

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NUMBER:

24/00073

For publication *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

Key decision: Yes

- It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions- All Divisions are impacted.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Schools Access Initiative Policy and Procedure

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills I agree to:

- APPROVE the adoption and implementation of the Schools Access Initiative Policy and Procedure
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to refresh and/or make revisions to the policy where changes do not require additional governance.
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the above decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

The Schools Access Initiative Policy and Procedure are written to support the delivery of a number of strategies including:

- The Education Strategy,
- The delivery of Kent's SEND Strategy, and
- Our Countywide Approach To Inclusive Education (CATIE).
- the Commissioning Plan for Education provision in Kent 2023-27.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on local authorities to prepare a written accessibility strategy and a duty on responsible bodies of schools (i.e. governing bodies and trusts) to prepare a written accessibility plan. It also places a duty on local authorities/governing bodies to plan to increase the accessibility of their schools. KCC does not have a current Education Accessibility Strategy which this addresses.

The County Council provides capital funding, the Schools Access Initiative (SAI), to enable KCC maintained mainstream schools, for which it has capital responsibility (community, voluntary controlled and foundation school), become more accessible for school aged disabled children. It supports the implementation of the Education Accessibility Strategy.

The Council's commitment to this area of activity has been underpinned for many years by it setting aside SAI capital funding. For example, across the 5 year period 2019-24, £3,152,274 was spent on 83 SAI projects.

The SAI Policy and Procedure sets out how the funding KCC sets aside to improve the accessibility of its community, VC and foundation schools is accessed, how spending decisions are made, communicated and can be challenged, together with the governance arrangements.

The documents were consulted on in the Autumn of 2024. The responses received have been considered in making this decision with changes being made to the Policy and Procedure.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The views of the Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee Members will added following the meeting.

The documents were consulted on in the 23 September to 11 November 2024. Fifteen responses were received. Nine responses were from parents/ carers or family members, the remainder from professionals. Eight respondents had children with SEN, of which five had an Educational Health and Care Plan.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The option of not having an SAI Policy and Procedure was dismissed. The funding of SAI works is finite and therefore, we need a framework against which fair and consistent funding decisions can be made.

Incorporating this within the SEND strategy was dismissed to ensure Strategy and Policy and Procedure remained focused and concise.

Amendments to the SAI Policy and Procedure were made reflecting comments received during the consultation period.

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

NA

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signed

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date