
From: Beverley Fordham, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Christine McInnes, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children Young People and Education Cabinet Committee –
15 September 2026

Subject: Proposal for KCC capital contributions to the DfE Schools Rebuilding Programme for Water Meadows Primary School to include 2 Forms of Entry core facilities to the DfE's 1 Form of Entry rebuilding programme.

Decision no: 26/00048

Key Decision: It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Mark Mulvihill - Herne Village & Sturry (Canterbury)

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This report seeks the allocation of the £1.4m capital funds to the Department of Education (DfE) Schools Rebuilding Programme to provide 2 Forms of Entry (FE) core facilities at Water Meadows Primary School to be included in the DfE's rebuild programme of the 1 Form of Entry school.

Recommendation(s):

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council (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 2026-30 (KCP) 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. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:

Commissioning Plan for Education Provision - Kent County Council

- 1.2 Water Meadows Primary School is a 1FE primary school on the outskirts of Canterbury City and is within the Marshside primary planning group. It is part of The Stour Academy Trust.
- 1.3 The Kent Commissioning Plan identifies Water Meadows Primary School to be expanded by 1FE to meet the needs of pupils generated from new housing developments adjacent to the school and in the planning group. The expected primary pupil yield from new developments in the planning group is 277 new primary pupils. A 1FE expansion provides 210 places across Year R to Year 6.
- 1.4 The DfE identified Water Meadows Primary School to be included in the schools Rebuilding Programme and is rebuilding the 1FE School. As the school has been identified to be expanded by KCC in the Kent Commissioning Plan, KCC can contribute funding to enable the inclusion of 2FE core facilities within the rebuild. This will future proof the school site and provide infrastructure capable of supporting a future expansion should additional pupil places be required. Delivering these facilities as part of the rebuilding programme represents better value for money and minimises cost, disruption and inefficiency for retrofitting the infrastructure later.
- 1.5 Water Meadows Primary School and Stour Academy Trust are in full agreement and have been consulted throughout the redesign of the 1FE school with 2FE core. The school will welcome the future 2FE expansion and have the leadership capacity to enable this.
- 1.6 The proposed housing development of Land North of Hersden CA/22/01845 (800 homes) is adjacent to Water Meadows Primary School. The planning application includes 0.8h of land to expand the school by from 1FE to 2FE. The application is currently awaiting a decision by Canterbury City Council. The decision is expected shortly and the s106 is in draft form. The total primary product for Marshside planning group is 277 pupils with 207 attributed to Land North of Hersden (see table below).

Expected pupil yield from new developments within		Marshside planning group		
Planning reference	Development	Houses	Flats	Primary product
CA/24/01935	Goose Farm Shalloak Road Broad Oak Kent	26	0	7
CA/24/01430	Hoplands Farm Island Road Hersden Kent	50	0	14
CA/23/01743	Land North of Popes Lane, Sturry CT2 0JZ	120	0	34
CA/22/01845	Land To the North of Hersden, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 4HY	726	46	207
CA/22/01648	Hoplands Farm Island Road Hersden Canterbury Kent CT3 4HQ	0	4	0
CA/22/01584	Hoplands Farm Island Road Hersden Canterbury Kent CT3 4HQ	50	3	14
CA/21/01018	Sweech Farm Sturry Kent CT3 4FZ	3	0	1
CA/20/02826	Land at Sturry/Broad Oak, Sturry (S106)	55	54	0
New developments within the planning area		1,030	107	277

- 1.7 Funding is therefore sought specifically for the additional 2FE core infrastructure, which goes beyond the DfE-funded 1FE rebuild. This includes

enlarged and enhanced shared facilities necessary to support a 420-pupil school, including:

- Hall and activity spaces
- Kitchen and catering facilities
- Library and specialist teaching spaces
- Staff and administrative accommodation
- Circulation and supporting infrastructure

1.8 The additional core provision totals approximately 263 sqm of extra floorspace. These elements are critical core infrastructure, without which the school cannot operate at 2FE capacity. While additional classrooms (approximately 7) would be required in the future, these can only be delivered effectively if the core infrastructure is already sized appropriately.

1.9 Delivering this expanded core infrastructure at the rebuilding stage provides a cost-effective and efficient solution, avoiding the need for significant disruption, redesign and increased cost later. It ensures that the school is “future-proofed” and can be expanded quickly in response to housing-led pupil demand.

2. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

The option of allowing the DfE to rebuild the school as a standard 1FE school without the enhanced core facilities has been considered and rejected. Any future expansion would require disruptive and intrusive works to provide adequate core infrastructure, such as enlarging the school hall, to a newly rebuilt school, resulting in greater cost and inefficiencies.

3. How the proposed decision supports the Council’s Strategic Statement

3.1 The proposal aligns with and supports the Strategic Statement.

Aim 3: Supporting residents that needs help.

Aim 4: Building better communities. Ensure that the infrastructure needs of the county to support economic growth and quality of life are fully in place.

