

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

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform

Subject: Decision Number: 14/00115 **Proposed expansion of Birchington CE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School from 2FE to 3FE**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee, 27 September 2013

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: **Birchington & Villages**

Local Member: **Roger Latchford**

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to commission an enlargement of Birchington CE Primary School from 2FE (60) to 3FE (90) from September 2016.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform is asked to consider the responses to the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the proposal and

- i. Issue a public notice to expand Birchington CE Primary School from 2FE to 3FE increasing the published admission number to 90.

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

- ii. Expand the school
- iii. Allocate £2,750,000 from Education & Young People's Services 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

This decision is conditional upon planning permission being granted

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 allow for proper

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Thanet district section of the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18 identified a significant pressure in Reception Year places. Thanet district was forecast to have a deficit of up to 87 Reception year places in September 2016 and this deficit is expected to continue.
- 1.2 It is proposed to permanently enlarge Birchington CE Primary School by 30 Reception Year places, taking the published admission number (PAN) from 60 to 90 (three forms of entry) for the September 2016 intake. Successive Reception Year intake will offer 90 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 630 pupils.
- 1.3 The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18 identified the need for further capacity to serve Birchington. Feasibility was undertaken showing that there is sufficient space on the school site for a 1FE expansion.
- 1.4 This report sets out the results of the consultation, which took place between 22 September and 20 October 2014. A consultation meeting for parents/carers, governors and members of staff was held on 9 October 2014.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 It is proposed to enlarge Birchington CE Primary School by 210 places taking the PAN to 90 (3FE) for the September 2016 intake and eventually a total capacity of 630 places.
 - a. Capital: The enlargement of the school requires the provision of 7 additional classrooms, as well as ancillary facilities. A feasibility study has been completed the total cost is estimated to be in the region of £2,750,000. Appropriate funding has been identified as part of the Medium Term Capital Programme. 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: For a period of three academic years from September 2016 the school will receive protection for an additional 30 Reception Year pupils at the rate of £2,727 per pupil. For each additional classroom, resulting from the expansion of the school, the sum of £6,000 will be allocated towards the classroom setup costs.
 - c. Human: Birchington 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' identified the demand for up to 87 Reception Year places within the Thanet district. If capacity is not added, there will not be enough places available to meet demand and parental preference.

4. Consultation Outcomes

- 4.1 A total of 79 written responses were received: 54 respondents supporting the proposal; 16 objecting to the proposal and 9 respondents undecided.
- 4.2 A summary of the comments received is provided at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 A summary of the views and comments given at the consultation meeting is attached at Appendix 2.

5. Views

- 5.1 The view of the Local Member:
The Local Member is Mr Roger Latchford. He responded that his only concern would be one of traffic issues. "Already this is a major issue and any increase in number will increase the problem. Our KCC Community Warden shares this concern".
- 5.2. The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:
The Governors, Headteacher and staff of Birchington CE Primary School wholeheartedly support Kent County Council's proposal that Birchington should increase from a two form to a three form entry school.

There is a need for more school places in Thanet and particularly in Birchington where children cannot attend their local primary school. There are also plans for more houses to be built in Birchington and Minnis Bay so more children will be attending schools where there is a need to travel across the island rather than to their local school.

We know that the school has the capacity to expand, keeping the high standards and caring ethos that it is known for both locally and within the Local Authority. Development of the present site and a new build will increase the opportunity for the school to offer more children the unique opportunity of being educated at Birchington, where these high standards and caring go hand in hand.

- 5.3 The view of the Diocese of Canterbury:
The Diocese fully supports the leadership of the school and has complete confidence that the school will retain its strong values and ethos. The Diocese welcomes the collaborative and helpful dialogue with the Local Authority, and supports their plans to commission these places in order to provide for anticipated need.
- 5.3. 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 enlargement is not only necessary, but the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to increased demand in the local area. All other schools in the planning area were considered. The pre-school population is increasing in the

Birchington Wards and it is expected that for entry in September 2016, 105 children will be seeking a place in a local primary school.

Birchington CE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School is a popular, inclusive and improving school that serves its local community well.

6. Proposal

- 6.1 The proposed enlargement of Birchington CE Primary School will increase the value of KCC's property portfolio by adding value to the school buildings.
- 6.2 The proposed enlargement of Birchington CE Primary School is subject to KCC statutory decision making process and planning.
- 6.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

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.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Forecasts for the Thanet district indicate an increasing demand for primary school places in the Birchington locality. This enlargement will add an additional 30 Reception Year places in the first year and 30 Reception Year places to the capacity per year, thereafter, 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).

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to expand Birchington CE Primary School from 2FE to 3FE increasing the published admission number to 90.

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

- (ii) Expand the school
- (iii) Allocate £2,750,000 from Education & Young People's Services Capital Budget.

