

**From:** Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education,  
Learning and Skills

**To:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health  
Reform

**Subject:** Decision number: 14/00003/2 Proposal to relocate and  
expand Tunstall CE Primary School

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** Education Cabinet Committee – 27 September 2013 & 14  
January 2014

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

**Electoral Division:** Swale Central

**Local Members:** Mr Roger Truelove and Mr Lee Burgess

**Summary:** Following objections being received to the Public Notice to relocate and expand Tunstall Primary School it is necessary for the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform to take a further decision to complete the process.

*Recommendation(s):*

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform take the decision to:

- (i) Relocate and expand the school subject to planning permission being agreed
- (ii) Allocate £4,818,000 from the Education. Learning and Skills Capital Budget.
- (iii) AUTHORISE the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
- (iv) AUTHORISE the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

This decision is subject to planning permission being granted by 31 March 2015

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The district section of the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18 has identified a significant pressure in Reception year places. The district of Swale is forecast to have a deficit of up to 87 Reception year places in September 2016 and 2017.
- 1.2 Tunstall CE Primary School is located on a small restricted site. There are significant issues with parking and access and full compliance with DDA guidelines is not possible. The current school accommodation consists of

the original Victorian building, two timber demountable classrooms and three mobiles. A key issue has been the renewal of planning for the three temporary mobiles, without which the school could not continue to operate as a one form entry school.

It is proposed to relocate and rebuild the school on a site owned by KCC located approximately 500 metres to the north east of the existing school. It is also proposed to enlarge Tunstall CE Primary School by 30 reception year places, taking the published admissions number (PAN) from 30 to 60 (Two Forms of Entry) for the September 2015 intake. Successive Reception Year intake will offer 60 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 420 pupils. The rebuilding of the school will provide the children and staff with buildings and facilities fit for 21<sup>st</sup> education and expansion will provide much needed places within the Sittingbourne South planning area.

1.3 On 27 September 2013 Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform that a consultation takes place on the proposal to relocate and expand Tunstall CE Primary School. The public consultation took place between 30 September and 15 November 2013 and a public meeting was held on 22 October 2013.

1.4 On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014, Education Cabinet Committee received a report on the outcome of the public consultation and resolved: the Education Cabinet Committee endorse the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, to:

(i) Issue a public notice to relocate and expand **Tunstall CE Primary School**, by 210 places from 1FE to 2FE.

And, subject to no objections being received to the public notice

(ii) Relocate and Expand the school

(iii) Allocate £4,818,000 from the Education. Learning and Skills Capital Budget.

(iv) AUTHORISE the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council

(v) AUTHORISE the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

1.5 The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform took the decision to issue the public notice on 20 February 2014. In the decision it stated that, should objections not already considered by the Cabinet Member when taking this decision be received during the notice period, a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal and expand the school to allow for proper consideration of the points raised. This decision is subject to planning permission being granted.

- 1.6 During the Public Notice Period 49 responses were received and in line with the Councils democratic process a separate decision to continue the proposal must now be taken. A summary of the objections is attached as appendix 1.
- 1.7 Many of the objections received referred to the proposed rebuilding and location of the new school, raising concerns about parking and traffic. These concerns were also raised as part of the planning process and will be taken into consideration as part of that process.
- 1.8 Objectors also felt that KCC should replace the mobiles on the current school site with a permanent structure to enable it to continue as a 1FE school. This option was considered in 2012 but was not considered viable as it would not represent good value for money and would still not provide the school with adequate facilities. This option would not provide the additional school places needed for the area. This option would also not deal with the considerable parking, access and traffic issues already been encountered on the current site. If KCC were not able obtain planning for the mobiles, the school would have to revert to a half form entry school over a period, further increasing the pressure on primary school places in the locality, causing children to have to travel further distances for their education.
- 1.9 Those in support of the proposal recognised the benefit for the community in ensuring good educational facilities for years to come.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 It is proposed to relocate and rebuild Tunstall CE Primary School, enlarging the school by 210 places taking the PAN to 60 (2FE) for the September 2015 intake and eventually a total capacity of 420 places.
- a. The total cost is estimated to be in the region of £4,818,000. Appropriate funding has been identified as part of the Medium Term Capital Programme, which includes funding from the Targeted Basic Need allocation from the DfE made in August 2013. The costs of the project are estimates and these may increase as the project is developed. If the cost of the project is greater than 10% the Cabinet Member will be required to take a further decision to allocate the additional funding.
- b. Revenue - The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget on a 'per pupil' basis.
- c. Human – Tunstall CE Primary School will appoint additional teachers, as the school size increases and the need arises.

