mainstream school buildings and grounds for all age ranges from 4 to 19, and also advice on the Council's School's Sustainable Design Brief.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1(i). **Accept, as outlined in paragraph 17 and in the Legal implications section of this report, that the procedures established by The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, have been complied with in bringing forward the proposal to expand Roecroft Community Lower School, Stotfold**
- (ii). **Confirm that no representations were received in respect of the proposal to expand Roecroft Community Lower School and the statutory notice as set out in Appendix A, issued on the 13 October 2014 under Section 19(1), of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.**
- (iii). **Approve the statutory proposal to expand Roecroft Community Lower School, Stotfold from its current capacity of 300 places to provide a total of 450 places with an implementation date of 1 September 2015 thereby approving the commencement of the project and related expenditure, subject to the grant of planning permission under Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 by 1 July 2015.**
2. **Indicate support for the proposed commencement of consultations by the Governing Bodies of Leedon Community Lower School and Clipstone Brook Community Lower School to permanently expand each school from 1 September 2015.**

Each school will also be invited to prepare a business case which will be subject to approval by the Council's Executive in its decision to approve the proposals in March 2015.
3. **Take account of the implications for the Council's Capital Programme arising from the 2014/15 refresh of the Council's School Organisation Plan and New School Places programme.**
4. **Note the use by the Council of EFA Building Bulletin 103 Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools and the Council's School's Sustainable Design Brief as guidance in creating future design briefs for new school buildings, school refurbishment or conversion projects.**

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

5. A summary of the content of this report has been subject of a presentation to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 11 November 2014. The committee's view of the published final report will be reported to Executive at its meeting.

New Lower School Places in Stotfold

6. On the 19 August 2014 the Council's Executive considered a proposal to approve the commencement by the Council of consultation and the publication of statutory notices for the proposal to expand Roecroft Community Lower School in Stotfold. The proposal was made as a result of significant and sustained demographic growth in the area.
7. The initial consultation period commenced on 8 September 2014 through to 6 October 2014. The Council worked in partnership with the school to undertake the consultation which included public and staff meetings, to ensure that the process followed that set out in Department for Education guidance and regulation.
8. The consultation materials, minutes of the public and staff meetings and copies of all responses, is attached at Appendix A to this report. The initial consultation for the proposal to expand Roecroft Community Lower School received 30 responses in total of which 60% indicated support and 10% were undecided.
9. The main issue recorded as a concern by respondents related to traffic and the potential of an expanded school to increase congestion in and around the immediate area of the school. Throughout the consultation it has been made clear that it is increases in the very local Stotfold demographic that is driving the need for more school places and these local children could walk, although parents may chose to drive as a result of work or other family commitments.
10. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on local councils to promote the use of sustainable transport on the home to school journey and whilst the concerns are acknowledged it is an issue that will be addressed through the design and eventual planning approval process and also by the school itself which will be required to review and refresh its own travel plan to reduce the number of vehicle trips to the school site by encouraging and/or developing alternative travel options and to raise awareness about travel issues such as air pollution and road safety.

11. As a result of the responses received to the initial period of statutory consultation, statutory notices (under Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) were published in line with Department for Education guidance on 13 October 2014 along with evidence of the initial consultation and other information prescribed by regulation inviting further comment or objection to the proposal by the end of the representation period on 10 November 2014.
12. Copies of the Statutory Notice and the prescribed information for the proposal are also attached at Appendix A.
13. No representations were received to the proposal to expand the school.
14. The DfE guidance for decision makers of school organisation proposals contains a number of key factors to be considered along with the views submitted throughout the consultation process, including all objections to and comments on the proposals. The guidance is clear that these factors should not be taken to be exhaustive and all proposals should be considered on their individual merits.
15. The factors outlined in statutory guidance for school organisation proposals include:
 - i. Consideration of consultation and representation period
 - ii. Education standards and diversity of provision
 - iii. Demand
 - iv. School size
 - v. Proposed admission arrangements
 - vi. National curriculum
 - vii. Equal opportunity issues
 - viii. Community cohesion
 - ix. Travel and accessibility
 - x. Capital
 - xi. School premises and playing fields.
16. The School has submitted a business case which has been evaluated by Council officers and is attached at Appendix B. The proposal complies with the Council's Policy Principles for Pupil Place Planning in Schools and the school's ambition is aligned with the Council's Education Vision.
17. Having followed the procedure required by regulation and in consideration of the relevant key issues and factors for decision makers set out in guidance and in the original report to Executive on the 19 August 2014 it is recommended that the proposal to expand Roecroft Community Lower School, as set out in this report and published by Statutory Notice issued on 13 October 2014, be approved with an implementation date of 1 September 2015.

