

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 to allocate funding for the expansion of Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy, Green Street Green Rd, Dartford DA1 1RB

Decision no: 25/00036

Key Decision: Expenditure of over £1m

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report:

Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 16 May 2024

Cabinet Member Decision 24/00024

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Dartford East served by Penny Cole

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

This paper requests the Cabinet Member to agree the funding for the proposed 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.

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. In consultation with Committee Services, this report is being submitted as a fully urgent decision, to ensure the current project plan and timescales for completion can be maintained.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agrees 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.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This proposal to expand Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy has been 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.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 A decision is required from the Cabinet Member to fund the permanent expansion of Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy. The majority of this expansion will be managed by KCC infrastructure, with some elements of the work being managed by LAT.
- 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 Dartford and Swanley non-selective planning group.
- 2.3 Any works undertaken by the Academy are to be overseen by the appointed KCC Consultant team, and all costs validated by the Woodley Coles Partnership, whom have been engaged by KCC to provide overall cost management control on the scheme.

3. Background

- 3.1 Dartford 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 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.
- 3.3 Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy agreed to increase its PAN from 240 to offer 270 places for September 2023, September 2024 and September 2025.
- 3.4 Following further discussions, Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy agreed to offer 300

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

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 Every other Secondary school in Dartford Borough, both selective and non-selective, has either been expanded already, or considered for expansion. Nevertheless, the Assistant Director Education, North Kent, 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 Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy is the most appropriate option to deliver the capacity that is needed in the area.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Capital

- 5.1.1 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. The breakdown of cost at that time was 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)		£ 750,000.00	£ 750,000
KCC Costs	£ 975,000	£ 8,200,000.00	£ 9,175,000
Contingency		£ 150,000.00	£ 150,000
Sub total	£ 1,400,000	£ 9,100,000.00	£10,500,000

- 5.1.2 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.
- 5.1.3 As planning for the whole scheme has progressed and RIBA Stage 03 was completed, the estimated cost increased to £10.945 million. The main reasons for these increased costs were:
- Change from mass pad foundation to reinforced concrete foundations.
 - Requirement for ground heave protection.

- Identification of site drainage within the building footprint, necessitating removal.
- Introduction of openable rooflights for daylighting and natural ventilation.
- Fixed fume cupboards required in science labs.
- Increased MEP costs due to rising GIFA cost rates.

5.1.4 To mitigate this increase in costs a value engineering exercise was undertaken to identify possible savings.

5.1.5 The cost saving measures that were subsequently implemented were:

- Reduction of curtain glazing on the west elevation.
- Introduction of rainscreen cladding on the first-floor west elevation, replacing brickwork.
- Removal of west elevation canopy and entrance canopy.
- Omission of the Man Safe MSA Lifeline System and associated gate access.
- Replacement of operable louvered panels with solid-coloured spandrel panels on the north elevation.
- Omission of the third set of roof lights.
- Introduction of a smaller entrance canopy, matching the social space canopy.
- Removal of hygienic cladding in corridors.
- Rationalisation of internal ceilings and external works.
- Use of Bauder roof trim instead of PPC on the main roof.
- Removal of additional bracketry.
- Exploration of alternative non-aluminium window options.

5.1.6 These identified savings have resulted in a revised funding requirement for this scheme of £10,698,049. This means a decision to allocate the remaining balance of £9,298,049 from the CYPE Capital Budget is required.

5.1.7 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 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.

5.3.2 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.

5.3.3 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 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.

8. Data Protection Implications

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

9. Other corporate implications

No corporate implications have been identified.

10. Governance

10.1 KCC Infrastructure team are engaged in overseeing and managing the expansion.

10.2 The KCC Member for the Dartford East Division, Penny Cole, has been informed of the proposal through the paper submitted to CYPE Cabinet Committee for the decision numbered 24/00024.

10.3 Both the school and the Trust are fully supportive of the proposal.

10.4 The Assistant Director Education, North Kent, has said that the analysis of demand in Dartford shows that approximately 2 FE of new year 7 places are needed. All alternatives have been considered, and the conclusion is that the best solution is to expand Sir Geoffrey Leigh Academy.

11. Conclusions

11.1 The school is an Academy, so ran its own consultation on the proposal, with assistance from KCC.

- 11.2 The school held a public drop-in session which was attended by KCC Officers.
- 11.3 The consultation results were presented to the Governing Body who agreed to proceed with the proposal.
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Recommendation(s):

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12. Background Documents

- Previous CYPE Cabinet Committee Reports - Decision number 24/00024 - [Decision - 24/00024 - Expansion of Leigh Academy, Green Street Green Rd, Dartford DA1 1RB](#)
- EqIA - [Expansion of Leigh Academy Dartford](#)
- Kent Commissioning Plan 2024/2028

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