## **3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework**

- 3.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition “to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places” as set out in ‘Bold Steps for Kent’.

- 3.2 The 'Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2013-18' has identified the demand for up to 317 Reception Year places within the planning area of South Sittingbourne.

#### **4. Views**

##### **4.1 The view of the Local Members:**

Having attended the recent public meeting and heard the School's proposals, Local Member, Roger Truelove, is in favour of relocation on educational grounds because the current site is not fit for purpose. He also accepts the case for expanding to two forms of entry to meet need in the Sittingbourne area. On the planning consultation, Mr Truelove will be interested to see whether parking arrangements are adequate and what plans are in place to encourage children and parents to walk to the school.

Having attended the recent public meeting, Local Member, Lee Burgess provided the following response. He declared his interest in the proposal as he is chairman of Tunstall parish council and lives in a property opposite the current school site.

"Tunstall school is located in a small hamlet south of Sittingbourne, has its origins in the 1800s and a large part of the school is in a listed building which has grown over the years to meet demands of local residents and more recently for people all across Sittingbourne. The playground is now dominated by mobile classrooms that are cold in winter and hot in the summer. Each expansion has very rarely looked at long term problems like parking for staff or the increase in traffic from parents. This has led to at times a very hostile relationship between the Parish Council, village hall, residents and the school, a relationship that has not got much better with regards to the current plans and a consultation that has been less than transparent and helpful. The current site is not an ideal one for the ambitions and catchment area of the current school but other options can be looked at.

The consultation has not been as wide ranging or transparent as I would have hoped, the Parish Council and local residents have not been engaged as much as they should have been. If the Parish Council had not stepped up to the mark then very few people would have known about the whole project, and though KCC and the diocese may have done all that the law requires they have still fallen short in proper community engagement. The constant lack of information, misinformation and the constant running of the rumour mill has led to an atmosphere of distrust between residents, the Parish Council, and the school/authority.

The new school will be on very good agricultural land that has drainage issues as does the surrounding area. It will also erode the strategic greening gap between the village and southern Sittingbourne and, in my view, will help pave the way for future development in the rural area. The road is struggling to take current levels of traffic and will not cope with the massive increase in cars; it is a country road that has traffic calming on a bus route. The new proposal though welcomed in principal is not a very good idea on the intended site. All that will happen is the problems we currently experience with the old site will be magnified by the increase in numbers

and just moved further down the road. As a Church of England school children living close to the school but outside the Ecclesiastical Parish come 9th on the admission criteria and Children with affiliations to other Anglican Churches within the Deanery of Sittingbourne come 5th, Children with other Church affiliation at churches in membership with 'Churches together in Sittingbourne come 6th. There is no reason why this new build needs to be in the civic parish of Tunstall at all. It has been for some time serving an ever growing number of children from outside of the civic parish with future development to the north of Sittingbourne and with the schools good reputation this will only increase. The local people were only offered one site for this new school and an inappropriate one at that. This current plan is being rushed forward and has left a lot of people in the dark. I know much of what I have written is more to do with planning than the education needs but they are so closely linked. Poor planning will lead to a detrimental outcome in terms of education. I do not want to see Tunstall lose its small and unique village school; neither do I think it would close due to the expansion/relocation not going ahead or being delayed. The mobiles will keep getting planning permission and people will still want to send their kids to the school as well as other extra capacity in the borough being brought into effect before the new site would even be open, so the education case does not mean we should push ahead regardless. I would be happy to invite all members of the Committee to have a site visit at the proposed new site so that rather than looking at misleading maps and pictures they can get a better idea of the situation."

