

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	19 th May 2005
Subject:	Proposal for a Hindu primary school
Responsible Officer:	Executive Director (People First)
Contact Officer:	Geoff Wingrove, Director of Strategy, People First
Portfolio Holder:	Education and Lifelong Learning
Key Decision:	Yes
Status:	Public

Section 1: Summary

Cabinet is asked to decide whether or not to submit a bid to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for Targeted Capital Fund (TCF) allocations in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to establish an LEA maintained voluntary aided Hindu primary school in Harrow.

The deadline set by DfES to receive bids is 27 May 2005. DfES will announce its decision about TCF allocations in September 2005. If a bid is successful statutory processes would need to be followed, including full consultations and planning consents. The earliest a new school could be opened is likely to be September 2007, and could be September 2008 if new build is involved.

Two separate submissions to establish a Hindu primary school in Harrow have been received from Hindu faith organisations. These submissions have been evaluated by officers against educational criteria for Members to consider.

From the outcome of the evaluation it is apparent that both submissions have merit. Both submissions have features in their favour, and both have some differences. Given this position from the evaluation, it is not considered that one bid outweighs the other sufficiently to enable a definitive recommendation to be made. However, the I-Foundation submission overall has more detail at this stage, whilst the Sai submission can evidence more established working relationships within the local Harrow community. Therefore decision is required as stated below.

Decision Required

1. Whether or not to submit a bid for TCF allocations in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to establish a VA Hindu primary school in Harrow.
2. If it is decided to submit a bid, which of the two submissions that have been received should form the basis of the bid.

Reason for report

The Government recently announced a very tight timescale for applications for additional one off capital funding for school improvement works. In addition it also made it possible for promoters of faith schools to make a case for a bid to be made to create a new voluntary aided school.

Initially the deadline for applications was November 2005. However, in February the deadline was brought forward by the Government to April 2005. The arrangements were also changed so that no further applications could be made for two years. Following representations made about the deadline it has been extended to 27 May 2005 to give councils a little more time.

Harrow has voluntary aided faith schools as a well-established part of its school system. Harrow has the largest percentage Hindu population in its area of any local authority in the country (20% 2001 Census). There is currently no voluntary aided Hindu school in Harrow or the surrounding area. (There are in fact none nationally) Hindu faith organisations have been in informal contact with the Council since 2003 exploring the possibility of such provision, but were unable to proceed to any formal position due to difficulties in identifying a site. The promoters are representing a strong wish from a large section of the community to establish a Hindu school in Harrow.

Benefits

1. Would meet the aspirations of a large community in Harrow
2. Effects would be incremental on existing provision as admissions would be on a year by year basis
3. Would balance the diverse needs of Harrow's faith community for educational provision

4. Would give Harrow a national profile
5. May attract pupils who go out borough or attend independent schools

Cost of Proposals

The Targeted Capital Fund scheme includes a new section for the 2005/06 bidding round relating to new VA schools. The guidance and pro formas for this were received in February/March from the DfES. Local Authorities can put forward new proposals for a VA school with a limit of £10m, which could be raised in particular circumstances. This could include the purchase of land. The 90%/10% DfES/Governor liability has also been revised with the DfES providing up to 100% funding in future. Only one new VA school bid may be made.

The revenue funding for the new school would be contained within the Schools Budget. The Schools Budget is effectively set by the Government through the current passporting requirements. If the new school draws its pupils from within the existing Harrow schools' population then the majority of the revenue funding for the new school would be redistributed from other Harrow schools. If the new school draws its pupils from outside of the existing Harrow schools' population then the majority of the funding would be provided by an increase in the Schools Budget. Currently however this increase in funding would be a year behind the financial year in which costs are incurred. The Government is currently consulting on changes to the funding arrangements for schools from 2006/2007 and this may impact on the above.

