

URGENT DECISION REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

From: Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

Subject: Disposal of the Former Gravesend Adult Education Centre, Darnley Road, Gravesend DA11 0RX

Decision no: 25/00114

Key Decision: YES - involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m – including if over several phases

Classification: Unrestricted report with Exempt Appendix A, which is not for publication under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Northfleet and Gravesend West, Matthew Fraser Moat (Reform UK) and Sharon Roots (Reform UK)

Is the decision eligible for call-in? No – *Urgent Decision*

Summary: The report outlines the disposal of the Former Gravesend Adult Education Centre, Darnley Road, Gravesend DA11 0RX.

The property, formerly the Adult Education Centre, was closed in October 2025 following the relocation of the Adult Education Service to the New Beginning Centre in Gravesend. Outreach services also transferred to numerous community and school buildings within the town. The asset was declared surplus in April 2025 and has progressed as a property disposal in-line with the Council's adopted policy.

The Constitution's Property Management Protocol provides delegated authority to the Director of Infrastructure to agree freehold disposals up to a value of £1m, with disposals more than this figure to be determined as a key decision by the Cabinet Member. Third party advice indicated that the delegated limit would not likely be exceeded.

The property was entered into the 11 December 2025 auction, with a reserve agreed by the Director of Infrastructure under delegated powers as set out in the Property Management Protocol.

The final bid achieved exceeded the £1m limit of officer delegations. An urgent decision from the Cabinet Member is therefore required to confirm the appropriate approvals for the completion of this disposal and sale.

Recommendation(s):

That the Deputy Leader consider the following proposal:

As Deputy Leader, I agree to:

1. Approve the sale of the property for £1.523m under the auction terms and conditions;
 2. Confirm the Director of Infrastructure's decision under delegated authority to dispose of the property known as Gravesend Adult Education Centre, Darnley Road, Gravesend DA11 0RX noting that the property's performance at auction exceeded the delegated limit underpinning the original disposal plan; and
 3. Delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the sale and take other actions including but not limited to, entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement this decision.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The former Gravesend Adult Education Centre, Darnley Road, Gravesend DA11 0RX had been approved for sale via delegated management of the property portfolio, in accordance with the Asset Disposal Policy. Authority was in place to support the sale via auction of the property as the price was expected to fall within the normal delegated limits under the Property Management Protocol.
- 1.2. The property went to auction on the 11 December 2025. The hammer price achieved was £1,523,000, exceeding the limits of the £1m officer delegation; authority is therefore now sought to confirm and proceed with the sale under auction terms.
- 1.3. Due to the timescales involved in the property transaction with completion scheduled for 13 January 2026, the decision is following the urgent decision pathway.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1. This is sale of a property for more than £1million. The property was guided at £400,000 based on advice from auctioneers and local agents who were fully sighted on the property's particulars and planning status.

- 2.2 The Council sets a reserve price as part of any auction disposal, this sets a level below which the property will not be sold, to ensure compliance with statutory duties.
- 2.3 The Council cannot, due to the nature of auction sales, define the exact sale price which will be achieved on the day.
- 2.4 Due to a very high level of competition during the bidding process the property has sold for £523k above the limit of officer delegations.
- 2.5 It was not anticipated that a figure would be achieved exceeding the limits of officer delegations. If this had been anticipated, a key decision would have been sought in advance of the auction date.
- 2.6 The initial decision to market this property at auction was made at officer level in accordance with the Property Management Protocol and the Asset Disposal Policy.

3. Background

- 3.1 The property is the former Gravesend Adult Education Centre, a site plan is included at Appendix B. It is situated in Gravesend town centre at the junction of Darnley Road and St James's Road. It is close to the bus and train stations and the town's shops and amenities.
- 3.2 The property measures approximately 0.54 acres (0.22 ha) and comprises of a detached three storey brick-built building with basement with a number of brick and wooden huts located in the yard areas outside. There is limited car parking. The accommodation measures 1851.53 sqm (19,930 sqft) in total.
- 3.3 The building was constructed in the early 1890's and comprises brick elevations with stone and render details under a number of pitched roofs. At first floor level is a glass covered walkway which is propped up by scaffolding. There are also North light windows to the art classrooms, and timber sash windows in varying stages of decay. The building has limited access for those with mobility issues having only a stairlift to the first floor. There is no heating to the second floor.
- 3.4 The property was underused by the Adult Education Service and was declared surplus to KCC requirements earlier this year as a result of changes in the service to align with government funding changes. The service changes were set out in Key Decision 24/00046. As a result, the Adult Education Service relocated to another building in the town centre, with classes also transferring to school and community facilities within the town.
- 3.5 KCC's Freehold Property Assets Disposals Policy states that assets declared surplus to requirements should be disposed of, enabling the recycling of receipts into the Council's Capital Programme and the modernisation of the retained estate.
- 3.6 In accordance with this Policy, the disposal was considered and, due to the nature of the asset and expected capital value, it was viewed that the most expedient method of sale was by auction. It brings certainty of a timely

transaction being completed, as buyers' due diligence is undertaken in advance, whilst providing the opportunity to maximise receipts through competitive bidding. It provides an open and transparent method of disposal.

