

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

22/00055

For publication

Key decision: YES

- *It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m*

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Proposed Expansion of Maidstone Grammar School for Girls

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- (i) enlarge Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Buckland Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 0SF by 1FE, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2023.
- (ii) authorise the allocation of £6,378,593 in funding from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the permanent expansion of Maidstone Grammar School for Girls.
- (iii) authorise the allocation of £1,432,129 from the Education Modernisation Programme to enable the replacement of T Block and N Block.
- (iv) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council.
- (v) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Kent County Council (KCC), with support from the school's Governing Body, would like to expand Maidstone Grammar School for Girls to help provide more places for local children.

For provision planning purposes KCC's forecasting methodology produces forecasts according to planning groups. These planning groups are nationally recognised by central Government; Maidstone Grammar School for Girls forms part of the Maidstone and Malling selective planning group.

The Commissioning Plan forecast for the Maidstone and Malling Selective planning group indicates

that there will be a deficit of Year 7 girls' selective places from 2023-24 if no additional places are established. To meet the demand for Year 7 places we propose to expand the Maidstone Grammar School for Girls by 1 FE, increasing its PAN from 180 to 210 from September 2023.

Background

Maidstone Grammar School for Girls has provided education for girls from Maidstone and the surrounding area for over 130 years. The school was judged as 'Outstanding' by OFSTED in May 2009 and is ideally located within Maidstone town to meet the forecast demand within the established travel to school patterns for the Maidstone and Malling Selective planning group.

KCC have worked with the school to ascertain the additional accommodation required for it to expand by 1FE on a permanent basis. That work identified the additional space required in direct support of a future expansion and combines necessary modernisation work that includes the replacement of both T Block and N Block. These existing blocks at the school are significantly beyond their designed lifespan and require replacement. Combining delivery of this modernisation work with the expansion scheme enables KCC to benefit from the economies of scale that can be achieved by completing the works together rather than replacing the existing blocks in isolation.

The scheme also incorporates the provision of a visitor centre, linked to the school's unique set of Second World War Air Raid Shelters, which will be an integral part of the new accommodation. This part of the scheme will be funded by the school and not KCC but will also takes advantage of the economies of scale presented by the expansion project. The purpose of the visitor centre is to enable the school to provide opportunities for students in primary schools to visit the school and gain a real-life experience of school life during the Second World War. There will also be opportunities for some members of the public to visit the Air raid Shelters during some school holidays.

The required accommodation comprises a new teaching block, which includes the visitor centre, an extensive music classroom, 6 practice rooms and associated storage and ancillary spaces. This project therefore brings much needed modernisation work and will transform the school for the benefit of all students as well as provide space for additional students.

Financial Implications

Capital Funding: The total scheme cost is £8,986,481 million. This entails £6,378,593 from the Basic Need Capital Programme Budget to fund the construction of the required additional accommodation and £1,432,129 of Education Modernisation funding to enable the replacement of the T Block accommodation to be incorporated within the scheme. The school will contribute £1,175,759 towards the project to cover the costs of the visitor centre and contribute towards the Music Suite of rooms which is outside the scope of Basic Need.

Revenue Funding: Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's funding formula.

Legal implications

Planning permission will be required for the new accommodation to enable the expansion of the school.

Equalities implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee considered the decision on 19th July 2022.

In accordance with the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance (October 2018): Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools, there is a need to undertake a formal statutory consultation process.

An informal education consultation was held from 21st April 2022 to 19th May 2022. The consultation document was distributed by the Maidstone Grammar School for Girls to parents, members of staff and governors. The consultation was also emailed to all key stakeholders, including but not limited to the following groups:

- The Department for Education
- The Diocese of Rochester, The Canterbury and Southwark
- Elected Members (Kent County Council, District and Parish Councils)
- Local MP
- Trade Unions
- Local Children's Centres and pre-school providers
- Schools in Maidstone area

The consultation was advertised on the KCC and school websites and a drop-in information session was held on Thursday 5 May 2022, 15.45 to 18.00 at the school.

Following the closure of the consultation period, 7 responses were received, 6 were in support of the expansion and 1 in disagreement; the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership Multi-Academy Trust disagreed with the proposed scheme on the basis that it holds the view that additional selective places are not needed and could have a detrimental impact on non-selective pupils.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

There are only 2 girls' grammar schools within the planning group and therefore the options for expanding girls' grammar provision are limited to these schools. KCC has recently worked with Valley Invicta Academies Trust to expand Invicta Grammar School from September 2022 and therefore Maidstone Grammar School for Girls is the only other viable option for the provision of additional girls' selective places.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None

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signed

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date