

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Overview & Scrutiny Committee      **DATE:** 10<sup>th</sup> April 2008  
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### **PART I** **FOR CONSIDERATION & COMMENT**

#### **Interim Accommodation Arrangements for the New Slough Islamic School**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

The target date for completion of the new Muslim faith school building is now Easter 2009, although this is not yet confirmed. To ensure continuation of education for the pupils attending the new school Cabinet have resolved that the current buildings be used by the school in the interim period.

##### **2 Recommendation**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

At its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008 the Cabinet resolved:

- a) That use of the current Lea Infant and Junior School buildings by the Slough Islamic School until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009 or until the new school is complete, whichever is earlier, be approved.
- b) That The Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services and the Director of Law and Corporate Governance be authorised to approve the terms of a lease of the existing school premises and grounds for a term of 1st September 2008 to 31st August 2009 with a break clause at the sole discretion of the Council which can be invoked giving one month's notice at any time after 19th April 2009.

##### **3 Key Priorities – Taking Pride in Slough and Making a Difference to Communities and our Environment**

###### **Priority 3 – Improving life chance for children and young people**

###### *Aims*

- 3.1 *Keep every child safe.*
- 3.2 *Improve outcomes for vulnerable children.*
- 3.3 *Help every child achieve.*
- 3.4 *Improve provision and outcomes for young people*

## 4 **Other Implications**

### (a) Financial

There are no known financial implications at this stage. The new Islamic school will be funded based on pupil numbers as is the case with all other maintained schools and would meet the full costs relating to their use of the current Lea buildings.

The current Lea school buildings are in a poor state of repair and some capital repairs may become necessary. All repairs would be funded by the school.

A decision has yet to be taken by the Council on the future of the surplus land occupied by the current school buildings. It is anticipated that it would be disposed of at some point but this process would take longer than a year and this proposal would therefore have a minimal impact on that process.

### (b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The LA has a duty to provide a satisfactory education for all resident pupils of a statutory school age. There is no alternative school/location available that could accommodate the pupils due to start at the new Slough Islamic School from September 2008.

If suitable accommodation cannot be found for the Slough Islamic School from September 2008 then to ensure continuity of education for the pupils the current community schools would have to continue as at present. There would not be sufficient places at other Slough schools to accommodate the former Lea pupils. Reversing the closure procedure would be legally difficult and the playing fields would be owned by a third party, SISP.

In order to protect the Council's interests on this land which will eventually be sold, it is recommended that the Council enters into a "contracted out" lease under the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954. This means that the Slough Islamic School will not gain any security of tenure over this parcel of land, which is surplus to their requirements, once the new school is constructed. By granting this lease until 31st August 2009 allowance has been made for any building delays but the break clause means the Council can take back the land at any time after 19th April 2009 which is the current estimate for completion of the building works.

### (c) Workforce

Many members of the workforce including the headteachers and deputy headteachers have found alternative employment and it would be very difficult to retain the current schools beyond August 2008.

## 5 **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 A significant proportion of the Lea Campus was transferred to the ownership of the Trustees of the Slough Islamic School (SISP) on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2007 following payment of the £1.5m transfer fee.
- 5.2 Once this transfer was completed tender reports were able to be issued for the construction stage. These were sent out 5<sup>th</sup> November 2007.
- 5.3 Running in parallel with this tender process has been the task of agreeing the final cost and budget for the Islamic school with the Department for Children, Schools and Families who are funding this element of the project. Now that tenders have been

received from interested companies this matter should be settled in the coming weeks.

- 5.4 It became apparent during 2007 that the new school building would not be complete by the original target date of September 2008. However, it was not known at this stage when a completion date was likely. Now that tenders have been received and discussions have been held with the interested companies it is known that the earliest possible completion date would be Easter 2009. Given that construction has yet to start and an Easter deadline doesn't include allowance for delays it would be prudent to assume some slippage and a definite completion date of August 2009.
- 5.5 The headteacher was appointed in December 2007 and is an experienced headteacher currently working in Qatar. Her full time contract is due to end in June 08, and she will be arriving to manage the school in July 2008. Interim arrangements have been agreed. Mr Egerton Chesney, current headteacher at Lea Junior will take on a consultancy role to develop the staffing structure and to work with promoters and the governing body.
- 5.6 Regular meetings are held as part of the transition process within the Slough Policy for the Implementation of School Closures, Amalgamations and Changes of Site. These are chaired by Bill Alexander, Assistant Director, Raising Achievement. There is full representation at the meetings from local authority officers, governors, headteachers from both schools and unions. The unions are fully engaged.
- 5.7 In line with the Slough Policy for the Implementation of School Closures, Amalgamations and Changes of Site, the group has developed a draft TUPE enabling document and will use that to determine arrangements for staff once the staffing structure has been developed. One to one meetings with staff will be held in the w/c 31 March 2008. Over the past two terms there has been no evidence of current staff resigning their positions.
- 5.8 In line with the Admissions Policy, parents have been asked about their personal preferences for the school for September 2008 and these numbers will be available by the end of February, together with the number of pupils currently on the waiting list. Current estimates show that the school is likely to be full.
- 5.9 The project plan for the tender is on schedule and SISP is now in a position to select from one of two preferred bids for the new building. This will be finalised during March 2008. The building is projected to be completed by April 2009.
- 5.10 The school will open as the Slough Islamic School on 1 September 2008, in current buildings.

## 6 **Conclusion**

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this report that was approved by the Cabinet at the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

## 7 **Appendices Attached**

None

## 8 **Background Papers**

- '1' Cabinet report 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007
- '2' Cabinet report 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008