New Lower School Places in Leighton Linlade

18. The south of Leighton Linlade school place planning area includes schools within Leighton Buzzard and Hockliffe, up to Heath and Reach and contains a significant amount of planned housing.
19. 2,500 dwellings are planned within the East of Leighton Linlade extension which will eventually require an additional 4 forms of entry (120 extra pupil places per age group) across all phases of education. This is the equivalent of 2 new 300 place lower schools, 1 new 480 place middle school and the expansion of existing upper school provision by 500 places including sixth form.
20. 1,657 dwellings are forecast to be built out in the Leighton Buzzard & Linlade area within the current 5 year forecast period, including:
 - i. 175 dwellings at the former RAF Stanbridge
 - ii. 142 at Pratts Pit/ Billington Park
 - iii. 461 at Grovebury Farm
 - iv. 165 at Brickyard Quarry
 - v. 75 at Pulford Corner, and
 - vi. 575 dwellings within the land east of Leighton development (of 2,500 dwellings planned in total)
21. In total there are currently approximately 640 school places in each lower school year group in schools within this planning area. From September 2014 the 640 places available in Year R are accommodating a total of approximately 550 children.
22. The number of children who will be of reception age in September 2015 and already living in the area, including additional yield from new housing to be built and occupied in the forthcoming year is forecast to be approximately 700. In September 2016 the size of the Year R cohort is predicted to be approximately 600 and in September 2017 approximately 680.
23. 2015/16 is a very high year in the lower school forecasts for the planning area with a deficit of places of 2 forms of entry (60 places) in that year alone, which although not immediately sustained in 2016/17, is forecast to be required in the long-term as the area continues to see significant housing development mainly to the south of the town.
24. As a result an additional 2 forms of entry of lower school provision is being planned to be provided on a permanent basis, from 2015/16 to cater for children living within the catchments of lower schools to the south of Leighton Linlade as the majority of demographic demand is being driven by pupil yield from new and anticipated housing towards the south east of the town.

25. The additional places required within the lower school age range are proposed to be provided through the expansions of Leedon Lower (300 to 450 places) and Clipstone Brook Lower Schools (225 to 375 places), each along with the new Greenleas Lower School site within walking distance of the new housing developments, both Ofsted Good Schools with sites capable of expansion.
26. Feasibility studies are now underway and each school's Governing Body has indicated an intention, subject to the support of the Council's Executive in December 2014, to commence consultation with its local community and other stakeholders in early January 2015. Ward Councillors have also received a briefing on the Council's forecasts of demographic growth and the need to plan for additional school places in the area.
27. The outcome of those consultations along with a business case submitted by each school will be reported to the Council's Executive in March 2015 for final approval to commence each expansion project, funded through the Council's New School Places Programme.
28. In order to ensure that parents and carers are aware of the pressure on school places in the south of the Leighton Linlade area and of the need to consider and express preferences for more than one local school, the Council's School Admissions Service has produced a targeted Starting School leaflet for parents and carers of children who are due to apply for a Reception place in September.
29. The Land East of Leighton housing development will eventually include two 2 form entry lower schools, or a total of 120 places per year group. The timing of the phased introduction of this new provision will be in line with the rate of development on site, but is expected to be required from September 2017.
30. The need to plan for additional middle school places, required in September 2016 and 2017 in the Leighton Linlade area will also be subject of the report to Executive in March 2015.

