

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – URGENT RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY

Rory Love

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

25/00036

For publication

Key decision*

Yes

Subject: Expansion of Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy, Green Street Green Rd, Dartford DA1 1RB, by 2 FE, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 240 places per year group to 300 places per year group.

Decision:

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

- I. ALLOCATE £9,298,049 from the CYPE Capital Budget to complete the permanent expansion of Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy, bringing the total project budget to £10,698,049.
- 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.

Reason(s) for decision:

This proposal to expand Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy was developed because the Kent Commissioning Plan 2024/2028 indicated that there will be a shortfall in year 7 places in the Dartford and Swanley non-selective planning group.

To support KCC to mitigate against this shortfall, Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy agreed to increase its PAN from 240 to offer 270 places for September 2023, September 2024 and September 2025.

Following further discussions, Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy agreed to offer 300 places from 2026, subject to a physical expansion. This proposal sought to facilitate the expansion by building a standalone block, and to enable various internal and external works. The Trust, senior leadership team and governors of Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy agreed to consult on the proposal to permanently expand the school and enlarge the secondary provision within the school by the addition of 60 places per school year.

Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy, part of the Leigh Academy Trust (LAT), is a co-educational secondary school. Following an inspection that took place in April 2023, Ofsted deems Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy to be a 'GOOD' school.

Reason for Urgency:

Through an administrative error primarily due to the complexity of this decision, with an element of the project's funding being agreed immediately after presentation to CYPE Cabinet Committee in

May 2024, leaving the balance needing to be agreed much later, the deadline for submission of this decision prior to the pre-election period was missed. This must therefore be taken via the fully urgent decision process, to ensure the current project plan and timescales for completion can be maintained.

Financial Implications:

Capital

When this scheme was presented to CYPE Cabinet Committee in May 2024, the estimated cost was £10.5 million which was split between KCC for the majority of the expansion work and a smaller element being allocated to LAT to undertake some smaller elements of the expansion directly.

Following that Committee, the KCC Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed to allocate £1.4m from the CYPE Capital Budget to enable early design work and small building alterations to be undertaken.

As planning for the whole scheme has progressed and RIBA Stage 03 was completed, the estimated cost has increased slightly but the increase was minimised by a range of value engineering measures, which resulted in the total scheme cost increasing to £10,698,049. The revised breakdown of costs is as follows:

	Early Release of Funding for Preliminaries	Construction (estimate)	Sub total
LAT costs	£ 73,000		£ 73,000
LAT Costs (internals 2024)	£ 352,000	-	£ 352,000
LAT Costs (externals & dining 2025)		£ 750,000	£ 750,000
KCC Costs	£ 975,000	£ 8,398,049	£ 9,373,049
Contingency		£ 150,000	£ 150,000
Sub total	£ 1,400,000	£ 9,298,049	£10,698,049

With the revised overall cost of the scheme being £10,698,049, this meant a further decision to allocate the remaining balance of £9,298,049 from the CYPE Capital Budget was required.

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.

Funding Source

This funding will be sourced from the CYPE Capital Budget.

Revenue

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.

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.

Equality Implications:

An impact assessment was completed for the 24/00024 decision that indicated that there are no issues. This assessment was re-examined and no further or new issues have been identified.

Data Protection Implications:

Any information that would have data protection implication was gathered by the Trust.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The overall scheme was considered as part of decision 24/00024. However, no Cabinet Committee consultation was possible concerning the revised overall cost of the scheme, due to the urgency process.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, in addition to agreeing that the decision could not be reasonably deferred provided the following comments:

No further comments

The Group Spokespeople of the Scrutiny Committee providing the following comments:

No objections raised.

The Chair and Group Spokespeople of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee provided the following comments:

No objections raised.

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

None



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signed

21 March 2025

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date