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| Meeting: | Cabinet |
| Date: | 4 th October 2006 |
| Subject: | Voluntary Aided Hindu Primary School: Use of William Ellis Playing Fields |
| Responsible Officer: | Graham Jones Director of Planning Services |
| Contact Officer: | Graham Jones |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Marilyn Ashton Planning, Housing & Property People First |
| Key Decision: | Yes |
| Status: | Public |

Section 1: Summary

Members will recall that this report was submitted to Cabinet on the 15th September, when it was noted as no decision could be made as negotiations with the I Foundation the promoters of the Hindu School, had not been resolved. Progress has been made subsequently which is set out in the report in part 2 of the agenda. Members are therefore requested to reconsider the report.

Earlier this year the I-Foundation, promoter of the Hindu School, undertook a consultation in accordance with education procedures regarding providing a voluntary aided Hindu primary school at Pinner Park Farm. Following the consultation and subsequent discussions with the Council, the Pinner Park Farm option is no longer being pursued and the William Ellis Playing Fields, Camrose Avenue, Edgware, has been identified as an alternative. To accommodate the

delay arising from a change in location, the I-Foundation has had the timetable for publishing its statutory notices extended until the end of September. Agreement by Cabinet to the in principle use of the William Ellis site will enable the proposal to be progressed.

Decision Required

Cabinet recommended to agree to:

1. The use of approx 5.5 acres of the William Ellis Playing Fields in principle for the development of a Voluntary Aided Hindu Primary School.
2. Subject to 1. above, to negotiate a lease with Belmont Football Club for the remaining approx 5.5 acres, on terms to be agreed.

Reason for report

To facilitate the development of a Hindu School in the Borough.

Benefits

To proceed with the I-Foundation proposals and utilise the targeted funding allocation from the Department of Education and Skills (DFES) within the required timescale.

To provide the Belmont Football Club with long term security and enhanced facilities as part of a comprehensive strategy for the William Ellis site.

Cost of Proposals

The capital costs of the school will be met by the promoter utilising the DFES grant.

Revenue funding for the new school will be contained within the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is set by Government. Whether and how much this affects the overall schools budget will depend upon where the pupils are drawn from, i.e. whether they come from within or outside the existing schools population.

The costs of enhancing the Belmont Football Club facilities would be funded from the capital receipt from the sale to the I-Foundation of their site. The costs of officer time in negotiating and agreeing the sale of the site and the improvements to Belmont FC will also be covered by the sale. If the scheme does not proceed, some or all of these costs may prove abortive. Any abortive costs incurred will

have to be managed within existing departmental budgets.

Negotiations for the sale of the land to the I Foundation have yet to be resolved. The current position is set out in a Part 2 report.

Risks

1. The new school will draw pupils from existing provision over a period of time and the full impact will not be known for some time.
2. This will add further pressure to achieving the Council's target of 10% surplus capacity across the primary school sector. However, the school will be one form of entry and will fill on an incremental year-by-year basis, so this pressure will be kept to a minimum.
3. The new school may have an impact on the linked school admissions policy to high school.
4. Any potential health and safety risks will be considered at the appropriate time.
5. Any site for the new school will be subject to site acquisition negotiations and the need for planning consents. If these are unsuccessful, or there are delays, this could jeopardise the DFES funding allocation.

Implications if recommendations rejected

Negotiations for the school cannot proceed.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

Since the outcome of consultation on the location of the School at Pinner Park Farm, the I-Foundation and officers have been investigating alternatives, and in particular the possibility of William Ellis Playing Fields.

The Playing Fields total 11 acres and are currently occupied by Belmont FC on a 'tenancy at will' basis. This means that the Council can terminate their occupancy at any time. Belmont FC had previously approached the Council, looking for a more secure situation. The division of the site between the school and Belmont offers the opportunity for both the school and the Football Club to achieve their objectives. Discussions with the

Football Club have proved positive, on the basis that their changing and clubhouse facilities are rebuilt, they have dedicated off-street parking, and the pitches are improved.

They would also receive a long term lease for their site which would give them security of tenure and the basis for future business planning and grant applications. Ideally they would like to retain more of the site for their own use, but accept that what is on offer provides the basis for their long term future.

The school could be accommodated satisfactorily within the 5.5 acres at the northern end of the site, with a reasonable buffer between the adjoining houses and the school which could also have its own junior football pitch and parking. Progress would be dependent upon securing planning permission.

Negotiations for the sale of the school site to the I-Foundation by the Council are continuing.

2.2 Options considered

The Pinner park farm option has been considered and discounted. The I Foundation have considered other sites but none which offer realistic prospects for development..

2.3 Consultation

The I Foundation has carried out a statutory consultation process as required by Education legislation for developing at Pinner Park Farm, and this proposal is in part a result of that exercise. Officers have consulted both the I Foundation and Belmont Football Club in preparing this report.

2.4 Financial Implications

The capital costs of the school will be met by the promoter utilising the DFES grant.

Revenue funding for the new school will be contained within the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is set by Government. Whether and how much this affects the overall schools budget will depend upon where the pupils are drawn from, i.e. whether they come from within or outside the existing schools population.

A capital receipt is expected from the sale of the proposed site to I-Foundation .This will cover the costs of improvements to Belmont Football Club, including enhancing the Belmont Football Club facilities, as well associated costs of officer time in negotiating and agreeing the sale of the site.

If the scheme does not proceed, some or all of these costs may prove abortive. Any abortive costs incurred will be managed within existing departmental budgets.

Negotiations for the sale of the land to the I Foundation have yet to be resolved. The cost and financial implications will have to be explained in greater detail in a further Part 2 report, as the scheme progresses.

2.5 Legal Implications

2.5.1 The Council has the power to dispose this site under section 123 Local Government Act 1973 subject to obtaining the best consideration reasonably obtainable.

2.5.2 If best consideration is not being obtained it will be necessary to obtain the specific consent of the Secretary of State if reliance cannot be placed on the terms of the 2003 general consent.

2.5.3 The 2003 general consent permits local authorities to dispose of properties for less than the best consideration provided the disposal will assist the promotion or improvement of the economic environment or social well being of the area and the undervalue does not exceed £2m (two million pounds)

2.6 Equalities Impact

This new school will help to balance the diverse needs of Harrow's faith community for educational provision. Faith schools do not currently reflect all the significant faith communities in Harrow. There are six Roman Catholic, one Jewish and one 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.

2.7 Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

The focus of the new school on community cohesion is fully consistent with the statutory obligation on the Council to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Background Documents: None.