

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

**DECISION NUMBER:**

24/00025

**For publication**

**Key decision: YES**

**Subject Matter / Title of Decision**

Agree funding for the expansion of Northfleet Technology College, Colyer Rd, Northfleet, Gravesend, DA11 8BG.

**Decision:**

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

- I. AGREE to allocate £9,165,120 from the CYPE Capital Budget to enable the expansion of Northfleet Technology College from a PAN of 164 to a PAN of 189.
- II. AGREE to 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
- III. 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:**

This proposal to expand Northfleet Technology College was developed because the Kent Commissioning Plan 2024/2028 indicated that there will be a shortfall in year 7 places in the Gravesham and Longfield Non-Selective planning group.

Northfleet Technology College, a member of the Northfleet Schools Co-Operative Trust, is a boys secondary school. Following an inspection that took place in October 2022, Ofsted deems Northfleet Technology College to be a 'GOOD' school, in all areas.

Following initial discussions, Northfleet Technology College agreed to offer 189 places on a temporary basis in 2023. This agreement has been repeated for 2024 and 2025 through the use of temporary accommodation already owned by KCC. To make the expansion permanent, the senior management and governors of Northfleet Technology College agreed to consult on this proposal to permanently expand the school and enlarge the secondary provision within the school by the addition of 25 places per school year.

If no further action is taken in the longer term, Kent County Council will find it extremely difficult to provide sufficient secondary school places in the Gravesham and Longfield Non-Selective planning group.

## **Financial Implications**

### **Capital**

The project received in-principal approval from CYPE Cabinet Committee in May 2024. At that time, the estimated cost was £8.320m. Since then, detailed design work and extensive surveys have been conducted, leading to the completion of RIBA Stage 03. As a result, the estimated project cost initially increased to c£10.290m, exceeding the original anticipated cost by £1.970m.

The primary reasons for the cost increase were:

- Unexpected groundworks and structural challenges identified during surveys.
- A required change in foundation type from pad foundations to piling.
- The need to relocate an existing attenuation tank, which was discovered beneath the planned building site.

To mitigate this significant cost increase, Value Engineering (VE) opportunities were explored. The most radical but effective measure was reducing the building size. A change that was agreed by the school.

The reduction in building size and other smaller VE measures have reduced the potential new cost by £1,125,771.34, bringing the revised project total to £9,165,120. This remains £845,120 over the original anticipated budget, proceeding to RIBA Stage 04.

It should be noted that within this budget is the inclusion of client and contractor contingency sums, which if unspent may lead to further potential cost savings for the project. Although at this point in time it is recommended that the contingency is retained as per the current level, which is equivalent to £499,536.00. Any savings will be returned to the CYPE Capital Programme for use on other schemes in the future.

Northfleet Technology College is a Public Finance Initiative (PFI) school. The works will result in part of the land being removed from the PFI red line. Legal costs for the DoV are included within the total project cost for the main capital works.

An allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to the school, to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. This will be met from the overall Capital allocation for this project.

### **5.3 Revenue**

The initial phase involved the installation of four mobile teaching rooms at a cost of £311,168. This was a Revenue expense, funded from the Mobiles and Temporary Accommodation Budget included within the Education Revenue Budget.

The school would also receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's Schools Funding Formula.

As the scheme progresses, £6,000 per newly provided learning space, would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment, such as tables, desks, chairs, cabinets and learning resources.

Both of these revenue allocations will be met from the Growth Funding provision held within the dedicated school's grant.

## 5.4 Human

The school will appoint additional staff as required; utilising revenue funding allocated through the Schools Funding Formula for these additional pupils.

### Legal implications

KCC, as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. This duty applies to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, as well as mainstream settings.

The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out KCC's future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

### Equalities implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed that indicates that there are no issues.

### Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered and endorsed this decision in May 2024. Consultations were carried out by the Academy Trust and were reported on in the Cabinet Committee paper.

Local Members were informed of this proposal and given the opportunity to make comment.

The Assistant Director Education, North Kent has said that the analysis of the demand in Gravesham means that KCC need to provide more Year 7 places in the Gravesham and Longfield planning group.

### Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Every other Secondary school in Gravesham Borough, both selective and non-selective, has either been expanded already, or considered for expansion. Nevertheless, the Assistant Director Education, North, conducted further analysis to see whether there were any schools that would be a better candidate for expansion. The conclusion was that Northfleet Technology College is the only solution to create sufficient places for the forecasted demand.

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

None.



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signed

21/3/2025

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date