

REPORT TO Executive Board

DATE: 29 March 2012

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children and Enterprise

SUBJECT: The Heath Sixth Form Free School Proposal

PORTFOLIO: Children Young People and Families

WARDS: Runcorn

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides an update on the proposed development of The Heath Sixth Form Free School.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That Executive Board consider and agree a response to the The Heath Sixth Form Free School proposal.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Heath School submitted an application to the DFE in February 2012 to establish a Sixth Form. The Heath School is the applicant and a second company, registered with Companies House has been set up, as the Sixth Form will be an Academy in its own right. The proposal submitted by The Heath provides information on the following areas:

- Applicant details and declaration;
- Outline of the School;
- Education Vision;
- Education Plan;
- Evidence of demand and marketing;
- Capacity and capability;
- Initial costs and financial viability;
- Premises; and
- Due diligence and other checks.

3.2 The proposed Sixth Form will cover the 16 to 19 age range and will be nonselective. It will admit up to 150 in Year 12 and Year 13 a total of 300 students across both age ranges. It is intended that it opens in September 2013 admitting up to 150 in Year 12.

- 3.4 The proposed Sixth Form will offer a wide range of A level courses, plus a Foundation Learning Pathway, students will be offered the opportunity to learn independently and pursue studies related to their own interest
- 3.5 The Heath will be instrumental in running the new Sixth Form and teachers will be shared between The Heath and the Sixth Form. A number of the services will be shared with the school. Students from The Heath will be encouraged to attend the Sixth Form for their post-16 studies. It is also intended to encourage other young people currently attending other secondary schools in the area to attend.
- 3.6 The Heath have widely circulated leaflets outlining their vision for the Sixth Form and asking for a response to their proposal. A copy of this leaflet is attached at Appendix A. To gauge the interest in this proposal the information has been sent out to students parents and the local community.
- 3.7 Those responding to the consultation are asked to provide their name and address.
- 3.8 The decision on the most appropriate premises for the Sixth Form will ultimately be made by the DFE however The Heath have been asked to provide options.
- 3.9 Consultation will need to take place locally if the proposal is supported by the DFE.
- 3.10 In addition, the Secretary of State has a duty to consider the impact any new free school will have on the existing schools and provision in the area. The Local Authority will be contacted by the DFE. The DFE will then consider the views and contextual information provided prior to entering into a Funding Agreement with the Free School.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are already a number of post-16 providers offering provision in Runcorn. These include:
- Riverside College;
 - St Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School and Specialist College; and
 - Ormiston Bolingbroke.

4.2 Riverside College is made up of Cronton Sixth Form College, Riverside College Kingsway Centre, and Astmoor Construction Skills Centre based in Runcorn. Riverside College offers courses to suit all levels of ability from basic skills through to advanced level courses to all residents in Halton. The broad curriculum is designed to ensure that every learner reaches their full potential and is supported to progress through the course levels. The recently published 2012 performance tables places Riverside as fourth in the country for points score per exam entry. The College has also been rated as outstanding in the Advanced Level Performance Systems. Transport links to all Riverside College campuses from Runcorn are good.

4.3 In addition to the additional provision proposed by The Heath the Sandymoor Free School have also proposed an additional 300 place Sixth Form with 150 Year 12 and 13 places.

4.4 At the 14-19 Partnership in November it was agreed that where providers are interested in delivery of post-16 provision the authority would expect to see the following principles applied:

- The provision would offer choice and breadth;
- It would be quality provision;
- It would be sustainable;
- There would be collaboration with existing providers; and
- Information, advice and guidance would be available to all learners.

4.5 The information available to date provides an outline of the offer however no details have been provided about collaboration with any of the existing providers.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The level of additional provision proposed by The Heath and the Sandymoor Free school would be likely to de-stabilise the viability and offer of Riverside College and the other existing post-16 provision in the Borough.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The establishment of The Heath Sixth Form Free school could impact on the sustainability and ultimately the offer of the existing providers.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

N/A

6.3 A Healthy Halton

N/A

6.4 A Safer Halton

N/A.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

N/A

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Halton is expected to experience a reduction in the post-16 cohort over the next few years at the same time that the number of places offered will increase. Although a number of students currently seek out of borough post-16 provision the range of providers offering the same provision in Halton and the lack of collaboration is likely to be a threat to the current breadth of provision on offer and its sustainability.

8.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

8.1 This report seeks to gain the views of Executive Board to the proposal to establish The Heath Sixth Form Free School so that a response can be made to the statutory consultation.

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

9.1 N/A

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

10.1 The Free School are looking to open in September 2013.

11.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

11.1 The Free School will be a non-selective sixth form.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Pamphlet on The Heath Sixth Form	Floor 2 Rutland House, Runcorn	Ann McIntyre – Operational Director Children’s Organisation and Provision
Paper presented to Halton 14-19 Strategy Partnership (26-3-2012)	As above	As above