

**From: Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education**

**To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education**

**Subject: Proposed changes to St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Tunbridge Wells**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

**Decision Number: 18/00020**

**Past Pathway of Paper: 15 January 2018 - the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2018-22 was endorsed by the Cabinet Committee.**

**Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decisions**

**Electoral Division: Catherine Rankin - Tunbridge Wells South**

**Summary:**

This report sets out the proposal to expand and relocate St Peter's Church of England School in Tunbridge Wells.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

- (i) Permanently expand and relocate St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Windmill Street, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4UU, from 140 places to 210 places, increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 20 to 30 Year R places from September 2019.
- (ii) Allocate £7.1 million from the Basic Need Capital Programme Budget, which over a period of time will be offset by approximately £1.5 million from developer contributions and an estimated £450,000 in capital receipts from the sale of the existing school site.
- (iii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with General Counsel to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council
- (iv) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

The Cabinet Member's decision on the project will be conditional upon planning permission being granted.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 As the strategic commissioner of school provision, the Local Authority (LA) has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent as set out in Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-22.
- 1.2 The current forecasts for the Tunbridge Wells town area and the specific planning group of Tunbridge Wells South indicate an overall surplus of places, although below the 5% minimum target surplus in some years. The planning group forecasts and preference data do not fully represent the local demand within the Hawkenbury area. The limited places at St Peter's and lack of availability at other local schools necessitates extended travel to learn distances for some children who cannot secure places at St Peter's.
- 1.3 In early 2017, the Hawkenbury Farm development of 235 new homes in Hawkenbury received planning permission from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council; the permission includes the safeguarding of land to enable the relocation and expansion of St Peter's CE Primary School by up to 1.3FE.
- 1.4 The estimated pupil yield from the Hawkenbury Farm development is circa 70 Primary aged children, across the seven Primary year groups. This demand is not reflected in the forecast data and will, over time, reduce the surplus of places. The full pupil impact will not be forthcoming until the houses are built and sold, with the first occupations anticipated in 2019 and final completion several years later.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1 Kent County Council (KCC), with the support of the Governing Body, would like to expand and relocate St Peter's Church of England Primary School to help provide improved Primary education facilities and more places for local children. The proposal would permanently expand the school from 140 places to 210 places, increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 20 to 30 (1FE) Year R places from September 2019.
- 2.2 The proposed expansion will serve to meet the additional demand for Primary school places arising from new housing at Hawkenbury and localised demand for school places from the indigenous population. The relocation of the school to new, purpose-built accommodation will significantly improve and increase the facilities available for its pupils.
- 2.3 It is anticipated that there will be a future demand for additional places, in particular from new housing developments arising through the Borough Council's Local Plan process. It is therefore intended to seek planning consent for a 2FE school and to build St. Peter's with larger ancillary facilities to accommodate 2FE when this is demonstrably required.
- 2.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation to comply with the Council's equality duty to have due regard to equality considerations when proposing school expansions and commissioning additional school capacity.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Capital - The total cost is estimated to be in the region of £7.1m from Basic Need budget. The total cost includes approximately £950,000 of abnormal costs related to site specific issues. Over a period of time it is anticipated that the overall cost will be off-set by approximately £1.5 million from developer contributions and an estimated £450,000 in capital receipts from the sale of the existing school site. The costs are estimates and these may increase as the project is developed. If the cost of the project would be exceeded by more than 10% the Cabinet Member will be required to take a further decision to allocate the additional funding.
- 3.2 Revenue - £6,000 per new classroom will be provided from Revenue Funding towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This will be given to the school to purchase the required equipment.

The school will receive growth funding in accordance with the Pupil Growth Policy established by KCC and the Schools' Funding Forum.

- 3.3 Human - The schools will appoint additional staff as and when appropriate.

### **4. Raising Standards**

- 4.1 St Peter's was judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in March 2014. For the Reception Year intake in September 2018 the school received a total of 107 parental preferences, of which 17 were 1st preferences, for a published admissions number (PAN) of 20. The school has consistently operated a mixed-age class structure, including at the point of the 2014 Ofsted inspection.
- 4.2 St Peter's is a Church of England School that aims to provide a happy, secure and Christian learning environment in which every child can achieve academic and personal success. The school is very proud of its 'smallness' and each child is valued and encouraged. The school recognises that all children have potential and does its best to provide a caring and well-ordered environment in which they can learn and develop.
- 4.3 The school is currently split over three sites, with relatively poor-quality accommodation and access only to rented playground space nearby. Therefore, the relocation provides the opportunity to integrate the school into one location, with improved educational and outdoor play facilities and increased places available for local children.