Risks

1. Will be Harrow provision in the main and will therefore draw pupils from existing provision over a period of time
2. This will add further pressure to achieving the Council's target of 10% surplus capacity across the primary school sector
3. Neither site is located in a community sense close to the main Hindu populations
4. May adversely affect linked school admissions policy

Implications if recommendations rejected

1. Harrow's faith school provision would not reflect the high level of Hindus in Harrow's population
2. There would not be additional surplus primary school capacity

Section 2: Report

Capital funding for school premises is made available from DfES by needs-related formulae. However, bids for additional capital funding can also be made by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) under the Targeted Capital Fund (TCF). Harrow has made TCF bids for community and VA school improvement works over the last two years and will do so again this year.

In February 2005 the Government announced the arrangements for TCF applications for the two years 2006-07 and 2007-08, and the associated guidance was issued in the middle of March. These arrangements include scope for promoters of voluntary aided schools to bid, via the LEA, for the creation of a new maintained school where there is clear local demand. Each LEA may submit only one such bid. This does not affect the other school improvement bids, which the LEA can make under this programme. It will not be possible to bid for TCF monies again for at least another two years. The deadline for submissions to the TCF has been set at 27 May. The Government will announce its decision about TCF allocations in September 2005.

Two separate submissions in their final form were received by the Council at the end of April from promoters who wish to establish a voluntary aided LEA maintained Hindu primary school in Harrow with the support of TCF monies. These submissions are independent of each other. The submissions make separate cases, and involve different sites to locate the new school. The two promoters are Sai and I-Foundation. Sai has been running the Sai Saturday school in Harrow for ten years. The I-Foundation is working in affiliation with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which has been running a private Hindu school in Hertfordshire over an equally long period.

Both promoters have held discussions with Council officers to explore their ideas and to help them understand the education context in Harrow. These discussions began on an exploratory basis in 2003, and more detailed discussions have occurred very recently once it was clear they intended to make submissions to the Council with a view to a TCF bid. The submissions have

been informed by these discussions, and both promoters are keen to work collaboratively with stakeholders to implement their proposals. As a result the key features of their submissions are similar, and to some degree take account of the educational needs and challenges in Harrow.

Both submissions are to establish a one form of entry voluntary aided Hindu primary school. The school would be co-educational, and would include a Nursery. Both promoters would admit pupils on a year by year incremental basis, so that the school would not be full for a period of up to eight years. Their admissions policy would not be area specific, and their catchment area would extend beyond Harrow.

The promoters have identified possible sites to locate a school. These can only be indicative at this stage because the information is commercially sensitive. The sites identified are in Pinner and in Harrow Weald. Initial indications are that both sites would meet DfES requirements for a one form of entry school, though there are planning issues in respect of both that would need to be considered fully.

The Council's approach to the proposals of the promoter organisations has been even-handed. They have both had meetings with officers, and have been advised where to direct their enquiries while finalising their submissions. A deadline was set for the final submissions to be received. They were advised that their submissions would be evaluated against educational criteria, which were developed and sent to them prior to the deadline.

Educational Criteria

Fifteen educational criteria have been identified to enable an evaluation of the two submissions. These criteria were set by Harrow Council before the final submissions were received, and were sent to the two promoter organisations for their information three days before the deadline for their submissions to be received.

The educational criteria are:

- i.** Educational ethos and vision within the context of Harrow's education service
- ii.** Extent, balance and quality of the educational programme
- iii.** Evidence of emphasis on the quality of the teaching and learning
- iv.** SEN policy
- v.** Pastoral organisation
- vi.** Transitional arrangements to Secondary schools
- vii.** Evidence of level of faith support and sustainability of that support
- viii.** Proposals for, and evidence of, community engagement
- ix.** Admissions policy within the context of Harrow education service
- x.** Impact on current provision

- xi.** Financial arrangements
- xii.** Governance
- xiii.** Site proposals from an educational perspective
- xiv.** Green travel arrangements
- xv.** Proposals for extra mural activities such as sport, drama etc

Evaluation process and outcome summary

Officers with the relevant expertise have evaluated the submissions against each of the fifteen educational criteria. Their evaluation is contained in Annexe A.