2014/15 Refresh of the Council's School Organisation Plan

31. In order to continue to comply with its legal obligations to secure sufficient and suitable school places in Central Bedfordshire the Council's first School Organisation Plan was published in September 2011, setting out the extent of provision and the challenges of local demographic change in the period 2011-16 arising from changes in birth rates, housing developments and proposals by neighbouring authorities.

32. The School Organisation Plan is subject to annual review and refresh with pupil level annual school census data, area health authority statistics on pre-school children, housing occupancy predictions and other influences on the local supply of school places across nine planning areas which subdivide Central Bedfordshire.
33. The plan also includes forecasts of the impact of demographic change on the supply of places in provision for children with special educational needs. This specialist provision is to be subject of further review in 2015/16 to ensure that the Council continues to plan for places and services in the context of the Children and Families Act 2014 and reforms of services for those children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
34. The annual refresh and review of area health authority data also enables the assessment of demand in the pre-school population identifying temporary or more sustained increases in pupil numbers forecast to come through to specific schools.
35. The School Organisation Plan has recently been published for the period 2014-2019 and can be viewed at;
http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/School%20Organisation%20Plan%202014_tcm6-58059.pdf#False
36. The Official Statistical Release issued in July 2014 by the Department for Education provided national pupil projections for the trend in number of pupils in schools. In summary the findings were:
 - i. Births in England have been broadly rising since 2002, leading to increases in primary-aged pupils from 2010. Between 2014 and 2023, pupil numbers in maintained nursery and state-funded primary schools are projected to increase by 9%.
 - ii. The number of pupils aged 5 to 6 years in state-funded primary schools increased at an average annual rate of 2.9% between 2010 and 2014. Between 2015 and 2019 pupils from the same age group are projected to grow at the slower average rate of 0.7% per year.
 - iii. State-funded secondary pupil numbers (aged up to and including 15) started declining in 2005 and are projected to continue to decline until 2015, after which the increases in primary pupil numbers will start to flow through into secondary schools.
 - iv. By 2023, the number of state-funded secondary pupils aged up to and including 15 is projected to be 17% higher compared to 2014.

37. In Central Bedfordshire this national picture of changing demographic feeding into and through the education system is mirrored in the Council's School Organisation Plan, although the impact of growth in the numbers of households is the predominant factor that continues to drive the demand for new school places in a number of specific locations and at all phases across the Council's area.
38. The accuracy of the Council's methodology for calculating pupil yield from new housing developments is critical in demographic forecasting and also in the negotiation and calculation of financial contributions required from developers for new school infrastructure. As a result of the significant housing growth in Central Bedfordshire the Council is currently reviewing its methodology in partnership with two other Local Authorities through market research and general household surveys across new housing developments in each LA area.
39. Housing trajectory figures published in April 2014 by the Council's Development Plans and Process Service suggest an average of approximately 1,800 new homes are expected to be completed each year over the next five years in Central Bedfordshire and the forecasts of growth in pupil numbers in Central Bedfordshire show an increase in numbers each year both as a result of the naturally changing demographics with an increase in pre-school numbers and the impact of the housing growth.
40. Within Central Bedfordshire, as at January 2014, the 133 mainstream schools (excluding nurseries) catered for a pupil population of approximately 38,200 pupils aged 4+ to 18+. Total pupil numbers are expected to rise by approximately 8,800, to 47,000 pupils in 2019:
41. The School Organisation Plan provides further detail on the geographic impact of this forecast growth in pupil numbers and the specific timing of required new school places.
42. The Plan indicates specific pressure on places over the next five year period in each of the school place planning areas in Central Bedfordshire with need over the next two years in Stotfold, Shefford, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill, Biggleswade, Cranfield and Silsoe to be met through new school place projects that have already received Executive approval or will be subject of reports in early 2015.

2014/15 refresh of the Council's New School Places Programme

43. The Council's School Organisation Plan continues to establish a clear overview of the forecast change in pupil numbers over the next five years and provides the basis for the Council's New School Places Programme of capital investment in major projects to provide new school places in the areas of demand where new schools or significant expansions of existing schools are required.