#### 4.2. The view of the School

##### Headteacher and Governing Body:

The Headteacher and the Governing Body are wholly supportive of the sustainable long term solution that has been proposed by KCC and the Diocese to relocate and expand the school. The proposed site is within the ecclesiastical parish, maintaining its links with the church, whilst providing the expansion to two form entry. This proposal will provide the school with buildings and facilities fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century education and will allow them to build upon its reputation of providing 'good' education as confirmed by Ofsted.

##### Pupils:

As part of a writing exercise, Year 6 children had the opportunity to give their views; 24 supported the proposals to relocate and enlarge the school; 5 objected to the proposals to relocate and enlarge the school.

- There will be more room for us to play
- We will have better facilities to learn in the new school
- Our old mobiles get flooded in heavy rain and sweaty when it's lunchtime.
- We would have a larger hall with proper space to do PE.
- We would have more friends and more friends mean a happy school.
- I object to the new school because there would be lots of traffic disruption.
- Four year old children will find it much more daunting in a larger school.  
Many children like Tunstall School because it's a small school.

#### 4.3 The view of the Diocese of Canterbury:

The Diocese of Canterbury jointly proposes the re-siting and expansion of the school. It will serve the continuing and sustained demand for places in the school, while also making the school more cost-effective. The Church

has provided a School for the ecclesiastical parish and local communities here since 1887, and fully supports the proposal.

It is the Diocesan Board of Education's view that this 'Good' school with a strong and popular ethos is worthy of expansion, and can make a valuable contribution to supporting parent choice and adding to the number of available Voluntary Aided primary places in the area.

4.4. The view of the Area Education Officer:

The Area Education Officer for East Kent fully supports this proposal and, having considered other commissioning options and the need to address the urgent situation with regard to the school on its current site, is of the belief that rebuilding Tunstall CE Primary School as a two form entry school is not only necessary, but the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to the increased demand in the area. All other schools in the planning area were considered.

Tunstall CE Primary School is a popular and inclusive school judged as 'Good' by Ofsted and is regularly oversubscribed. The school's location in South Sittingbourne means it is ideally placed to meet the forecast demand for primary school places in this locality.

## **5. Proposal**

5.1 Tunstall CE Primary School is a Voluntary Aided Church of England school and the proposal is being brought forward by KCC and the Diocese of Canterbury with the support of the governing body of the school.

5.2 The proposed relocation and expansion of Tunstall CE Primary School is subject to KCC statutory decision making process and planning.

5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. Comments have been received from local residents saying that the proposals impact unfavourably on them, but the Equality Impact Assessment is an assessment of the impact of the project on the client group, which in this case is the children, and the families whose children currently attend the school and whose children will attend in the future. No comments to the assumptions made in the Equality Impact Assessment have been received from the client group.

## **6. Delegation to Officers**

6.1 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.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1 Forecasts for the planning area of South Sittingbourne indicate an increasing demand for primary school places. The rebuilding of Tunstall CE Primary School will add an additional 30 Reception Year places to the

capacity per year, in line with priorities 3, 4 and 9 of 'Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework' and the 'Commissioning Plan for Education – Kent' (2013 – 2018).

## 8. Recommendation(s)

**Recommendation(s)** that the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform take the decision to:

- (i) Relocate and expand the school subject to planning permission being agreed
- (ii) Relocate and expand the school
- (iii) Allocate £4,818,000 from Education, Learning and Skills Capital Budget.
- (iv) AUTHORISE the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
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## 10. Background Documents

10.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/your\\_council/priorities,\\_policies\\_and\\_plans/priorities\\_and\\_plans/bold\\_steps\\_for\\_kent.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities,_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx)

10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43253/ItemD3KentEducationCommissioningPlan20132018final.pdf>

10.3 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/TunstallSchool/consultationHome>

10.4 Report to Education cabinet Committee - Decision number: 14/00003

Proposal to relocate and expand Tunstall CE Primary School- 14 January 2014

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s44491/Item%20B3%20-%20Tunstall.pdf>

10.5 Minutes of Education Cabinet Committee – 14 January 2014

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s45463/Minutes%20of%20Previous%20Meeting.pdf>

## 11. Contact details

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