

Report to:	EXECUTIVE
Relevant Officer:	Delyth Curtis, Director of People
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary (Resilient Communities)
Date of Meeting:	10 October 2016

SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES AND THE PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF THE FORMER BISPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To inform of the status of the Free School application made by Fylde Coast Academy Trust and update on the impact this will have on secondary school places within Blackpool.

Further to the above, seek approval for the demolition of the former Bispham High School buildings and agree to retain the land at this present time. Any proposal regarding the future use or disposal of the land would be the subject of a further report.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To note the approval by the Secretary of State for Education of a new Free School within Blackpool. The school will be opened September 2018 for pupils from nursery age to 16 years of age (all-through) and will be run by Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT). The location of the school will be the former Arnold School site on Lytham Road, Blackpool.
- 2.2 To approve the demolition of the former Bispham High School in its entirety and that the demolition be undertaken by the Blackpool Local Education Partnerships via the existing arrangement with the Council, which would expedite the demolition process.
- 2.3 To retain the former Bispham High School site in the short term for educational purposes until a further decision is made around the future use of the site.
- 2.4 To agree that the Director of People continues to work with existing academy providers, to ensure that there are a sufficient number of good quality secondary places to meet demand in future years.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 The Council's School Organisation Pupil Place Plan 2015-2020 highlighted that there is likely to be a shortfall in secondary school places within the borough over the next 5 years and that this is forecasted to continue into the next decade.

On the 13 July 2016 the Secretary of State for Education gave approval for Fylde Coast Academy Trust to open a new free school within the south of Blackpool.

The school will cater for 1,180 pupils, inclusive of 700 secondary, 420 primary and 60 nursery places. The school will be located on the former Arnold School site on Lytham Road, Blackpool and it is anticipated that the school will be open for September 2018.

The opening of this new facility will mean that the majority of the demand on secondary places within Blackpool should be met in the long term. There may be a requirement to find additional places (around 200) in future years, however this could be accommodated for across the existing school estate, with some basic need capital investment and agreement with existing academy sponsors

The former Bispham High School site has remained unoccupied since Aspire Academy vacated the premises in December 2015. Until recently the site was being retained pending discussions around future secondary place requirements and the outcome of the free school application made by Fylde Coast Academy Trust earlier this year.

Given that a decision has now been published by the Secretary of State for Education in relation to the new free school there is no longer a requirement on the Council to seek a site or sponsor for a new secondary school.

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| 3.2a | Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? | No |
| 3.2b | Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? | Yes |

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

The decision regarding the new Free School means that there is no longer a requirement for the Council to consider alternative options around large scale expansion of the school estate to meet the demands for secondary school places.

With regards to the former Bispham High School site the alternative options would relate to the continued retention of the buildings until such time that a useful purpose for them can be sought. Alternatively, part demolition / retention could be considered for areas of the building, reducing the overall retention costs.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is: “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The Council has recently published the forecast pupil places data within the document ‘School Organisation Pupil Place Plan 2015-2020’.

5.2 The forecast within the plan indicates that there will be an imminent shortfall in secondary places. Current forecasts indicate that there will be a 1.5% (100 places) shortfall in places by September 2017/2018 with an acute rise thereafter to a 13% (900 places) shortfall by 2023/2024.

5.3 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of the population in the area.

5.4 There are currently two processes for the delivery of new school places:-

- i) Direct Department for Education Free School Application process for those wishing to open up a Free School, (open to all, except Local Authorities).
- ii) Free School Presumption Process – Local Authority led process for delivery of additional places, either via expansion of existing schools or provision of new Free Schools/Academies.

5.5 Free School Application – Fylde Coast Academy Trust

During Autumn 2015 Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT) a local academy sponsor made a direct application to the Department for Education to open a 1,180 place all-through Free School. The request was made for a school to be opened within the

south planning area of Blackpool.

5.6 The new school would accommodate 700 secondary places, 420 Primary and 60 nursery places.

5.7 On 13 July 2016 the Secretary of State for Education approved the Free School application made by Fylde Coast Academy Trust. The project will now progress to the next stage 'pre-opening stage', thus effectively approving the delivery of a new Free School within Blackpool.

5.8 The approval of the new school by the Secretary of State for Education will very clearly meet a large proportion of the forecasted shortfall in secondary place numbers, as outlined in the School Organisation Pupil Place Plan, as previously mentioned under paragraph 5.2.

5.9 Former Bispham High School site

The former Bispham High School was until very recently (December 2015) utilised as a temporary facility for Aspire Academy, whilst that school was having a new school constructed on the old Collegiate High School site. Since this date the school has remained unoccupied and is now falling into a state of disrepair. During this period the Council has had to manage and fund the premises and grounds and ensure that they are kept safe and secure.

5.10 There have been a number of instances over recent months whereby trespassers have entered the building causing damage and disruption. As a result of this the Council has had to increase the number of security patrols which is resulting in increasing costs.

5.11 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.12 **List of Appendices:**

None

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places under the Section 14 of the Education Act 1996.

6.2 Fylde Coast Academy Trust has been given approval to proceed with a new Free School via a statutory process, with approval being granted via the Education Funding Agency.

6.3 At present there are no plans for the future use of the former Bispham High School site. Should the long term use of the site result in disposal from education use, then approval from the Secretary of State will need to be sought under s77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. There is a risk that the Department for Education may request any capital receipts associated with the land are retained by central government for the delivery of Free School places.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 The costs for the retention of the site to date are in the region of £60,000. This includes the costs for securing the site and maintenance of the grounds. The costs however exclude non-domestic rates which are an additional £99,000 per year.

9.2 The costs for the demolition of the school are anticipated to be in the region of £350,000. It is recommended that the costs for meeting the demolition are met from the Basic Need capital fund.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 The Free School programme is being managed, procured and delivered through the Education Funding Agency for the Secretary of State for Education. The anticipated opening of the new school is September 2018. Should the new school not be completed on schedule temporary accommodation may be required to ensure the demand for school places can be met. In this situation the Council would need to hold discussions with the Education Funding Agency to establish a suitable course of action.

10.2 The demolition of the former Bispham High School is likely to raise public questions or concerns over the future use of the site.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 A consultation exercise was undertaken by the Council whilst preparing the School Organisation Pupil Place Plan 2015-2020.

12.2 Consultation was also undertaken by both Fylde Coast Academy Trust and the Education Funding Agency in relation to the Free School proposal, in accordance with statutory requirements and guidance for establishing a new school.

12.3 No additional consultation has been undertaken in relation the demolition of the former Bispham High School buildings.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Blackpool Council - School Organisation Pupil Place Plan 2015

The Free School Presumption – Departmental advice for local authorities and new school proposers

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 11/2016

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

14.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 30 September 2016 Date approved:

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1

18.2 Date of Decision:

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

19.1 Date Decision published:

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1

