

Committee: **Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness**

Date: **24 March 2014**

Title of the report: **Eastbourne Primary Places Alternative Options**

By: **Acting Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To provide an update on the alternative options in Eastbourne for providing primary places**

Recommendation: Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) **Reverse the decision taken on 9 December 2013 to expand St Andrew's CE Infant School and Tollgate Community Junior School: the schools will remain at their existing size;**
 - 2) **Agree to progress the establishment of a new two form entry primary school on the Cavendish School site to open by September 2015; and**
 - 3) **Agree that, subject to the outcome of the options appraisal on the Ratton School Academy Trust site, this option is also progressed, possibly linked to the reorganisation of existing primary places in the town.**
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1. Financial appraisal:

1.1 Revenue: the proposal will not affect the Schools Funding Formula.

1.2 Capital: Based on the initial options appraisal we believe the estimated capital cost would be in the region of £7-8million. A detailed feasibility study will provide more accurate costings. The schools' basic need capital allocation was agreed as part of the Council's three year capital programme for 2015/16 – 2017/18 in February 2014; this together with funding already allocated for the previously agreed expansion at St Andrews CE Infant School and Tollgate Junior Community School and other resources secured means that the project is fully funded. There is also the possibility that additional capital funding could be secured through the Free School application process.

2. Background information:

2.1 On 9 December 2013 the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness approved the proposal to permanently enlarge St Andrew's CE Infant School and Tollgate Community Junior School from September 2016 to provide an additional 210 primary places (ages 4-11) in the central south part of Eastbourne.

2.2 At the Lead Member meeting there was strong representation from governors at St Andrew's CE Infant School who expressed concern at the proposal. The Council has been working with both schools over the last couple of years to find appropriate design solutions, but there were particular limitations with regard to the St Andrew's solution that the capital resources identified for the project could not address. To reflect these concerns, the Lead Member's approval was conditional upon alternative options for providing primary places in Eastbourne being investigated. It was agreed that a report on the alternative options should be presented at a future Lead Member meeting.

2.3 Providing additional primary school places in Eastbourne has always presented a challenge; a wide ranging options study undertaken in 2009/10 identified that beyond the former Dental Practice Board site (now Gildredge House Free School) there was no appropriate land available for a new primary school and many of the existing primary school sites provide limited scope for expansion. However recent changes to the national policy on school organisation including the academy agenda and the possibility of applying to open Free Schools means that a number of new options are now available.

2.4 Following the Lead Member meeting on 9 December 2013 two alternative options have been further investigated. These are: the provision of primary places through the establishment of a new two form entry primary school on the Cavendish School site, and the provision of primary places through the establishment of a new primary school on the Ratton School Academy Trust site.

2.5 An initial options appraisal has been conducted on the provision of a new two form entry primary school on the Cavendish school site and this concluded that a new primary school could be provided on the site within the capital budget available. The following risks have been highlighted that will need to be addressed through the design and planning process:

- Any proposal to develop the Cavendish site is likely to result in a loss of playing field space which will be at odds with the remit of Sport England. This risk will need to be managed by early negotiations with Sport England and improving facilities both on site and by making better use of the playing fields on Kings Drive which form part of the school's existing provision;
- Consideration needs to be given to the position of the new primary school on the site and the impact on traffic and congestion on surrounding roads. This risk could be managed through positioning the school on the site to allow for a different access point to the existing secondary school entrance.

2.6 The Headteacher and governors at Cavendish School have indicated their support of the proposal to establish a new school on their site. The new school could be established in two ways: either through Cavendish applying to open a primary Free School on their site or through a consultation to extend the school's age range. Cavendish have confirmed that they would be prepared to pursue an application to open a Free School in the first instance; with the new school opening in September 2015.

2.7 The options appraisal for a new primary school on Ratton's site is currently underway. The findings of the appraisal are due to be reported at the end of April. The Acting Headteacher and governors of Ratton School Academy Trust have indicated that they too are supportive of the proposal. This proposal could potentially be linked to a wider reorganisation of primary places in the town which would provide additional places and make better use of existing sites.

2.8 The 'School Organisation and Place Planning in East Sussex 2013/14' strategic plan indicates that the Council is forecasting a shortfall of six forms of entry across the town. The expansions at St Andrew's CE Infant school and Tollgate Community Junior school would have provided an additional one form of entry (210 places). Providing a primary school on the Cavendish School site would provide an additional two forms of entry (420 places) which will go further to providing the additional places required in the town.

2.9 Pupil pressures for secondary schools are not expected in Eastbourne until the early part of the next decade. At its peak it is forecast that an additional five forms of entry may be required. This pressure could be met by the provision of new secondary places on land owned by the Council and identified as suitable for a secondary school, or through the expansion of existing schools.

3. Conclusion and reason for recommendation:

3.1 In conclusion, the Council has a statutory duty to ensure the provision of sufficient school places in Eastbourne to meet demand in the foreseeable future. For this reason the Lead Member is recommended to:

- Reverse the decision taken on 9 December 2013 to expand St Andrew's CE Infant School and Tollgate Community Junior School. The schools will remain at their existing size.
- Agree to progress the establishment of a new two form entry primary school on the Cavendish School site to open by September 2015.
- Agree that, subject to the outcome of the options appraisal on the Ratton School Academy Trust site, this option is also progressed, possibly linked to the reorganisation of existing primary places in the town.

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Local Members: Councillors Belsey, Tutt, Ungar and Wallis