The format of this Evaluation document takes each of the educational criteria in turn. Commentary on each submission is given in relation to the criteria, and comparative comments are made as relevant to the criteria.

Key points arising from this evaluation include:

The two submissions are well presented and convey interesting and coherent proposals for a Hindu primary school in Harrow. The I-Foundation submission feels more professional and detailed, though much of the documentation is the detail of their research. The Sai submission feels like an application to extend their supplementary school to a full voluntary aided school provision, and lacks as much detail in a number of areas at this stage.

The educational ethos and vision of both submissions are strong and appropriate. The I-Foundation submission provides much detail about curriculum, and the curriculum approach is sound if lacking in appreciation of recent curriculum development initiatives in the primary phase. The curriculum approach described by Sai is sound, though lacking detail that would be required to evaluate it further at this stage. Both submissions recognise the importance of good quality teaching and learning. The I-Foundation describes some innovative approaches to teaching. The Sai submission describes the teaching frameworks it would adopt, but does not set out much detail.

Overall the Sai proposal provides a more comprehensive description of how children with special educational needs will be catered for within the context of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, DfES 2001, and related legislation and guidance.

Pastoral organisation and transitional arrangements are adequately covered by both submissions. Both submissions evidence a high level of sustainable faith support, and Sai are able to evidence faith support for their supplementary school within Harrow. Both submissions state their intention to engage with the local community, and Sai are able to evidence that the supplementary school has shown that it can achieve parts of their objective within Harrow.

The admissions policies are similar to those of other VA schools in Harrow, and will need further work and consultation if a school is established. The approach of both submissions should minimise the impact on current provision.

I-Foundation will begin analysis and consultation for the possible provision of a Hindu secondary school if this will help improve local education standards and provision. The Sai submission does not indicate such intentions. If a Hindu secondary school was to be established, it is unlikely this would be developed within Harrow given the land constraints that apply.

Both sites will have planning issues that need to be addressed. The I-Foundation submission about its provisional site is detailed, and quotes government guidance fully. The Sai submission does not draw out as fully the guidance provided by DfES. Both submissions make assumptions about green travel arrangements. The I-Foundation submission proposes high use of private buses. The Sai submission lists the options open to them for consideration.

Other processes

An information letter has been sent to all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors as key stakeholders. This letter enables comments to be made by them at this early stage if they wish to do so. Response has been received from the High School Heads meeting stating that they will make their opinions known once it is clear how the proposed school fits into the School Organisation Plan and overall consultative process.

If a bid is submitted, and the application is accepted by DfES, there will be a range of further comprehensive processes to be followed. These processes will include planning consents for the site, consultation with all stakeholders, green travel planning, etc

Financial Implications of a new school in Harrow

The Government is currently consulting on changes to education funding arrangements for 2006/2007 onwards. The outcome of this consultation may impact on the financial implications described below.

The Individual Schools Budget (ISB) is the total budget available within the Schools Budget to be distributed amongst the schools in Harrow in accordance with the school funding formula. The majority of the funding formula 75% is distributed to schools based upon age weighted pupil units (AWPU). Similarly other funding for Additional Educational Needs, costed statements and free school meals is distributed based upon pupil characteristics. Any new school in Harrow will receive a share of this funding based upon the numbers and characteristics of its pupils. If the new school draws its pupils from within

Harrow's current school population then this funding will be redistributed from existing schools to the new school.

There are however other formula factors which are based upon the floor area and overall size of the school which any new school will be entitled to and which will need to be funded from within the overall ISB. A school of 1,220msq will receive approx £51k for premises related costs, £17.5k for fixed costs, £29k small school allowance and £5k for other allowances. In addition £20k is payable through the formula for expanding schools. This totals £122.5k. This funding will need to be found from within the overall funding available and will have a small redistributive effect on other schools. Given that the ISB for 2005/2006 is £98.24m the impact on other schools will be less than 0.125%.

