

DECISION REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

From: Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Rory Love Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Agree the funding for the expansion of Northfleet Technology college, Colyer Rd, Northfleet, Gravesend, DA11 8BG

Decision no: 24/00025

Key Decision: Expenditure of over £1m

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: CYPE CC 16 May 2024

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Northfleet & Gravesend West served by Dr Lauren Sullivan and Conrad Broadley

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

This paper requests the Cabinet Member to agree the funding for the proposed expansion of Northfleet Technology College, Colyer Rd, Northfleet, Gravesend DA11 8BG, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 164 places per year group to 189 places per year group.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:

- 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.

1. Introduction

This proposal to expand Northfleet Technology College has been developed because the Kent Commissioning Plan 2024/28 indicated that there will be a shortfall in year 7 places in the Gravesham and Longfield Non-Selective planning group.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 A decision is required from the Cabinet Member to agree to fund the requisite expansion work.
- 2.2 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 Gravesend and Longfield non-selective planning group.

3. Background

- 3.1 Gravesham Borough's population is increasing with more families moving into the area and as a result, Kent County Council needs to add additional secondary school places to manage the increase in demand. One strategy for providing additional school places is to expand existing successful and popular schools.
- 3.2 Northfleet Technology College, a member of the Northfleet Schools Co-Operative Trust, is a boy's secondary school. Following an inspection that took place in October 2022, Ofsted deems Northfleet Technology College to be a 'GOOD' school, in all areas.
- 3.3 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.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 Sites were considered on the basis of the Ofsted rating of the school, popularity, available site space, willingness of the Governing body and cost. The conclusion from this analysis was that the expansion of Northfleet Technology College is the most appropriate option to deliver the capacity that is needed in the area.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Capital

- 5.1.1 The project received in-principal approval from CYPE Cabinet Committee in May 2024. At that time, the estimated cost was £8.320m.
- 5.1.2 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.
- 5.1.3 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.
- 5.1.4 To mitigate this significant cost increase, Value Engineering (VE) opportunities were explored. The most effective measure was reducing the building size. A change that was agreed by the school.
- 5.1.5 The cost-saving measures that were implemented included:
- Reduction of 101m² in Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA).
 - Smaller soakaway system to reduce drainage costs.
 - Foundation size reduction due to the GIFA decrease.
 - Modified dining canopy design.
 - Substituting blue brickwork with a similar-coloured render/cladding.
 - Removal of the green roof, replaced with an alternative to maintain Biodiversity Net Gain.
 - Cost-effective footpath material change. Elimination of flag paving at the building's entrance.
 - Wellness garden modifications.
- 5.1.6 These 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 4.
- 5.1.7 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.
- 5.1.8 Northfleet Technology College is a Public Finance Initiative (PFI) school. The PFI Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) have been on board from the start of the project and a change notice is in place for the Deed of Variation (DoV). 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.

- 5.1.9 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.

5.2 Funding Source

This funding will be sourced from the CYPE Capital Budget.

5.3 Revenue

- 5.3.1 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.
- 5.3.2 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.
- 5.3.3 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.
- 5.3.4 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.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.

7. Equalities implications

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

8. Data Protection Implications

Any information that would have a data protection implication was gathered and held by the school, as its own Data Controller.

9. Other corporate implications

No corporate implications have been identified.

10. Governance

10.1 KCC Infrastructure team are engaged in building the school.

10.2 The Members for the Northfleet and Gravesend West Division, Conrad Broadley and Dr Lauren Sullivan, have been informed of the proposal through the paper submitted to CYPE Cabinet Committee.

10.3 The school are fully supportive of the proposal.

10.4 The Assistant Director Education, North Kent has said that the analysis of the demand in Gravesham shows that approximately 1 FE of new year 7 places is needed. All alternatives have been considered, and the conclusion is that the best solution is to expand Northfleet Technology College.

11. Conclusions

11.1 The school is a Foundation, so ran its own consultation on the proposal, with assistance from KCC. The consultation ran from 29 February 2024 to 28 March 2024.

11.2 The school held a public drop-in session on 12 March 2024, which was attended by KCC Officers.

11.3 The consultation results were presented to the Governing Body who agreed to proceed with the proposal.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:

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12. Background Documents

- EqIA

- Kent Commissioning Plan 2024/2028

13. Appendices

None.

14. Contact details

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