

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Shellina Prendergast

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

22/00080

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Provision of temporary premises to enable Chilmington Green Secondary School to open off-site in September 2023.

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- I. Authorise funding of up to £2,900,000 from the Education Revenue Budget to enable Chilmington Green Secondary school to open off-site in September 2023.
- II. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into necessary contracts or taking other legal actions as required, to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

The Commissioning Plan for Education in Kent has long identified the strategic solution to the secondary school needs of Ashford to be the provision of a new secondary school at Chilmington Green. This development, consent for 5,750 new homes, provides a site for a new secondary school and, over time, £22.5m of contributions.

The Department for Education (DfE) has, in principle, included the new school in its “wave programme” and has appointed United Learning Trust (ULT) to be the school sponsor. The DfE has secured planning permission for the school (June 2022).

KCC’s aspiration had been to have the new school opened in September 2021. Due to delays in getting the site transferred to KCC with all the infrastructure in place, it is unlikely that the school will be open on the permanent site until Easter 2024 at the earliest, but this could be delayed further with up to two years of off-site provision being required.

Currently there are two off site options available:

The Former Ashford South Primary School, Jemmett Road, Ashford

Or

The Former Linden Grove Primary School, Stanhope Road, Ashford

The high level costs for refurbishing the school sites and insuring that there is sufficient provision for up to two years is as follows:

Ashford South: £2,525,557 (Year 1: £1,201,884, Year 2: £1,323,673)

Linden Grove: £2,909,668 (Year 1: £2,384,655, Year 2: £525,013)

Subject to final approval by the Secretary of State for Education, the DfE is willing to approve the opening of the school from September 2023 and to progress the build of Chilmington Green Secondary School, if KCC provides and funds any temporary accommodation needed by the school prior to its new, permanent buildings being occupied.

There is an urgent need to provide secondary school places in Ashford Town non-selective schools in September 2023 and September 2024. Existing schools have all been admitting further pupils and cannot continue to do so without significant additional investment, and there are no guarantees suitable solutions can be delivered.

Financial Implications

Opening off site provision for up to 2 years would require an agreement to revenue investment of up to £2,900,000. This would provide 240 Year 7 places across the 2 years at a maximum cost of £12,083 per place.

Off-site provision would represent a revenue budget pressure and this has not been budgeted for.

Both sites are currently earmarked for disposal and any capital receipt would need to be rephased based on the final option selected. The Linden Grove site already has the benefit of the S77 and Schedule 1 approvals as part of a bigger site to enable a disposal to proceed.

Legal implications

KCC as the LA has a duty to ensure sufficient school places are available which will be supported by the opening of the school in off-site provision.

Equalities implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and no adverse impact on protected groups being identified.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

It has been necessary to take this decision outside of the committee cycle as the Children's, Young People and Education (CYPE) Cabinet Committee on 13 September 2022 had to be postponed following the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth II. The reason this decision cannot wait until the next CYPE Cabinet Committee is the DfE wish to confirm to United Learning Trust that, subject to the Secretary of State for Education approving a funding agreement, move forward with a September

2023 opening. To give this confirmation, DfE require KCC to commit to providing a temporary site and buildings for the school to open in. Delay in providing this will delay the DfE's decision, which has a knock on for the timing of them entering contract to build the new school, which in turn increases the risk that KCC would need to provide temporary accommodation for a longer period, with the costs associated. It also reduces the time the new school has to market, recruit and provides parents with less opportunity to apply for school places with knowledge of the changing options. This would not be able to wait until October or November 2022.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Agreements are already in place to provide additional place at the three non-selective school in the Town to provide 82 additional places in September 2023. However, the latest forecasts suggest that even with these additional places we would still be 70 places short in Year 7 across Ashford Town.

Adding additional provision in existing schools (above what is already agreed) will be challenging given that all Ashford Town non-selective schools have added places to meet demand from the previous 3 years. In addition, getting feasibility in place, planning permission secured and works tendered for September 2023 opening would be challenging.

There is not expected to be sufficient capacity in schools in other towns and districts to meet the overspill from Ashford.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None



29/09/2022

.....
signed

.....
date