

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

To: Richard Long TD, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: **Expansion and relocation of Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School under the Priority School Building Programme Round 2**
(Decision Taken Outside of Cabinet Committee cycle)

Decision Number: 20/00087 (Decision taken on 1 September 2020)

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: Sarah Hohler, Member for Malling North

Summary:

This report sets out a proposal to expand and relocate Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Maidstone Road, St. Mary's Platt, Nr Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 8JY under the Priority School Building Programme Round 2.

At the time of taking the decision, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed to:

- (i) Allocate £1,390,000 to the project, of which £900,000 is to be funded from the Priority Schools Building Programme Budget and £490,000 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget;
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with KCC General Counsel and the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council with the Trustees of Platt CoE Primary School to secure the sale of the current school land with the sale proceeds to be paid to the County Council;
- (iii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with KCC General Counsel and the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council to secure funding of no less than £3,430,000 from the Department for Education for the project;
- (iv) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with KCC General Counsel and the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council to facilitate and manage the construction of the new school buildings and associated works;
- (v) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to ensure that the appropriate level of funding is received from the

Department for Education to cover their agreed share (70%) of any unforeseen costs during the building's construction to ensure that the County Council minimises any unforeseen costs; and

- (vi) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

Recommendation:

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 1 May 2014, the Minister of State for Schools announced that the Government would fund a further phase of the Priority School Building Programme (PSBP), with a value of around £2 billion. The new phase, known as PSBP2, was planned to be a five year programme operating between 2015 and 2021 and entailed major rebuilding and refurbishment projects in schools and sixth form colleges in the very worst condition.
- 1.2 PSBP was not intended to replace those wider efforts to support local authorities, dioceses, sixth form colleges, academies and multi-academy trusts in addressing the condition needs of their estates. Rather it was intended to run alongside these in order to address individual projects that were of such a significant scale that it would be difficult to pay for them through regular formulaic maintenance allocations.
- 1.3 On 9 February 2015, The Secretary of State for Education and the Minister of State for Schools, announced that 277 schools across the Country had been successful in their applications. KCC were successful for 7 of the schools in addition to a further 6 schools across Kent where Academies bid directly. Platt Church of England (CE) Voluntary Aided (VA) Primary was one of the 7 successful KCC school applications.
- 1.4 Previously, the first round of PSBP funding had mainly focused on whole school replacement projects, whereas the criteria for PSBP round 2 was amended and was not always centred on replacing all the school's accommodation. The emphasis was more upon block replacement and was based on poor condition rather than any other criteria such as suitability or sufficiency. Only in exceptional circumstances was a whole school to be replaced.
- 1.5 To aid the delivery of the PSBP round 2 programme, the Education Funding Agency (EfA) decided to offer LA's the opportunity to deliver schemes locally, using local procurement arrangements and local supply chains. These schemes were to be funded by the EfA, but there was opportunity for the Local Authority to contribute additional funds for basic need expansion.

2. Scheme Details

- 2.1 In round 2 of the PSBP scheme KCC, with support from the Diocese of Rochester, as it involves a VA school, made a successful application for

funding to improve Platt CEP school. The EfA funding allocation of £3,430,000 was limited to covering the rebuilding of 2 main school blocks that were in the poorest condition. The project was also selected by the EfA for local delivery with KCC to receive the necessary funding for the construction via a Project Delivery Grant.

- 2.2 Subsequently, agreement was reached with the Diocese and the EfA that third party funding would be used to rebuild the remaining two blocks that had not successfully met PSBP funding criteria. This would allow the whole school to be relocated and rebuilt on a site adjacent to the existing school building. It also enables a Basic Need expansion of the school's PAN from 26 to 30, which would provide 28 additional places across the age range of the school for local children, as a 1FE school it would be financially more sustainable and secure into the longer term future.
- 2.3 The third-party funding was to be achieved through the capital receipt from the sale of the existing school land; owned by the trustees of the school, as it is a Voluntary Aided school. An allocation of cost was agreed with the DfE based on the areas of the building, to allocate the cost of replacement of the school and the cost of increasing the capacity of the school. This increase in capacity was to be fully funded from the future sale of the existing site, which has been estimated at between £800,000 and £1.2 million.
- 2.4 The total scheme cost was initially estimated to be £3,640,000; However, at tender stage it became apparent that there would be significant cost pressures on the scheme arising from the planning requirement to provide a pitched roof which added circa £400,000 to the project.
- 2.5 Value engineering works have been on-going for some time, but cost pressures have been exacerbated by other design and development issues, notably site surveys which confirmed requirements for an additional £190,000 for foundations and retaining walls and £110,000 for drainage. In addition, ecology costs are now at £140,000 due to the volume of reptiles found and an additional £50,000 has been allocated to address the additional costs related to constructing within the relevant Covid-19 restrictions. All additional costs have been scrutinised and agreed by the DfE.
- 2.6 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified in the early stage EqIA, but the assessment will be reviewed as the project continues.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The total estimated cost of the scheme is now £4,720,000. The PSPB funding from Government will be £3,430,000, which leaves £1,290,000 to be funded by third party funding, in addition a contingency of £100k should be allowed for, the total third-party funding required is therefore £1,390,000. It was initially anticipated that the sale of the existing school site would fully fund the third party funding; however this may no longer be the case, due to the increase in costs and advice we have received that the school land may not achieve the higher end of its valuation due to value suppression and nervousness within the land sale market.

