

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 07/18

Date: August 2018

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To provide a briefing note detailing the factors considered in determining the proposed site in Rainham.

Briefing note: Proposed Free School in Rainham

Introduction

In 2016, Central Government announced an initiative to provide Free Schools to help meet demand when and where required. In total, across Medway, 13 Bids were submitted by various Academy Trusts and four were successful. Two of these were to meet increasing secondary school demand and one of these was for the Rainham area. The Leigh Academy Trust were the successful bidders. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) managed and determined the process, with very little input from Medway Council

The new school will provide for 1150 students aged 11-19.

This initiative provides a timely opportunity, which Medway can ill afford to miss, to acquire significant investment (expected to be in the region of £25-30m in Rainham alone), without which sufficient funding will not be available to meet increasing demand in the non-selective secondary sector, which would lead to significant pressure on places in Rainham and Strood particularly. No internal funding exists for the Council to provide these places.

Site locations

The ESFA indicated that they would consider both Local Authority and third party owned land when seeking suitable sites for the schools. The ESFA is responsible for purchasing the land but expected that any Local Authority land classified as education land would be leased to the new schools on a peppercorn rent basis for 125 years. They would consider purchasing other Council owned land, although this was not the preferred route.

The following factors are considered by the ESFA when assessing the suitability of a site;

- a) Location
- b) Demand
- c) Accessibility
- d) Size
- e) Cost

The ESFA employed an education land acquisition company and took the decision to open discussions and negotiations with the owners of their favoured site. Any agreement reached at this stage is subject to planning and formal consultation.

At the time of writing, the LA were waiting to have sight of the feasibility study undertaken by the ESFA.

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