

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY

Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

DECISION NO.

14/00098

Unrestricted

Subject: Proposed expansion and relocation of Ridge View School, Tonbridge

As Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, I agree to:

1. (i) To agree the increase in the designated pupil number of pupil places from 164 to 180 for September 2014.
- (ii) Allocate £3.5m from the Targeted Basic Need Budget and £11.1m from the Special School Review Capital Budget in order that the school may be relocated and expanded.
- (iii) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council.
- (iv) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

In relation to other required officer actions not specifically delegated above, the Executive Scheme of Delegation for Officers set out in Appendix 2 Part 4 of the Constitution (and the directorate schemes of sub-delegation made thereunder) provide the governance pathway for implementation by officers.

Any Interest Declared when the Decision was Taken- None

Reason(s) for decision, including response to any Cabinet Committee recommendations, and any alternatives considered

- 2.1 As the strategic commissioner of school provision, the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent. This duty applies to Special school provision, as well as mainstream settings.
- 2.2 Kent County Council's strategy for children and young people with special educational needs and who are disabled (SEND) identified the need to add 275 additional SEN places in Kent for pupils with Autism and Behavioural Needs. 175 of these places will be in special schools. Furthermore, the 'Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision' referred to additional demand for 2014-2016 to be met by commissioning additional places across Kent.
- 2.3 The Government has recognised the demand in Tonbridge and Malling and has allocated Targeted Basic Need funding totalling £3.5 million for the purposes of expanding and relocating Ridge View School in order to increase the places offered by September 2015.
- 2.4 Ridge View is a successful school, graded 'good' by Ofsted. The school provides for pupils with profound, multiple, and severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Over half have autistic spectrum disorders as a primary need. In addition, many have a range of complex needs including sensory impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment and delayed cognitive development. The majority of the children in the Oakridge Assessment nursery have a statement of special educational needs and a high proportion use alternative or augmentative methods of communication. Apart from attending Ridge View, nursery children enter a variety of other special schools, specialist mainstream schools and mainstream provisions. Ridge View currently incorporates specialist pre-school and nursery provision from two years (Oakridge) as well as students aged four to nineteen. All are

designated as having Profound, Severe & Complex needs.

2.5 The numbers of children surviving with profound, severe and complex (PSC) learning difficulties is increasing which has resulted in pressure on places in Kent. This, combined with the need to offer places that avoid long travelling distances for vulnerable young children means that KCC requires Ridge View School to increase the number of places it offers from its current position - 107 pupils on roll and the school at maximum capacity - to a capacity of 180. KCC's 10 PSC schools have seen their rolls rise from 1666 pupils in 2009 to 2004 in 2013, a 17% rise. In particular the growth has been in the early years phase, where we have seen Reception Year rolls increase by 36%, from 84 to 114 across the schools.

2.6 Ridge View School is located in unsuitable buildings in North Tonbridge and does not have sufficient outdoor play and sports facilities. The school shares a campus with two mainstream schools, preventing expansion to provide the additional capacity that is desperately needed.

3. Proposals

3.1 The relocation and expansion of Ridge View School does not necessitate statutory consultation under the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 as the proposed increase in designated number is less than 10% of the current designated number and the proposed relocation is under two miles from the current site. Therefore, the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to agree the increase in the designated number at Ridge View School from 164 to 180 for September 2014 and to allocate £3.5 million from the Targeted Basic Need budget and £11.1 million from the Special School Review Capital Programme budget to complete the necessary works.

4. Financial Implications

4.1

a) Capital – Proposals relating to regularising designated numbers do not have any capital implications. The capital costs of relocating and rebuilding Ridge View School is being allocated from the Targeted Basic Need budget and the Special School Review Capital Programme budget. The costs of this project are estimates and these may increase as the project is developed. If the cost of the project is greater than 10% the Cabinet Member will be required to take a further decision to allocate the additional funding.

b) Revenue – The schools delegated budget will be allocated on an agreed number of commissioned places in accordance with the High Needs funding methodology of 'Place Plus'.

c) Human – Ridge View School will appoint additional teachers, as the school size increases and the need arises.

4.2 As individual projects proceed from initial feasibility, through consultation and detailed site, building and planning considerations, initial budget estimates may be adjusted. Under the Executive Scheme of Delegation to Officers, those undertaking actions delegated to them are obliged to keep Members, in particular, the Cabinet Member informed. As part of this obligation where individual project costs vary from those set out in reports to Education Cabinet Committee, the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services will be consulted and will be asked to agree informally with the Director of Property Infrastructure that the changes can be managed within the basic need project budget. Members of Education Cabinet Committee are kept informed of changes through the regular Capital Monitoring Group meetings.

4.3 At any time the Cabinet Member may withdraw an undertaking from the scheme of delegation and escalate the decision to one that is taken at Member level via formal procedures.

4.4 Likewise at any time the officer with delegated authority may escalate a decision to the

Cabinet Member for approval via formal procedure should they think it necessary.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

5. Education Cabinet Committee Opinion

5.1 At its meeting on 14 March 2014 the Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform that the public consultations on the proposals set out in the report be undertaken.

Background Documents:

Report to Education Cabinet Committee 14 March 2014 – Re-designation of Special schools across Kent

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s45427/Re-designation%20of%20Special%20Schools%20across%20Kent.pdf>

Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

signed



Date

2 September 2014