

**From:** Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director Education, Learning and Skills

**To:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

**Decision No:** 13/00065

**Subject:** Partnership Working for grammar provision in Sevenoaks area.

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Electoral Division:** Sevenoaks and surrounding areas

**Summary:** This reports asks the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills to sign the agreement between Valley Invicta Academy Trust (VIAT) and KCC to work in partnership to devise and deliver a proposal, for the Secretary of State's consideration, for grammar provision in Sevenoaks.

**Recommendation:**

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agree to sign the agreement between Valley Invicta Academy Trust (VIAT) and KCC to work in partnership to devise and deliver a proposal, for the Secretary of State's consideration, for grammar provision in Sevenoaks.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In 2012 at a meeting of the full council, Kent County Council took a decision to pursue proposals for grammar provision in Sevenoaks. The Council's decision was the result of a very well supported petition from parents expressing a clear view that they wanted Kent to establish grammar provision in Sevenoaks.
- 1.2 Sevenoaks does not have grammar provision at present. Instead every day 1150 Sevenoaks children travel to the six grammar schools in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, a round trip of up to 25 miles.
- 1.3 In response to local demand, Kent County Council has been pursuing proposals to provide grammar provision for boys and girls in the Sevenoaks area. A number of options were considered and the County Council believes the best and most straightforward option is for one existing grammar school to expand to manage satellite co-educational provision.
- 1.4 Actual Primary school numbers from the 2013 spring school census mapped onto the likely intake of the six selective schools in the Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells towns demonstrate there is an increasing shortfall of Year 7 places in grammar schools in the area to meet the demand of increasing pupil numbers. By 2017 -18 an additional 5.5 forms of entry of grammar provision is required and an additional 7.5 forms of entry by 2018-19.
- 1.5 After exploratory discussions with several schools, Valley Invicta Academies Trust came forward with a proposal to expand their school by creating additional provision in Sevenoaks. Kent County Council has been working closely with Valley Invicta Academies Trust for several months to develop the proposal. The VIAT proposal to expand their school on a site in Sevenoaks complies with the statutory guidance for the expansion of any maintained school.

- 1.6 The agreement between Valley Invicta Academy Trust (VIAT) and KCC to work in partnership has been formalised in a legal document which covers all the technical aspects and expenses in preparing the proposal for the Secretary of State to consider. The agreement is time-limited to the process of preparing and despatching the proposal and the expenses are capped at £75k.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The contract will commit Kent County Council to providing Valley Invicta Academy Trust with funding, capped at £75k to cover the expenses of preparing and despatching the bid to the Secretary of State.

## **3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework**

- 3.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition “to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places” as set out in ‘Bold Steps for Kent’.
- 3.2 The ‘Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision’ referred to additional demand for 2014 - 2016 to be met by commissioning an additional x places in the area.

## **4. Urgency**

- 4.1 As there are a limited number of Cabinet Committee meetings and the contract had not been finalised by the last meeting the decision will need to be taken under the procedures outlined in the Councils constitution.
- 4.2 If the decision is not taken outside of the Cabinet Committee cycle, via the procedures outlined there may be a negative impact on the proposal to provide grammar school provision in the Sevenoaks area as the Valley Invicta Academy Trust could withdraw from the agreement.
- 4.3 In accordance with the procedures set out in the Council’s Constitution. the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and other required consultees agreed that the decision could not reasonably be deferred until the Cabinet Committee in order to follow KCC’s normal governance procedures.

## **5. Cabinet Committee recommendations and other Consultation:**

- 5.1 On 29 March 2012, County Council agreed to pursue proposals for expanded grammar school provision in Sevenoaks. The Council’s decision was the result of a very well supported petition from parents expressing a clear view that they wanted Kent to establish grammar provision in Sevenoaks.
- 5.2 On 19 March 2013, Education Cabinet Committee were verbally updated of the progress of the proposal on a grammar school in the Sevenoaks area and the interest of the Valley Invicta Academy Trust.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 KCC received a petition with over 2500 signatures campaigning for grammar school provision in the Sevenoaks area. This petition prompted a full discussion by County Council on 29 March 2013, where the council agreed to pursue grammar school provision in the Sevenoaks area. After extensive talks with the grammar schools in the surrounding areas in 2012, Valley Invicta Academy Trust was the only interested party. From this point on KCC has been in discussion with the school to formulate a proposal to provide grammar provision in the Sevenoaks area although The Weald of Kent Grammar School launched a consultation on a similar proposal late in the process with

no prior notification to KCC. This agreement will formalise the collaboration between KCC and VIAT to devise and deliver the proposal.

## **7. Recommendation(s)**

### **Recommendation:**

- 7.1 That the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agree to sign the agreement between Valley Invicta Academy Trust (VIAT) and KCC to work in partnership to devise and deliver a proposal, for the Secretary of State's consideration, for grammar provision in Sevenoaks area

## **8. Background Documents**

Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/your\\_council/priorities, policies and plans/priorities and plans/bold\\_steps\\_for\\_kent.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities,_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx)

Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-2017

[https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20\(Sept-2012\).pdf](https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20(Sept-2012).pdf)

## **10. Contact details**

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