

From: Matt Dunkley, CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

Subject: Proposed expansion of Speldhurst Church of England Primary School

Classification: Unrestricted

Key Decision: No

Decision No: 18/00070

Past Pathway of Paper: 15 January 2018 - the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2018-22 - Cabinet.

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Tunbridge Wells West, Mr James McInroy

Summary:

This report sets out the proposal to expand Speldhurst Church of England Primary School.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

- (i) Permanently expand Speldhurst Church of England Primary School, Langton Road, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN3 0NP from 140 places to 210 places, increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 20 to 30 Reception Year places from September 2020.

1. Introduction

1.1 Speldhurst Church of England Primary School's Governing Body has expressed a wish to increase its intake permanently from September 2020 and has directly secured planning permission and funding to facilitate this.

1.2 In accordance with the Department for Education's school organisation statutory guidance (October 2018): Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools, Kent County Council (KCC) approval is required to increase the school's overall capacity by more than 25%. However, it should be noted that the school has exercised its powers under the Admissions Code to temporarily increase its intake in 2018 and 2019.

- 1.3 KCC agreed to undertake a consultation for the expansion on the basis that the proposal would add additional choice to parents seeking a school place in Tunbridge Wells. In this instance, KCC is not commissioning the additional places directly and sought views from key stakeholders prior to a decision being taken.
- 1.4 As the strategic commissioner of school provision, the Local Authority (LA) has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-22.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Speldhurst Church of England Primary School proposes to expand from 140 places to 210 places, increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 20 to 30 Reception Year places from September 2020.
- 2.2 This is a school-led scheme that the Governing Body has secured funding to achieve. Funding has been obtained through LCVAP and with a Capital loan from KCC; as a result of which the school now has sufficient classroom space to accommodate the additional pupils.
- 2.3 KCC forecasts of pupil place demand for the Tunbridge Wells area indicate a small surplus of places in the medium term, which would not indicate a 'Basic Need' for additional provision. Nevertheless, KCC anticipates that the proposed additional places would benefit pupils in the local area and that any impact on other schools would be limited. Therefore, a consultation process has been undertaken based on increased parental choice in the locality.
- 2.4 The consultation concerned the increase in Year R intake from September 2020. However, it should be noted that the school has indicated its intention to exercise its powers under the Admissions Code to increase its intake in upper year groups from 2019.
- 2.5 Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for the education consultation in accordance with the Council's equality duty, having due regard to equality considerations when commissioning additional school capacity.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 **Capital** – There is no additional capital expenditure required for this proposal.
- 3.2 **Revenue** – Speldhurst will receive additional revenue funding in line with the increased pupil roll, but will not receive Pupil Growth funding, as the additional places were not commissioned by KCC from Basic Need.
- 3.3 **Human** - The schools will appoint additional staff as and when appropriate.

4. Raising Standards

- 4.1 Speldhurst was judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in February 2014. In their report, Ofsted inspectors noted that 'achievement of pupils is outstanding' and that 'pupils make consistently strong progress as they move through the school so that, by the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils making at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics is high.'
- 4.2 Speldhurst Church of England Primary was founded in 1859 and is proud of its traditions and links with the church and local community. The school adopts a child-centred approach to pupils' learning. The staff form a cohesive and supportive team who build on the individual strengths of children in order to raise self-esteem and make children feel valued.

5. Policy Framework

- 5.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition "to ensure that Kent's young people have access to the education, work and skills opportunities necessary to support Kent business to grow and be increasingly competitive in the national and international economy" as set out in 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'
- 5.2 KCC as the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-22 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 An education consultation was completed prior to the Cabinet Committee. Approximately 200 hard copies of the consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, school staff and governors, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local libraries, Parish Councils, Tunbridge Wells District Council and others. The consultation document was posted on the KCC website and the document was widely circulated. An opportunity was also provided to send in written responses online via email.
- 6.2 The consultation was advertised on the KCC and school websites and a drop-in' information sessions was held from 16:00 to 17:00 on Thursday 29th November at Speldhurst Church of England Primary School.
- 6.3 Following the closure of the consultation period, 22 responses were received that can be summarised as follows:

| Respondent | Agree | Disagree | Undecided/Not indicated | Total |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Parent/Carer | 8 | 3 | 2 | 13 |
| Member of Staff | | | | 0 |
| Governor | | | | 0 |
| Pupil | | | | 0 |
| Other Interested Party | 2 | 7 | | 9 |
| Total | 10 | 10 | 2 | 22 |

- 6.4 A summary of the responses is available in Appendix A. The key concerns from respondents were related to pedestrian and car traffic around the school, the need for expansion and the impact on other schools in the surrounding area. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education has been passed a copy of the full set of responses for his consideration.
- 6.5 Detailed responses addressing the key concerns raised during the consultation period have been provided by Ivan Goodsell, the Chair of Governors and Stephanie Hayward, Headteacher at Speldhurst CE Primary School, see Appendix B and C.

7. Views

7.1 The View of the Local Members

James McInroy, the local KCC member for Tunbridge Wells West has been consulted on these proposals.

7.2 The View of the Headteacher, Governing Body and the Diocese

This is a school led proposal that has the full support of the Headteacher, Governing Body and the Diocese of Rochester.

7.3 The View of the Area Education Officer

The Area Education Officer supports the proposal on the basis of providing increased parental choice in the locality and improving the Learning facilities available at the school.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This report sets out the proposal to permanently expand Speldhurst Church of England Primary School from 140 places to 210 places, increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 20 to 30 Reception Year places from September 2020. This is a school-led project that is delivered without capital expenditure from the Local Authority and is supported by KCC on the basis of providing greater choice for parents with additional places at a popular and oversubscribed local school.

9. Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

- (i) Permanently expand Speldhurst Church of England Primary School, Langton Road, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN3 0NP, from 140 places to 210 places, increasing the published admission number (PAN) from 20 to 30 Reception Year places from September 2020.

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020 <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/increasing-opportunities-improving-outcomes>
- 10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2018-2022 https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/66990/Kent-Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-2018-22.pdf

11. Report Author

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