

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NUMBER:

24/00106

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

Key decision: YES / NO

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Cost revision for the Project to Expand and Relocation of Rosherville Church of England Academy

Decision:

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

1. Authorise the allocation of an additional £2,063,000, thus creating a revised project budget of £16,963,000 from the Basic Need capital budget for the expansion of Rosherville Church of England Academy, London Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 9JQ, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 20 places per year group to 60 places per year group, facilitated by a relocation onto a new site on Crete Hall Road, Northfleet, DA11 9AA.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision; and
3. Agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts

Reason(s) for decision:

On 6 March 2024, through Decision number 24/00019, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed the funding for the proposal based on robust cost estimates provided at that time.

This proposal has experienced several significant challenges due to the transfer of the land for the school site. Additional costs have now been notified to the Assistant Director North Kent, Ian Watts, that require a decision to be made.

The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) is overseeing a number of new housing developments in Northfleet, Gravesham, including Cable Wharf and Harbour Village. The total of new housing is anticipated to generate between 1FE and 1.5FE of new primary demand. Analysis of

the provision in the Northfleet planning group indicated that there is insufficient capacity to accommodate this demand.

The proposal addresses two issues. That of increasing the primary provision in the area and providing Rosherville Church of England Academy with a new site and modern buildings, within the Cable Wharf development, but less than 200 metres from the existing school site. This issue has been mentioned in previous Kent Commissioning Plans for a number of years.

Rosherville Church of England Academy is a small 20 PAN primary school, sited on a challenging site on top of a quarry cliff. The site is unsuitable for several reasons. It is restricted by topography on the south and east boundaries, and by the B2175 (London Road) to the north. The site is made up of several smaller parts that have separate freeholders, including the Church Wardens of the Diocese of Rochester.

The school buildings are either very old or in need of replacement, with the main building being of Victorian era. The remaining buildings require constant maintenance to remain fit for purpose. Whilst there is no immediate danger to the school buildings on the existing site, the chalk cliffs are sheer, at about 12m high. The school cannot expand on its existing site.

There are the Health and Safety implications of the issue of Rosherville CE Academy remaining on a small, constrained, cliff-top site, not least because of the recent chalk cliff collapse on nearby Galley Hill.

With a PAN of 20, Rosherville Church of England Academy has to carefully manage smaller class sizes to remain a viable school. Increasing the school's PAN to 1FE and then again to 2FE as demand increases, will make the school much more financially viable and support the future of the school.

As previously reported to CYPE Cabinet Committee, to further support the new developments in the area, the new school will also include a 26 place nursery and additional SEND space for a Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) or similar.

Following an inspection that took place in September 2022. Ofsted deems Rosherville Church of England Academy to be a 'GOOD' school. The school is rated 'OUTSTANDING' by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) in their most recent inspection.

It is a popular school with parents. The school is part of the Aletheia Academies Trust.

Cause of the Forecasted Overspend

The cause was advised to the Cabinet Member and members of the CYPE Cabinet Committee, via reports that were Exempt from Publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered and endorsed this decision at its meeting on 16 January 2025.

Consultations were carried out by the Academy Trust and were reported on in the Cabinet committee cabinet paper for the Decision number 24/00019.

Local members opinions were sought.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

If the funding is not agreed, Kent County Council will find it extremely difficult to provide sufficient primary school places in the Northfleet and West Gravesend planning group.

KCC is also mindful of the Health and Safety implications of the issue of Rosherville CE Academy remaining on a small, constrained, cliff-top site, not least because of the recent chalk cliff collapse on nearby Galley Hill.

If the decision is taken to not agree the funding, then the expansion cannot proceed. This will result in there being insufficient primary provision in the Northfleet area in the future, and will leave Rosherville CE Academy on a highly unsuitable and constrained site.

There was one other alternative option to provide additional provision, that of expanding Lawn Primary School. This alternative was rejected, because of two reasons. Firstly, Lawn Primary School, is situated on a very small site and will encounter challenging Highways constraints. Secondly, because deciding to use the Lawn Primary School as a solution would not address the issue of Rosherville CE Academy being on a small, constrained, cliff-top site. Health and Safety concerns would deem it as an unsustainable situation, even in the medium term.

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