

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

### DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

### DECISION NUMBER:

25/00031

**For publication** *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

**Key decision: YES**

### Subject Matter / Title of Decision

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

### Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills I agree to:

- 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.

### Reason(s) for decision:

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 feasibilities and planning. 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.

The decision is necessary because the timing for the project is critical following the delays that have occurred.

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 Cockerling 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.

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.

## **Financial Implications**

### **Capital**

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. Site specific constraints and abnormal items 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 required, including KCC risk items and contingency £5,236,000

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.

Developer Contributions totalling £8,195,191.96 have been agreed and requested towards the new 2FE Thanington Primary School. Of this £244,807.88 has been received to date.

### **Revenue**

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. If required, this will be a cost to the General Fund.

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. 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.

£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

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.

There are no further revenue Council General Fund implications expected from this proposal.

### **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 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.

### **Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

This decision was considered and endorsed at the meeting of the Children's, Young People and

Education Cabinet Committee on 27 February 2025.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

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. If the decision is taken to not agree the 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.

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



21/03/25

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Signed

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Date