- 3.7 Following consideration by local agents and a local auctioneer, the pricing reflected the state of the market, the planning risk associated with the site and was set at a level to generate interest and bidding on the day.
- 3.8 Pre application advice had been obtained from Gravesham Borough Council prior to the marketing as part of the usual due diligence and the estimated likely sale price was based on this, and other factors.
- 3.9 Given its local significance, KCC was contacted by Historic England, who had received an application to have the building listed. Between listing with the auctioneer and the auction taking place, Historic England declined to list the building because its exterior and interior were not of sufficient architectural merit. This advice was also included within the legal pack prior to auction.
- 3.10 On the day of auction, over 550 bids were received from multiple parties.
- 3.11 Any future planning application submitted in respect of the site will be determined by the Local Planning Authority, Gravesham Borough Council.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 The asset became legally exchanged at the end of the auction. The recommendation is therefore to confirm the Officer's decision and regularise the delegated decision. Further consideration is given within the exempt appendix.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The sale of the property will result in a capital receipt which will be reinvested back into the Council's Capital programme. The detail is considered in the Exempt Appendix A outlining KCC's options with financial implications.
- 5.2 The disposal of the property will remove associated holding costs.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council has an overarching duty under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain not less than best consideration in the disposal of property assets. It also has a fiduciary duty to the residents of Kent. The competitive nature of auction has determined the level of best financial consideration.
- 6.2 External solicitors have been appointed to handle the conveyancing process in liaison with KCC legal services.
- 6.3 Further legal commentary is included in the Exempt Appendix A to this report, which outlines KCC's options and legal implications.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken and identified no direct equalities implications arising from the disposal of the site.
- 7.2 The property is currently vacant and has been declared surplus to KCC's operational requirements through the relevant governance processes. It has been vacant since October 2025 when the Adult Education service relocated to alternative facilities in the town. As such the disposal of this vacant property is not considered to have any positive or negative impact on protected groups.

8. Data Protection Implications

- 8.1 As part of this approval process and in the handling of marketing/conveyancing of the site Data Protection regulations will be observed.
- 8.2 A Data Protection Implication Assessment (DPIA) screener has confirmed that there are no DPIA implications and that a further DPIA assessment is not required in respect of this decision.

9. Other corporate implications

- 9.1 None - This decision will not have any impact on other areas of the Council's work.

10. Governance

- 10.1 Authority is required to confirm final approval of the transaction to ensure compliance with Council's Constitution. The total transaction value being in excess of £1m means that formal decision approval is required from the Cabinet Member responsible for the Property portfolio. Due to the timescales involved in the property transaction the decision is following the urgent decision pathway.
- 10.2 Local Members were consulted as part of the initial disposal plan and Officer level decision process, as per the Council's constitutional requirements. No comments were received in respect of the proposal to dispose of the site at that time. Further comments were sought for this urgent decision from Local Members, and they requested for some of the receipt to be diverted for resolving some local issues. However, capital receipts are not earmarked against specific schemes and will be utilised against the Council's priorities as set out the budget as approved by Full Council in February 2026.
- 10.3 The Director of Infrastructure will have delegated authority under this decision to take the necessary actions to finalise the sale and enter into relevant agreements to conclude the sale.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 Sale of this property was previously approved through Officer level decision making in line with the Property Management Protocol and Asset Disposal Policy. The property proved extremely popular at auction with bids exceeding £1million. Approval is therefore sought to conclude the sale of the property under auction terms at £1,523,000 as detailed in this report.
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Recommendation(s):

That the Deputy Leader consider the following proposal:

As Deputy Leader, I agree to:

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 2. Confirm the Director of Infrastructure's decision under delegated authority to dispose of the property known as Gravesend Adult Education Centre, Darnley Road, Gravesend DA11 0RX noting that the property's performance at auction exceeded the delegated limitations underpinning the original disposal plan; and
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10. Background Documents

- 10.1 Decision - 24/00046 - KCC CLS Adult Education Funding Reform
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2882>

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix A Exempt appendix to executive decision report
- 11.2 Appendix B Site Plan
- 11.3 Appendix C Urgent Record of Decision
- 11.4 Appendix D Equality Impact Assessment EqIA

12. Contact details

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