44. Where new school places are required these continue to be commissioned with approval of the Council's Executive and in line with the Council's Policy Principles for Pupil Place Planning in schools.
45. In March 2012 the Council's Executive approved its first New School Places Programme of capital investment for the period 2012/13 – 2016/17 to implement the need for places identified in the School Organisation Plan published in September 2011.
46. As a result new school places have now been provided through the completed expansions of Fairfield Lower School, Greenleas Lower School, Church End Lower School, Holywell Middle School, Alameda Middle School and Vandyke Upper School.
47. The New School Places Programme is itself also reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis utilising the Council's School Organisation Plan as its evidence base. A summary of the latest programme is attached at Appendix C and indicates the specific projects that are likely to be needed to be commissioned over the next five years, including those that have already been approved, many of which are in their construction phase.
48. The Programme is funded by developer contributions and Basic Need grant income from the Department for Education (DfE) although on current planning assumptions the programme also reflects a significant capital contribution that the Council would be required to provide from its own resources of approximately £2.1M in 2015/16, £7.3M in 2016/17, £18.3M in 2017/18 and £11.8M in 2018/19.
49. The Programme includes an assumption that DfE Basic need grant (allocations are currently only known through to 2016/17) will continue at a similar level and that the DfE methodology for calculating basic need grant will remain as it is currently.
50. Since 2009 Central Bedfordshire has seen a period of moderate growth in demographics which, taking account of existing surplus places in the area, has only required the Council to commission a total of 450 new places between 2009 to 2013 with a further 770 places commissioned by the start of the 2014 academic year. The Council has been able to meet all of the capital costs of providing these new school places from external funding but with a reducing balance sheet of unallocated DfE grant.
51. By September 2015 the Council will need to have commissioned a further 1,575 places with a further 865 by September 2016 and on current forecasts a further 3,690 places by September 2017 utilising a range of standardised designs and procurement frameworks to continue to provide cost effective construction solutions.

52. In August 2014 the Local Government Association published the outcome of research undertaken of chief finance officers in the 150 single and upper-tier English Councils in LGA membership. The research indicated that more than three-quarters of Councils who responded did not receive sufficient DfE grant to create the extra school places needed in their area between 2011/12 and 2016/17 with shortfalls funded from borrowing or from other building programmes.
53. The programme may be subject to further amendment in 2015 when it is next reviewed, housing trajectories may change and delay schemes currently partially funded by basic need, releasing grant to offset some of the expenditure currently forecast to fall to the LA.

Design Standards

54. Until April 2014 the vast majority of maintained primary and secondary schools in England were designed and built to the standards established by the non-statutory DfE Building Bulletin briefing standards 99 (BB 99) for Primary Schools and Building Bulletin 98 (BB 98) for Secondary Schools introduced in 2004. In essence the publications gave minimum sizes, types and number of spaces that should be provided in maintained schools.
55. In Central Bedfordshire these standards were adapted to provide specific space and suitability standards for each phase in our three tier education system. These local standards were used to brief the design of new school buildings, school refurbishment or conversion projects in Central Bedfordshire. They also supported negotiations with developers which are currently based on the per pupil cost of new provision, based upon the appropriate Building Bulletin standards, which is the regulatory guidance.
56. Suitability surveys have also previously been conducted of all of our schools using the locally adapted standards to determine how well the existing premises meet the needs of pupils, teachers and other users. The surveys and resulting assessments have concentrated mainly on the numbers and characteristics of each type of internal and external space. While there is no specific focus of Central Government grant to address these issues in isolation, the suitability of our current schools is a key input to the process of defining a brief for feasibility studies to be undertaken where significant capital investment is planned, especially for expansion.
57. In April 2014 the Education Funding Agency published Building Bulletin 103 (BB 103) area guidelines for school buildings and sites for all age ranges from 3 to 19. The guidance covers all state schools, including mainstream academies and free schools, except special schools and alternative provision.