This project will ensure that there are sufficient school places in the local area and the school infrastructure is appropriate to mitigate the new housing developments in the planning area.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The DfE are leading on the project to rebuild the school, with associated costs expected to be met directly by the DfE through the Schools Rebuilding Programme. The extension of the build to incorporate 2FE core facilities would require the Council to pay an estimated capital contribution to the DfE up to £1.4m which includes c£1.1m of base build costs and c£0.3m of external works and associated infrastructure. The project is at design Stage 3 with the planning application submitted to Canterbury City Council. The determination date is mid-August. The budget includes a risk allowance of 15%.

- 4.2 If this additional contribution is agreed, it will form part of the Basic Need Capital Programme. KCC currently holds banked developer contributions totalling **£1,020,300** towards the Water Meadows Primary School 1 FE expansion. A Community Infrastructure Levy bid has been submitted to Canterbury City Council for the remaining **£379,700**; we are awaiting the outcome of the bid, and this is expected in October. If the bid is unsuccessful the wider Basic Need budget (currently £148m) will be required to fund the difference. This is expected to be manageable within the overall budget and will not be an additional budget pressure. The Schools Basic Need Capital Budget is funded from a range of sources including Basic Need Grant, Developer Contributions, Prudential Borrowing (agreed for historic schemes) and other specific grants.
- 4.3 To complete the 1FE expansion, further capital costs will be required (this may be subject to a separate key decision in line with the governance process) and further developer contributions are being sought where possible.
- 4.4 There is no additional KCC General Fund requirement expected from this decision. There are no expected revenue implications for this design and indirect revenue costs, such as officer time, are expected to be met within existing resources. However, there is an inherent risk with all school related projects, that if this project does not go ahead any abortive costs will need to be transferred to revenue. This risk has been assessed as low.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Planning permission will be required for the 1FE rebuild and includes the 2FE core. The planning application has been submitted to Canterbury City Council, and the determination date is mid-August.
- 5.2 The DfE require KCC to enter into a s151 agreement confirming the funding allocated to the project in October. This aligns with the DfE's anticipated delivery timescale for contract award in October/November and a proposed start on site in January 2027.
- 5.3 Under this arrangement, the DfE will procure and manage the construction of the scheme, with Kent County Council providing the agreed capital contribution for the additional 2FE core infrastructure works.
- 5.4 The agreement will set out the funding, delivery responsibilities and governance arrangements for the project and will be completed in line with the DfE's Schools Rebuild Programme processes.
- 5.5 Local authorities must plan for and secure sufficient school places for their area in line with their duties under section 14 of the Education Act 1996.
- 5.6 Any impacts arising from LGR will be addressed through contract management and the established LGR transition and governance arrangements.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed for the proposed scheme. The screening found no evidence that the delivery of 2FE core facilities at Water Meadows Primary School will impact negatively on pupils from Protected Groups or lead to them being treated less favourably.

7. Data Protection Implications

- 7.1 There are no data protection implications.

8. Other corporate implications

- 8.1 Support from the Capital and Strategic Programmes team will be required to deliver the project.

9. Governance

- 9.1 The proposed decision seeks approval of a capital contribution to £1.4m to provide 2FE core facilities at Water Meadows Primary School as part of the Department for Education Schools Rebuilding Programme. This payment will form part of the Schools Basic Need Capital programme and is expected to be funded from a combination of £1,020,300 of developer contributions and £379,700 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. Should the CIL bid be unsuccessful, the resulting shortfall will be met from the wider Schools Basic Need Capital Budget.
- 9.2 Subject to approval, authority will be delegated to the Director of Infrastructure to undertake all necessary actions to implement the decision, including negotiating, entering and completing the relevant contracts, funding agreements and associated legal documentation.
- 9.3 The Director of Infrastructure will act as the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and will have authority to approve contract variations as envisaged under those agreements.
- 9.4 The Cabinet Member will take the final decision once the funding arrangements have been confirmed, with the Executive Decision Report and Record of Decision updated to reflect the final position.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 A planning consultation held in respect to Canterbury City Council planning application CA/26/00831.
- 10.2 The KCC Member for Herne Village & Sturry, Mark Mulvihill has been consulted on this proposal.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 This report sets out the need for capital contribution from KCC to the DfE for Water Meadows Primary School to include a 2FE core within the 1FE School

rebuild programme. As the school has been identified to be expanded by KCC in the Kent Commissioning Plan in response to new housing developments in the vicinity, KCC can contribute funding to enable the inclusion of 2FE core facilities within the rebuild. This will future proof the school site and provide infrastructure capable of supporting a future expansion should additional pupil places be required. Delivering these facilities as part of the rebuilding programme represents better value for money and minimises cost, disruption and inefficiency for retrofitting the infrastructure later.

Recommendation(s):

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

10. Background Documents

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Data Protection Impact Assessment
- [Commissioning Plan for Education Provision - Kent County Council](#)

11. Appendices

- Appendix A – PRoD

12. Contact details

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