If the new school draws its pupils from outside of the Borough or from private and independent schools then Harrow's share of the school and LEA formula spending shares (FSS) will be adjusted accordingly. The adjustment however does not take effect until the following financial year so pupils counted at January 2005 are not reflected in the funding until 2006/2007 and so on. These arrangements are being reviewed as part of the consultation mentioned above.

School provision

Harrow currently has a surplus of places in its primary school provision. Over the period of the School Organisation Plan 2003-2006, data on a Borough-wide basis indicates that there is a projected surplus of school provision within the primary sector of between 12% to 16% for years Reception to Year 7. This headline figure masks variations in the Planning Areas, which range from 2.4% to 24% over the life of the Plan. The Council's target is to maintain a surplus capacity of places across all sectors of schools at 10%. The Council is required to provide annually details to the DfES about how it is addressing surplus capacity in general, and in particular in those schools that have a surplus of over 25%.

Annexe B shows the position using currently available pupil number projections. There is not a huge difference from last year, though the numbers are a little higher (and thus the surplus is a little lower). Overall the surplus is projected to fall over the next 5 years, though a significant surplus capacity issue will remain in the south east of the borough. There is also a potentially significant deficit developing in the central area by 2010.

The sites proposed in the two submissions are towards the north and the west of the borough. These locations are away from the main concentrations of the Harrow population of Indian ethnic origin. Annexe B contains data that gives a broad indication of population concentration to illustrate the position.

A reasonable prediction about where a new Hindu primary school may draw its pupils from could expect a proportion of anything up to 25% of pupils coming

from outside the borough. Thus 75% of pupils may come from within the borough. However, it should be remembered that quite a few of these Harrow students are likely to come from independent schools and that both proposals are for one form of entry schools. Inevitably there will be some impact on current primary school rolls. Should the impact fall on a few schools in particular, and should these schools be experiencing surplus capacity, the impact for individual schools could be significant. The incremental approach to filling a new school being proposed by both promoters could reduce any impact on individual schools, and this impact would need to be carefully monitored.

Site ownership

Detailed information about the two sites is commercially sensitive.

The site proposed by I-Foundation contains a business. The site and business are currently owned by the same private individual. I-Foundation has agreed with the owner in principle a sale of the freehold and business interest at an agreed price. If Harrow LEA decide to back this bid, I-Foundation will seek to purchase an option on the site so as to ensure that if DfES and subsequent SOC permission is granted, the site is secured.

The site proposed by the Sai School is owned by a large commercial organisation. Representatives of the Sai School have held discussions with the company's property subsidiary and a written statement of interest has been registered with them. The Sai School interest has been welcomed by the company, but they have indicated that they will be seeking the full commercial value of the property when it is sold. This value is reflected in the cost estimates submitted to the Council. The matter has been discussed with DfES officials who have assured Sai representatives that the commercial value will be acknowledged in the grant funding awarded for the project. The Sai School are therefore fully confident that this site will be acquired for development as the new primary school.

Legal Implications

If funding is secured, the promoters of a new school must issue statutory notices. The School Organisation Committee will then determine whether to allow the proposal, having considered both Harrow's School Organisation Plan, and any responses to the statutory notices. If the Committee cannot agree or refuses the proposal, the Committee must, at the promoter's request, refer the proposal to the independent School Adjudicator.

Equalities Impact

Faith schools do not reflect the significant faith communities in Harrow. There are six Roman Catholic, one Jewish and two Church of England primary schools

currently in Harrow, and two Roman Catholic high schools and a Roman Catholic sixth form college. There is no VA Hindu school in Harrow or the surrounding area.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Annexe A Evaluation of the submissions for a Hindu primary school.

Annexe B School provision and demographic data.

The following are on deposit in the Group Offices.

- The full submissions from the two promoters
- Map showing site locations
- Comments received from schools and colleges and individuals

Summaries of the two submissions can be viewed on the Harrow Council website www.harrow.gov.uk/schoolsandcolleges

More information about the Targeted Capital Fund can be found at www.teachernet.gov.uk

There are no other background papers.