58. BB 103 has superseded the previous area guidelines and recommends reduced minimum internal and external areas based on typical curriculum delivery and staffing, but allowing for the individual priorities of schools to be accommodated and also takes account of schools' duty to offer universal infant free school meals from September 2014.
59. The minimum gross area now recommended for buildings, which is currently used to calculate funding for many new or replacement school projects, averages 15% lower than that recommended in BB98 (Secondary) and around 6% lower than BB99 (Primary).
60. Although the guidance is clear that the new standards should always be applied flexibly in light of the particular circumstances of a school it is clear that external funding allocations and negotiations will reflect the new areas and the Council must have due regard to them when creating design briefs for new school buildings, school refurbishment or conversion projects in Central Bedfordshire.
61. BB 103 can be viewed at;
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/324056/BB103_Area_Guidelines_for_Mainstream_Schools_COORRECTED_25_06_14.pdf
62. The development of new educational infrastructure will also continue to be supported by Central Bedfordshire's Schools Sustainable Design Brief, recently refreshed to ensure that the issue of sustainability continues to be central to and addressed within all major capital projects in the schools' estate, both new build and major refurbishment.
63. The new brief also now takes into account a number of changes to national and local policy, development of technologies (particularly in cost to deploy) and a better understanding of what a major school new build or refurbishment project needs to be able to deliver to ensure sustainability issues are properly and appropriately addressed.
64. In addition to this, the Council's emerging Development Strategy places a requirement on all non residential buildings over 1,000m² to aspire to be built to Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method for buildings (BREEAM) Excellent or an equivalent standard.
65. The new brief recognises that this might not always be financially or logistically possible but seeks to incorporate and promote the best of the ideals seen in a BREEAM excellent building to ensure new school buildings and refurbishments are carried out to an equivalent standard that embeds the core principles of sustainability and delivers schools that are efficient, vibrant and truly sustainable buildings.

66. The brief now includes a sustainability checklist to ensure and better demonstrate how these issues have been considered within the design process and to provide greater transparency with regards to why various design decisions are made.
67. Central Bedfordshire's School's Sustainable Design Brief can be viewed at:
http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/SDB240914_tcm6-59434.pdf#False

Reasons for decision

68. Recommendations 1 and 2 to ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations to provide sufficient school places and also to meet the legal requirements placed on the Council by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 regarding proposals to expand maintained schools.
69. Commitment to expenditure and final approval of the proposals set out in recommendation 2 will be determined by the Council's Executive in March 2015, informed by the outcome of the consultation exercises undertaken by each Governing Body and the business cases which are being prepared by each School.
70. Recommendation 4 to ensure that the Council can continue to develop design briefs for for new school buildings, school refurbishment or conversion projects.

Council Priorities

71. The report supports Central Bedfordshire's Medium Term Plan: Delivering your priorities – Our Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012-2016 and the specific priority of Improved Educational Attainment.

Legal Implications

72. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on Councils to secure sufficient and suitable school places to provide for 5 – 16 year old statutory aged children in its area. S14A of the Education Act 1996 imposes a duty to consider parental representations about the exercise by local authorities of their functions in relation to the provision of primary and secondary education.
73. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives Councils a strategic role as commissioners, but not providers, of school places to promote parental choice, diversity, high standards, the fulfilment of every child's educational potential and fair access to educational opportunity.

74. The main legislation governing school organisation is found in sections 7-32 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Mainstream Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
75. The relevant officers have confirmed that the Council has complied with the legal process with regard to the proposals set out in this report and the information supplied supports this position.
76. New DfE guidance for proposers and decision makers regarding school organisation in maintained schools was published in January 2014 by the Department of Education to support the new School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Mainstream Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
77. This guidance can be viewed at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>
78. The Council is able to propose the expansion of maintained schools and is also decision maker for those proposals, one of which has been subject of previous consultations as set out in this report with recommendations to now approve the proposed expansion of Roecroft Community Lower School.
79. In considering the proposal the decision maker must consider any comments made during consultation and may decide to reject, approve, approve with modifications or conditions (e.g. the implementation date), having consulted the LA and/or governing body (as appropriate) or approve with or without modification, subject to certain prescribed events (such as the granting of planning permission) being met. In any case, the reasons for the final decisions must be carefully recorded indicating the main factors considered and the reasons for the decision.
80. A list of the factors which must be considered by the decision maker can be found at paragraph 15 above. A copy of the final decision must be published on the website where the original proposal was published and forwarded to a range of bodies specified in the DfE Guidance referred to in paragraph 76 above.
81. Annex B to that guidance provides further information on the list of factors mentioned above, which must be taken into account.