- 3.2 It is projected that there will be a funding deficit of up to £490,000 if the land sale achieves an estimated £900,000 value.
- 3.3 It is therefore necessary for the County Council to consider contributing £490,00 of capital funding in recognition of the 28 additional places that the school's relocation will provide. This represents an unanticipated additional capital pressure on a Basic Need budget but is necessary to complete the relocation and rebuild of the school. It would have been financially advantageous for the project to create the 28 additional places without KCC funding, however the objective of PSPB is for rebuilding existing accommodation based on condition and is not intended to fund additional places. This cost represents a cost per place of £17,500 which is below the lower DfE benchmark of £21,022 per place for similar projects.
- 3.4 The County Council has agreed terms with the Trustees of the school that the freehold of the school's existing site is transferred to the County Council which will then sell the site and the proceeds shall be used as reimbursement of the capital funding allocated by the County Council. The proceeds shall be prioritised to reimburse the £900,000 from the PSPB budget, with any proceeds above £900,000 reimbursing the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget up to £490,000.

4. Raising Standards

- 4.1 Platt Church of England Primary School is a small school with a religious character within the Rochester Diocese. It has a school roll of 156 children between 4 and 11 years of age. It received a Good judgement at its last Ofsted inspection in April 2019, which was a Section 8 short inspection.

5. Policy Framework

- 5.1 The 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)'
- 5.2 KCC, as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2020-24 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out KCC's future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:
<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

6. Consultation

- 6.1 In accordance with the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance (October 2018): Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools, there is no need to undertake a formal statutory consultation process.

7. Views

- 7.1 The View of the Local Members
The Local KCC Member for Malling North, Sarah Hohler, has been consulted on the proposal.
- 7.2 The View of the Governing Body
The Governing Body has been integrally involved with the proposal and are fully supportive.
- 7.3 The View of the Headteacher
The Headteacher is fully supportive of the proposal.
- 7.4 The View of the Area Education Officer
The Area Education Officer supports the proposal and is pleased that it will provide additional places for local children and will assist the longer-term financial stability for the school.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This report sets out a proposal to expand and relocate Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School under the Priority School Building Programme Round 2, on behalf of the Department for Education. The scheme also entails a small basic need increase to the school's Published Admissions Number (PAN). The increase in PAN will provide additional places to local children and help to safeguard the financial viability of the school in future years.
- 8.2 The majority of the funding for the scheme is provided by the PSBP grant, but it also requires an allocation of £1,390,000 of capital funding from KCC, of which £900,000 is to be funded from the Priority Schools Building Programme Budget and £490,000 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget.

9. Recommendation(s)

At the time of taking the decision, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed to:

- (vii) Allocate £1,390,000 to the project, of which £900,000 is to be funded from the Priority Schools Building Programme Budget and £490,000 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget;
- (viii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with KCC General Counsel and the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council with the Trustees of Platt CoE Primary School to secure the sale of the current school land with the sale proceeds to be paid to the County Council;
- (ix) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with KCC General Counsel and the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council to secure funding of no less than £3,430,000 from the Department

for Education for the project;

- (x) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with KCC General Counsel and the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council to facilitate and manage the construction of the new school buildings and associated works;
- (xi) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to ensure that the appropriate level of funding is received from the Department for Education to cover their agreed share (70%) of any unforeseen costs during the building's construction to ensure that the County Council minimises any unforeseen costs; and
- (xii) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

Recommendation:

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

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 2020-2024 https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s88604/KCP%202019%20-%202023%20_Cabinet%20Committee%20-%20FINAL%20PW.pdf

11. Report Author

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