

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: *Cost revision for the proposal to establish a new 2 Form of Entry (FE) Primary School in Thanington Canterbury for September 2026.*

Decision no: 25/00031

Key Decision: Yes, Expenditure over £1m

Classification: Part Exempt (Unrestricted with exempt appendix)

Past Pathway of report:

Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee 27 February 2025

Children, Young People's, and Education Cabinet Committee Report 17 January 2023 agreed the proposal Record of Decision no 23/00001.

[Decision - 23/00001 - Proposal to establish a new 2FE Primary School in Thanington Canterbury for September 2025.](#)

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Mike Sole – Canterbury South

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

This paper provides an update and cost revision and request for the authorisation of the allocation of an additional £5,236,000, thus creating a revised project budget of £15,136,000 from the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Basic Need capital budget for phase 1 (1FE with 2FE infrastructure) of the establishment of a new 2FE Primary School in Thanington, Canterbury for September 2026.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member consider the following proposal:

- i. Approve the allocation of an additional £5,236,000, with a revised project budget of £15,136,000 from the Basic Need capital budget for phase 1 (1FE

with 2FE infrastructure) of the establishment of a new 2FE Primary School in Thanington, Canterbury

- ii. 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.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 22 February 2023, through Decision number 23/00001, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed to the establishment of a new 2FE Primary School in Thanington, Canterbury by the Free Schools Presumption process. At the time the preliminary cost estimate was identified as £9.9m. The cost was prior to detailed feasibilities and planning application. It was advised in the report that following these actions the proposal would return to the Cabinet Member to approve the finalised capital costs. Planning permission has now been gained for the new school and final capital costs for phase 1 (1FE with 2FE infrastructure) have been received at £15,136,000. A decision is now required to increase the capital funding to enable the establishment of the school and to enter a build contract.
- 1.2 This proposal has experienced several challenges, and additional costs have now been notified. This report is being submitted to the Cabinet Committee to seek approval for the additional costs resulting from delays to the scheme and some revisions to the specification of the land/buildings.
- 1.3 The reason that the decision is being proposed is that timing for the project is critical following the delays that have occurred.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 The project has been delayed for a number of reasons. The reasons to complete the project are still very much at the forefront. Delaying this decision may then delay the opening of the new school and additional revenue costs associated with temporary accommodation may be required.
- 2.2 This proposal will help to support Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy (2022-2026) Priority 1 - Levelling up. 'To maintain KCC's strategic role in supporting schools in Kent to deliver accessible, high quality education provision for all families.
- 2.3 The financial factors that apply to this report are explained later and include the financial implications if the decision is taken to not provide the additional funding.

3. Background

- 3.1 Canterbury City Council's current Local Plan, adopted on 13 July 2017, proposed a total of just over 16,000 new homes during the Plan period up to 2031. The Canterbury Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2019) identified the provision of a 2FE Primary School within the strategic site allocation at Cockering Farm, Thanington (Policy SP3, Site 11). This is critical infrastructure needed to support the delivery of the 2017 Canterbury District Local Plan. The new 2FE Primary School in Thanington is included in the Kent Commissioning plan and stated it would be needed as and when the new housing developments progressed.
- 3.2 The new 2FE Primary School in Thanington, Canterbury, is being established to meet the demand for places from new housing developments in the vicinity. The new school is to be built on the Cockering Farm housing development, and the site was secured through the Section 106 agreement for this site. The school will meet the need for additional primary school places arising from new housing on this site and the surrounding area and will reduce the impact on the road system in the immediate area. The 3 main developments in Thanington will produce a total of 1,150 new homes. These developments would be expected to generate 322 primary pupils (based on all dwellings being applicable).
- 3.3 The new primary school will provide in total 420 places for pupils aged 4 to 11 years with a 26-place nursery which is planned to open in September 2026. Initially the school will open as a 1FE school of 30 pupils in Year R (reception year) growing year on year together with the nursery. The second reception class will open at a future date as the housing development is built out and houses are occupied. This phased approach is to ensure that there are not too many primary school places in Canterbury and that additional places are brought forward as demand increases.
- 3.4 The 2024 forecasts for Year R to Year 6 show the forecast need places in the Canterbury City Planning group and neighbouring planning groups. There are no current plans for expansions or new schools in Bridge, Barham & Adisham, Littlebourne & Wickhambreaux or Chartham and Petham. A 1 FE expansion of Watermeadows primary school is planned in the future to meet the need in the Marshside planning group and is associated with an 800 house development adjacent to the school and a land transfer to enable the expansion. Additional new primary schools are planned in the Canterbury City planning group on the Canterbury South housing development but will not be built until the new housing development is built out and when the need arises subject to S106 and developer contributions.