82. If the Council were to fail to decide this proposal within 2 months of the end of the representation period it must forward the proposal, and any received representations, to the schools adjudicator for decision. Certain religious bodies and the governors and trustees of certain schools may appeal against a decision made by the Local Authority as decision maker, within four weeks of the decision being made.
83. The Local Authority must send the proposal, representations and its reasons for decision to the Schools Adjudicator for final determination. Once proposals have been implemented, the Local Authority must inform the Secretary of State.
84. As a consequence of changes introduced by the new 2013 regulations and guidance Governing Bodies are now able to propose to make a range of changes to their schools without following a statutory process, this includes expansion. It is therefore planned that these new powers are used by the Governing Bodies of Leedon Community Lower School and Clipstone Brook Community Lower School to propose permanent expansion.
85. The Governing Body are required to adhere to the usual principles of public law: they must act rationally; they must take into account all relevant considerations; and they must follow a fair procedure. Therefore, the Governing Body must liaise with the Local Authority and undertake consultation with parents and other interested persons on their proposed change and ensure that it has secured capital funding and any consents necessary for making changes to land and buildings, including Planning consents before the changes can be implemented. Once the changes have been implemented, the Governing Body must inform the Secretary of State.

Financial Implications

86. As stated previously in the report the New School Places Programme is funded by developer contributions and Basic Need grant income from the Department for Education (DfE) although on current planning assumptions the programme also reflects a significant capital contribution that the Council would be required to provide from its own resources of approximately £2.1M in 2015/16, £7.3M in 2016/17, £18.3M in 2017/18 and £11.8M in 2018/19.
87. The revenue implications of the forecast expenditure (MRP and Interest) based on the current MTFP assumptions and assuming that spend will occur evenly in each year is £7,875 in 2015/16, £113,875 in 2016/17, £466,250 in 2017/18 and £1,142,000 in 2018/19.
88. The Council will continue to ensure that all opportunities are taken to increase income and to seek alternative funding sources for new build and expansions of existing school buildings.

89. The figures in this programme provide an update to those within the Council's current capital programme 2014/15 to 2017/18, and its Medium Term Financial Plan approved by Council in February 2014 which as a result of the lead in time of the corporate financial planning process and resulting Executive report was based on the annual refresh of the Council's School Organisation Plan and New School Places Programme in September 2013, which used the latest validated data available for forecasting at that point, which was from early 2012.
90. Use of the latest data has enabled confirmation of a number of localised growth forecasts that can now be seen to be sustained, rather than temporary increases in demographic. This requirement for further permanent provision has led to the addition of specific projects to the Council's New school Places programme that now fall within the net funded phase of the programme.
91. The day to day running costs of school provision is met through revenue funding which is made available to each school as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant and is based primarily on the numbers of pupils attending and will increase accordingly in an expanded school.
92. Where necessary and where Schools and Academies are undertaking significant expansion on commission from the Council additional revenue support for relevant costs can be accessed on application through the Growth Fund established by the Schools Forum.
93. Capital expenditure within the New School Places Programme is subject to the Council's Code of Financial Governance. Expenditure to commission feasibility studies and design work required for projects within this rolling programme has been approved by the Executive Member for Children's Services, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services as required by the Council's constitution.

Equalities Implications

94. The consultation and decision making process set out in regulation for proposals to expand Academies and Council maintained schools requires an evaluation on a project by project basis of any equalities and human rights issues that might arise.
95. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to foster good relations in respect of the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

96. This statutory duty includes requirements to:
- i. Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - ii. Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
 - iii. Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
97. As decision maker for the proposal relating to Roecroft Community Lower School the Council has considered that there are no race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the change being proposed.

Appendices

The following Appendices are attached

Appendix A –Roecroft Community Lower School, consultation materials, responses, Statutory Notice.

Appendix B - Roecroft Community Lower School expansion business case

Appendix C – 2014/15 refresh summary of Central Bedfordshire’s New School Places Programme