### **5. Policy Framework**

- 5.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition "to ensure that Kent's young people have access to the education, work and skills opportunities necessary to support Kent business to grow and be increasingly competitive in the national and international economy" as set out in 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'

- 5.2 These proposals reflect KCC's aspirations to provide sufficient school places across the County, as set out in Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-22.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 In accordance with the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance (April 2016): Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools, there is a need to undertake a formal statutory consultation process as the additional places proposed exceed 25% of the school's total capacity.
- 6.2 An education consultation was completed prior to the Cabinet Committee. Approximately 200 hard copies of the consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, school staff and governors, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local libraries, Parish Councils, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and others. The consultation document was posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form, email and online was also provided.
- 6.3 A public drop-in event was held on 7 March 2018, 6.30 pm to 8.30pm. It had been advertised on the KCC and school websites and in the consultation documents.
- 6.4 Following the closure of the consultation period 45 positive responses were received, 29 were negative and 10 were undecided or blank, bringing the total to 84 responses. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education has been passed a copy of the full set of responses for his consideration.
- 6.5 The building scheme will also be subject to a planning application process, including a statutory consultation period, which will provide all interested parties with an opportunity to provide their views.

## **7. Views**

### **7.1 The View of the Local Member – Mrs Rankin**

I have concerns about the school being one form entry only . There is a development in East Sussex which may well fill some of the spaces in advance of the Berkeley Homes development around the school, which generated the s 106 money . Wealden refused to make a contribution to the school from its developer contributions

I think the Diocese, which I understand is also intending to contribute funds to the new school, would expect children in the parish to gain entry to the new school and this may not be the case if it is one form entry. The current catchment centres on the school which is adjacent to the church, so it extends to the north and east of the school. Houses in those areas will be too far away to gain admission if the school continues to be over-subscribed

I do not have any confidence that a revised admission criteria will protect the school for local children.

I have spoken to the Cabinet Member but remain unconvinced that the new school will provide adequate spaces for the local need.

## 7.2 The View of the Headteacher and Governing Body

The School's Governing Body's preference is for a 2FE school to be built immediately; however, in the interest of proceeding with the project, the Governing Body has confirmed its support to relocate the school with an expansion to 1FE and a 2FE core.

## 7.3 The View of the Area Education Officer

The Area Education Officer for West Kent supports this proposal which will significantly improve the education facilities for the current pupils, whilst providing a sustainable and future-proofed solution for school places in the Hawkenbury area.

## 8. **Delegation to Officers**

- 8.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. For information it is envisaged, if the proposal goes ahead, that the Director of Property & Infrastructure Support will sign agreements on behalf of the County Council.

## 9. **Conclusions**

- 9.1 This report sets out the proposal to expand and relocate St Peter's Church of England Primary School from 140 places to 210 places, increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 20 to 30 Year R places from September 2019. This is in response to local demand within the Hawkenbury area, with limited places available at St Peter's and extended travel to learn distances for some children who cannot secure places at St Peter's.
- 9.2 The proposed relocation provides the opportunity to integrate the school into one purpose-built location, rather than being dispersed over three separate sites, with minimal facilities for outdoor play. It will also increase the number of places available for local children in line with the forecast demand. A significant number of respondents indicated a preference for the school to be expanded to 2FE for 2019, however pupil forecasts indicate this would lead to a substantial and unsustainable surplus of places in the planning group, which would impact negatively on other schools. Additionally, a number of respondents indicated their strong desire for the school to move to a single-age class structure. This is a matter for the school Governing Body, which is considering whether it is financially viable to expand Years 1-6 from September 2019.
- 9.3 The proposed scheme would expand the school to 1 FE from September 2019, whilst preparing to accommodate future demand arising from housing developments. The new school will be future-proofed with planning consent incorporating larger ancillary facilities and scope to expand to 2FE at the point it is demonstrably required.

## 10. Recommendation(s)

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## 11. Background Documents

- 11.1 Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020 <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/increasing-opportunities-improving-outcomes>
- 11.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2018-2022 [https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/66990/Kent-Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-2018-22.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/66990/Kent-Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-2018-22.pdf)

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