Table 1 - Year R to Year 6 Forecast

School-based surplus / deficit capacity summary (all year groups)

Planning Group name	2023-24 capacity	2023-24 (A)	2024-25 (F)	2025-26 (F)	2026-27 (F)	2027-28 (F)	2028-29 (F)	2029-30 (F)	2030-31 (F)	2031-32 (F)	2032-33 (F)	2033-34 (F)	2033-34 capacity
Canterbury City	3,325	48	48	-40	-122	-149	-165	-166	-133	-97	-5	111	3,400
Marshside	803	34	32	31	11	-3	-9	-17	-11	-23	-48	-56	840
Bridge, Barham & Adisham	735	8	-10	-35	-50	-66	-86	-107	-125	-145	-155	-173	735
Littlebourne & Wickhambreaux	210	-12	-16	-23	-25	-27	-32	-38	-45	-48	-51	-58	210
Chartham & Petham	525	24	27	26	24	40	56	65	78	79	80	90	525

3.5 Primary schools in the Canterbury City Planning group are currently near to capacity with some classes in Key Stage 2 above 30 in a class.

4. Options considered and dismissed and associated risk.

4.1 This school is to serve the new housing developments in Thanington and forms part of a S106 agreement and is a strategic site within the Canterbury City Council Local Plan.

4.2 If the funding is not agreed, Kent County Council will find it extremely difficult to provide sufficient future primary school places in the Canterbury City planning group and adjacent planning groups. Current schools within the planning group are not able to expand further. Pilgrim's Way primary school is currently being rebuilt through the DfE's Schools rebuilding programme and is being expanded by 0.5FE from 1.5FE to 2FE and is currently taking pupils up to 2FE in each year group.

4.3 If the decision is taken to not agree to the additional funding then the new school will not be able to be built. This will result in there being insufficient primary provision places in the future.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Capital

5.1.1 Funding for this project was granted under Record of decision 23/00001 based on predicted costs. The scheme has been designed to RIBA Stage 3 and received planning approval in November 2024. The Stage 4 detailed design underway and due to be completed by June 2025. Site specific constraints, abnormal items, inflation and property development arrangements have resulted in a cost uplift.

- Record of Decision 23/00001 £9,900,000
- Forecast project cost @ 17/01/2025 £15,136,000.
- Total additional funding requirement, including KCC risk items and contingency £5,236,000.

5.2 Funding Source

- 5.2.1 Total estimated funding requirement from CYPE Basic Need capital budget is £15,136,000, of which this is expected to be funded from a combination of the Basic Need Capital Grant and Developer Contributions..
- 5.2.2 Developer Contributions totalling £8,195,191.96 have been agreed and requested towards the new 2FE Thanington Primary School. Of this, £7,977,891.96 has been secured through signed agreements to date. Not all has been received due to payment being linked to housing delivery triggers (to date £244,807.88 has been received).

5.3 Revenue

- 5.3.1 A further contingency of £250,000 is also required from the revenue budget should the new school need to open in temporary accommodation whilst the new block is built. Associated expenditure will be reported against “other schools services” key service line in the Council’s Revenue Budget. These cost will be a charge to the General Fund.
- 5.3.2 Other revenue costs associated with setting up the new school are expected to be fully funded from the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant: School Block from the Department of Education). This includes funding to support new or growing schools though a basic need requirement. Available revenue funding will be allocated in accordance with the prevailing Kent County Council School’s Growth Funding Policy.
- 5.3.3 £6,000 per newly created learning space, would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment, such as tables, desks, chairs, cabinets and learning resources.
- 5.3.4 The ongoing revenue budget for the school will be allocated in accordance with the prevailing Government requirements for setting the Local Funding Formula for Schools Budgets in Kent. Free schools are not controlled by a Local Authority and future revenue financial implications, including the management of the school budget, will be responsibility of the future Trust.
- 5.3.5 There are no further revenue Council General Fund implications expected from this proposal.

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 2025-29 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

- 7.1 An impact assessment was completed for the 23/00001 decision that indicated that there are no issues. This assessment was re-examined, and no further or new issues have been identified.

8. Data Protection Implications

- 8.1 There are no implications for Data Protection

9. Other corporate implications

- 9.1 No corporate implications have been identified.

10. Governance

- 10.1 Once a key decision is made, Kent County Council's Constitution (Section 10, Executive Scheme of Officer Delegation), provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions required to implement it.

- 10.2 KCC Infrastructure team are engaged in building the school.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 This paper provides an update and cost revision to the project to establish and build a new 2FE primary school in Thanington, Canterbury.
- 11.2 The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to authorise the allocation of an additional £5,236,000, thus creating a revised project budget of ££15,136,000 from the Basic Need capital budget for the establishment of a new 2FE primary School in Thanington, Canterbury.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member consider the following proposal:

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11 Appendices

Appendix 1 Thanington Primary School Exempt information

12 Background Documents

12.1 *Children, Young People's, and Education Cabinet Committee Report 17
January 2023 Record of Decision no 23/00001*

[Decision - 23/00001 - Proposal to establish a new 2FE Primary School in
Thanington Canterbury for September 2025.](#)

12.2 Kent Commissioning Plan 2024 to 2028

[Commissioning Plan for Education Provision - Kent County Council](#)

13 Contact details (please insert details below)

Report Author: Robert Veale	Lead Director: Christine McInnes
Job title: Assistant Director Education, East	Job title: Director of Education and SEN
Telephone number: 03000 418575	Phone number: 03000 418913
Email address: Robert.Veale@kent.gov.uk	E-mail: Christine.McInnes@kent.gov.uk