

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

24/00059

For publication**Key decision: YES**

- It involves expenditure or savings of more than £1million.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Proposed expansion of New Line Learning Academy, Boughton Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 9QL

Decision:

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

- (i) authorise the allocation of £6,900,000 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the permanent expansion of New Line Learning Academy by 1FE, increasing its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2025.
- (ii) 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 with The Future Schools Trust.
- (iii) 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:

The expansion of New Line Learning Academy is proposed in response to the significant demand for places within the Maidstone non-selective planning group indicated in the County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28 (KCP). The planning group has a forecast deficit of 129 places in 2024-25, which is set to increase throughout the Plan period.

In recent years, schools within this planning group have admitted over PAN, creating additional capacity. We anticipate this pattern to continue and will accommodate some of the forecast deficit. However, up to 90 temporary places via bulge provision within the existing Secondary schools will be needed to meet the demand initially, prior to permanent expansion works of up to 3 FE from 2025-26. The proposed expansion of New Line Learning by 1FE, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2025, will form part of Kent County Council's (KCC) co-ordinated response to the forecast demand.

Background

New Line Learning is a co-educational non-selective school for students of 11-16 years that converted to academy status in September 2007 and is now part of The Future Schools Trust. The

academy was rated 'Good' by Ofsted at its November 2019 inspection. The academy and the trust are keen to expand the school and welcome the opportunity to temporarily expand in September 2024 prior to the proposed permanent expansion in September 2025.

Following discussion regarding the accommodation needs of the school, KCC has agreed with The Future Schools Trust that, should this proposal go ahead, it will be a trust managed scheme, with KCC providing the Basic Need funding and the Trust undertaking the necessary capital works. The Trust has previously undertaken capital works relating to school improvement and maintenance and has the organisational infrastructure to manage such schemes.

Financial Implications

Capital Funding: In depth feasibility work has been undertaken which estimates the total cost of additional accommodation to be £6,888,200. The cost of this project will be funded through the CYPE Basic Need Capital Budget that was agreed at County Council in February 2024.

It is proposed that it will be a trust managed scheme and The Future Schools Trust have engaged a suitable contractor who has completed previous building work for the trust. KCC will monitor progress regularly during the building works to ensure that the accommodation needs are being met.

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. All school related revenue costs will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant as ring-fenced from the Department of Education, the expansion will fall into Kent's Growth Funding Policy.

Legal implications

The expansion will be subject to a legally binding and enforceable contract being in place between KCC and The Future Schools Trust. The Trust will need to secure planning permission for the new accommodation.

Equalities implications

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified in the early stage EqIA, but the assessment will be reviewed as the project continues.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

In accordance with the DfE's Statutory Guidance 'making significant changes to an existing academy', the expansion proposal can be fast tracked without the Trust having to provide a full business case to the EFA. However, the academy is required to carry out a public consultation with stakeholders as part of their fast-track application.

The Childrens, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered and endorsed the decision on 9 July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The short to medium term expansion options within existing Maidstone schools are limited, with 2 of the town centre schools having already expanded in recent years, whilst others are constrained by site and infrastructure limitations. KCC are working with a number of schools within the planning group to formulate expansion proposals over the coming years and New Line Learning is the first scheme to proceed to the detailed feasibility stage.

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