

Committee:	Date:
Community and Children's Services Education Board	12 June 2015 25 June 2015
Subject: Update report on Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School Expansion	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information

Summary

This report is to inform Members of the progress that has been made on the proposal to expand Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School to a Two Form Entry (2FE) school, and the recent decision by the Sir John Cass's Foundation Board not to support the expansion, as freeholder of the site.

The proposal to expand Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School to a 2FE was first raised at the full governing body meeting of the school on 27th March 2013 following the ending of the 'soft federation' between the school and Christ Church Primary School in Tower Hamlets, the expansion being seen as a way the school would continue to be an outstanding school, and to meet the City's statutory duty as a local authority to ensure sufficient primary school places for City residents.

Since March 2013 there has been regular on-going communications between the City, the governing body of the school, and the Foundation regarding the expansion, in the form of governor meetings, Tripartite meetings, presentations to the Foundation's Board, and a School Expansion Working Party chaired by one of the LA Governors since March 2014. This committee has also received regular updates as referenced at the end of this report.

On 24 September 2014 the full governing body passed a resolution committing them to becoming a 2FE school from September 2016. At the same meeting, the Governing Body also decided to consult on a change to the school's Admissions Policy to add an Admission Priority Area criterion, which will enable more City families to secure a place at this outstanding school

Throughout this period there has been no communication or indication that the Foundation would not support the expansion. However, despite a letter dated 9th January 2015 from the then Chief Executive of the Foundation stating the Foundation's Board held in October 2014 had agreed in principle to the capital development, a subsequent letter from the Foundation dated 4th June 2015 states the Foundation's Board had resolved not to give its consent to grant a licence to build, or give the 10% contribution towards capital costs. The letter makes reference to a report by Elizabeth Sidwell, former Schools Commissioner, independent legal advice, and the Business Case made by the governing body of the school, as the documents considered "in reaching this difficult and final decision", but no specific details of the reasons of how this decision was reached.

Given the City's statutory duty to ensure sufficient pupil places for City residents, the Director of Community and Children's Services has subsequently written to the Foundation seeking clarifications on the reasons for this reversal by the Foundation and is awaiting a response.

Recommendation

- That Members note the progress made in Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School becoming a Two Form Entry school.

Main Report

Background

1. The City as a Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for its residents. By 2016, the shortage of primary school places in London is set to reach 118,000. The projected potential demand for primary school places for City children over the coming years shows a demand of 73 primary school places for City residents by 2016, using 2011 census and Department for Education projections
2. Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School has had an increasing number of applications for the 30 Reception school places, rising year on year from 76 in 2010/11 to 116 for 2014/15.
3. The Governing Body of Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School has been considering expanding the school from a One Form Entry school (30 children in each year) to a Two Form Entry (60 children in each year) since March 2013 by exploring options to extend the existing building, as well as a change to the Admissions Policy criteria, which will ensure City families have an opportunity to secure a place at the school.
4. At the meeting of the Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School Governing Body held on 24 September 2014, the Governing Body passed a resolution committing them to becoming a 2FE school by September 2016. The governing body have also consulted on changes to the Admissions Policy with a new policy in place for September 2016 which includes an Admissions Priority Area, enabling more City children in securing a place at the school.

Current Position

5. A considerable amount of work has been carried out to ensure the capital programme of works will be completed in time for the school to meet the time line of offering a second form of entry by September 2016, and a completed build programme by September 2017.
6. The majority of the funding for the expansion has been secured. A significant amount from the Education Funding Agency to secure additional school places, who will have the expectation of a second form of entry being in place in the City from September 2016, as well as funding from Section 106 and through the Priorities Board. The remaining 10% being a requirement for Foundation Schools to be provided by the Foundation/governing body.
7. Interviews for the Design Team and Project Management for the City's education capital developments have taken place and are about to be appointed. Work on the initial designs and costings of the development have been carried out, with a Project Board operating for the governance of the scheme in place.
8. The Gateway Four Report originally being tabled for today's DCCS Committee for decision has now been withdrawn in response to the letter from the Foundation, as well from Projects Sub, and Policy and Resources committees meetings this month. Given the City's duty to ensure sufficient pupil places for City residents, the Director of Community and Children's Services has written to the Foundation seeking clarifications on the reasons for this reversal by the Foundation's Board in order to strive for a way forward to meet the duties of the

local authority, and ensure greater access to outstanding educational opportunity for children.

9. The governing body of Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School have consistently sought to move forward with the expansion of the school, and the changing of the Admissions Policy, which enables greater access for City families to places at the school, carrying out the necessary consultation and decision making to move this forward. Should the Foundation not change from its decision to provide the 10% capital funding, and licence to build, the governing body will need to decide if they wish to expand to a 2FE within the existing 'footprint' of the building through refurbishment and making best use of existing space, and secure the 10% capital funding through other means.

Implications

10. There is a statutory duty for local authorities to secure sufficient school places for their residents. The work the City has been undertaking with the governing body and the Sir John Cass's Foundation would have ensured that the City meets this duty to provide high-quality primary education for local families.
11. The Governing Body of the school is also its own Admission Authority, and in this case is not required to consult solely when increasing pupil admission numbers. However, it must consult where it is proposed that the Admissions Policy should be revised. The school has carried consultation on both these matters
12. There are a significant number of developments taking place close to Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School site, some of which contain housing. This is highly likely to further increase the number of applications the school receives for places over the coming years.

Conclusion

13. It is disappointing, especially considering the extensive communications that have happened for over two years between all parties on the expansion of Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School, that the Foundation has reversed the decision of its board made in October 2014 where it had agreed in principle to the capital development. Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School is judged as an outstanding school and the expansion would offer this education opportunity to greater number of children in the local community. Given the City's duty to ensure sufficient pupil places for City residents, and the City's education Strategy that "*The City will ensure that every child resident in the City has access to high quality education that enables them to reach their academic and personal potential.*", the department will be seeking clarifications on the reasons for this reversal by the Foundation in order to strive for a way forward.

Background Papers

Reports to the Community and Children's Services Committee:

- *Education of primary-aged children, 11 October 2013*
- *Provision of affordable homes and additional nursery and primary school places, 13 December 2013*
- *Demand for primary school places, 14 March 2014*
- *Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School Expansion, 26 November 2014*

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