

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

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

**Subject:** Following the amalgamation of the former Murston Infant and Junior Schools to establish Sunny Bank Primary School, relocation of Sunny Bank Infant and Nursery departments to Sunny Bank Junior department site, with infrastructure for an expansion from 1.5FE to 2FE following the academisation of the school.

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** Sittingbourne North – Jason Clinch

**Summary:**

This report sets out the proposal to relocate Sunny Bank Primary School's Infant and Nursery departments onto the Junior Site with the infrastructure for an expansion from 1.5FE to 2FE following the academisation of the School.

**Recommendation(s):**

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

- (i) Allocate £4.2M from the Children, Young People and Education Capital budget;
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the General Counsel (Interim) to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council; and
- (iii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

This proposal is also subject to Planning agreement.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The KCP 2019-2023 identifies the need for additional places in the Sittingbourne East primary planning area and the expansion of Sunny Bank Primary by 0.5FE was identified to meet this need. A total of 1,409 new dwellings are expected to be built in the Sittingbourne East Planning area

from 2019-2030. A full feasibility was commissioned in 2018 to relocate the infant department and Nursery to the junior department site and have the infrastructure to expand by 0.5FE to a 2FE primary school. This ensures that there are adequate places for children from new housing and secures the future final viability of Sunny Bank.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. Sunny Bank Primary School was established on 1 September 2016 when Murston Junior school and Murston Infant School and Maintained Nursery amalgamated. The new primary school opened in the existing accommodation of both schools and it was envisaged that in the longer term the Local Authority will pursue opportunities for future building work that would allow the infant phase to be accommodated on the junior site.
- 2.2. The current infant department was originally established in the 1860s and additional buildings were added over subsequent years. The cost of maintaining the infant school site would require substantial investment to ensure the buildings are fit for purpose as the classrooms are in a poor state of repair. The cost of refurbishment, continual maintenance and ongoing cost of the lease of the site (the site is owned by a Diocesan Trust) is not financially viable. The cost-effective measure is therefore to relocate the infants to the junior site which is adjacent to the Infant site and has adequate space to accommodate the infant and nursery on one site.
- 2.3. Following amalgamation of the two former schools, the new governing body of Sunny Bank Primary school went out to recruitment for a new headteacher. Despite several attempts to recruit, they were unable to attract sufficiently experienced candidates and the Local Authority brought in an interim headteacher under a short-term contract whilst alternative options were explored. Federation was considered as a possibility but despite several schools engaging in early discussions, none were willing to commit to consulting on federating with Sunny Bank Primary School. As a result, the governing body agreed to consider working with an academy trust under a contract to deliver executive leadership and wider school support, enabling the school and the Trust to carry out due diligence and decide whether academisation was the best way forward for both parties. Hampton Academy Trust has been working with Sunny Bank for the last two academic years. Hampton Academy Trust wanted to ensure that the school was in a better position financially and from a buildings perspective before agreeing to consult on academisation. Following the recent Ofsted and a judgement of Inadequate, a directive academy order has been issued and the DfE has decided that Sunny Bank will academise with an alternative Trust (The Island Learning Trust).

## **3. Proposal**

- 3.1. The proposal is to relocate the Infant and Nursery departments of Sunny Bank Primary school to the Junior department site, with the infrastructure for an expansion from 1.5FE to 2FE following the academisation of the school.
- 3.2. Relocation of the infant department and nursery is the cost effect option as opposed to refurbishing and maintaining two sites. The school is in receipt of a directive Academy Order. The school needs to be financially viable and remaining on two sites would mean that this would not be the case.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

a. Capital – A full feasibility has been undertaken for the relocation of Sunny Bank infant department and nursery onto the junior school site. The cost of relocation and refurbishment of the junior site has been estimated at £4.1m. A report will be submitted to the ICB after the planning permission has been granted, to approve and to gain permission to spend, subject to Cabinet Member decision.

Up to £2,500 is provided for each newly provided classroom for ICT equipment from Capital budget. Totalling £22,500 for this project A feasibility study has been completed to include surveys and the design has been developed. Planning agreement has been confirmed. The estimated budget cost of the expansion is therefore £4.2M.

b. Revenue – As per KCC policy a total of £6,000 per new classroom will be provided to the school from the DSG revenue budget. For Sunny Bank this will total £54,000.

A total of £1,334,600.27 has been secured or sought through Developer Contributions for Sunny Bank Primary School proposal.

c. Human – The School will appoint additional staff as the need arises.

#### **5. Legal Implication**

Notice will need to be given to the Diocesan of Canterbury regarding the lease of the Infant school site.

#### **6. Vision and Priority for Improvement**

- 6.1. This proposal 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)’.
- 6.2. The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2019-23 sets out how we will carry out our responsibility for ensuring there are sufficient places of high quality, in the right places, for all learners and this proposal supports that aim

#### **7. Consultation**

- 7.1. A pre- planning consultation event will be held for the relocation the infants and nursery at the beginning of November 2019. The plans will be displayed during the event at the school and interested parties including parents and local residents will be invited to view and comment on the plans.
- 7.2. It is proposed to submit the planning application by the end of November 2019, and we expect that a decision will be made by February 2020.

## **8. Views**

- 8.1. The view of the Local Member:  
Jason Clinch has been informed of the proposal and will be invited to the pre- planning consultation event.
- 8.2. The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:  
Sunny Bank Primary School and the Governing Body support the plans to relocate the infant and nursery departments and to expand the school following academisation. The reasons for this include: -
  - ensuring the future financial viability of the primary school on one site.
  - moving to 2 form entry, will provide school places for local children, enabling the LA to meet the need for extra school places in the locality.
- 8.3. The view of the Area Education Officer:  
The Area Education Officer for East Kent fully supports this proposal and, having considered other commissioning options, is of the belief that this is the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to ensure the future viability of the school and to ensure that additional places are created to meet the need of the demand from new housing in the locality.

## **7. Delegation to Officers**

- 7.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. For information it is envisaged, if the proposal goes ahead, that the Director of Property & Infrastructure Support will sign contracts on behalf of the County Council.

## **9. Conclusions**

- 9.1. Relocation of the infant department and nursery is the cost effect option as opposed to refurbishing and maintaining two sites. The school needs to be financially viable and remaining on the Infant site would mean that this would not be the case.
- 9.2. Ensuring the infrastructure of the relocated school is built to a capacity of 2FE will enable the school to increase its Published Admission Number (PAN) by 0.5fe following academisation, meeting the Local Authority's need for additional capacity to accommodate pupils from new housing in the locality.

## 9. Recommendations

**Recommendation(s):** The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

- (i) Allocate £4.2M from the Children, Young People and Education Capital budget;
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the General Counsel (Interim) to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council; and
- (iii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

This proposal is also subject to Planning agreement.

## 10. Background Documents (plus links to document)

10.1. Vision and Priorities for Improvement

[http://www.kelsi.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/68498/Children-Young-People-and-Education-Vision-and-Priorities-for-Improvement-2018-2021.pdf](http://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/68498/Children-Young-People-and-Education-Vision-and-Priorities-for-Improvement-2018-2021.pdf)

10.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2019-23

[www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision](http://www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision)

10.3 Equalities Impact Assessment - attached

## 11. Contact details

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