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

10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018

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

10.3 Education Cabinet Committee report– 27 September 2013

<http://kent590w3:9070/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=746&MId=5033&Ver=4>

10.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

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

11. Contact details

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Proposal to expand Birchington CE Primary School from 2FE to 3FE

Summary of written responses

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 450
Responses received: 167

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers	43	16	7	66
Governors	2	0	0	2
Members of Staff	8	0	0	8
Other interested party	1	0	2	3
Total	54	16	9	79

A summary of the main points:

In support of the proposal

Parents:

- With two more children approaching school age, I am reassured that more places means more chance they too can go to the local school. Living close-by means that we walk to school, thereby minimising the impact of traffic on local residents.
- Birchington Primary is a brilliant school so the extra places will give other children a chance to enjoy it as much as my son does.
- Brilliant idea, the school has an excellent reputation. I went to this school 20 years ago and when I had children I decided Birchington Primary was going to be their school. I moved area just to get the children in.
- Birchington Primary is a well-managed school and I am confident it can manage expansion well.
- With the expansion of the Reception Year classrooms, from 60 to 90 pupils, I will stand a better chance of my daughter going to the same school as her brother, so they can both receive the same quality and care in their education.
- To account for all the extra children who will potentially attend Birchington Primary, I believe there should be a proper crossing outside the school along Park Lane, and as a parent of four young children whom all attend the school, I feel this is necessary as I have found this road to be quite a dangerous road to cross, and there are many children who walk to school and have to cross this road.
- We moved into the area last year and were able to secure a place in Year 5 for my eldest son, but the wait to find a place for my youngest in Reception, which was oversubscribed, was horribly stressful. The entire school application procedure could probably be described in the same way. It should be possible to expand the school to give more children the opportunity attend and benefit from all it has to offer.

Staff:

- We desperately need to provide space for Birchington children who are being unsuccessful in their endeavours to obtain a place with us. This is the only way to develop a strong community.

- Although I think the expansion is a good idea, I am concerned that parking will be a major issue, both for staff using the school car park and parents parking on the road.
- Birchington is ever expanding and increasing our capacity would enable more local children to attend our school.
- We should be providing places to local children and since there are now more local children than before and the school is heavily oversubscribed, it really is necessary for the school to expand to three forms of entry.

Other interested party:

- I believe this is a strategic proposal that is likely to be of suitable quality and for the benefit of families in Thanet. I believe this proposal supports the freedom and equality of choice that parents need in choosing Secondary schools in due course and is preferable to hosting a primary school on a secondary school site.

Against the proposal

Parents:

- I do not believe the reason for expansion is to meet the demands of the increase in the number of children in the local area; it's to meet the needs of all the other parents who are dissatisfied with the performance of their academy schools. There will be a vast increase in traffic and congestion which in turn will not impress the local residents. Birchington Primary School is a fantastic school, which is on its way up, let's not spoil this situation, let's get better and continue to give our children the great village school quality of life they deserve.
- If further school places are required, then a "New School Facility" is the correct step forward in a suitable accessible location. Birchington is a "village", access to the school is poor, parking is poor and has been deemed dangerous, the local infrastructure cannot/will not cope.
- I feel that my children's standard of education will fall and that problems with bullying will rise due to more children being together at break and lunch times.
- It will be a big distraction to the children. But more importantly, the school needs to put the children already here first. Getting good Ofsted and good grades are more important than filling the school up with new classrooms.
- The reasons I wanted my daughter to attend this school was that it wasn't too large and had a nice friendly feel. We will lose outdoor space, which we are very lucky to have. There is already not enough hall space when it comes to nativity plays for parents to all attend at the same time.
- Birchington Primary is a fantastic school with a great team of teachers, staff and children – please don't let this be spoilt.
- I don't agree with constant building work going on while my children attend the school, she finds going into school hard enough let along with constant disruption.
- Maybe the government should look into placing children to their nearest local school first before disrupting this village school and accepting children from outside the village.
- Seven extra classrooms, plus extra space to fit all the children at dinner time, will only come with sacrifices and I can see no obvious benefit for any of the children currently attending the school.
- We chose Birchington School for its personal feel and extremely caring staff. I think that this may be jeopardised if the school was to expand.

Undecided

Parents

- We want to continue to support the school but have some reservations. We want to have faith in the information presented at the public meeting that this is an expansion to ensure more Birchington-based children are given the chance to learn at their local school and that the quality and standards of the teaching and the ethos of the school will not be compromised by the expansion.

Other Interested Parties

- The Local KCC Community Warden raised concerns about the additional traffic in the area as he already gets complaints from residents about the anti-social parking, parking on grass verges, blocking drop kerbs, blocking gateways, obstructing junctions, etc. He suggested that as the Children's Centre was rarely used that it could provide additional accommodation for the school. Additional staff parking would need to be provided otherwise complaints from residents will rise.
- A local resident raised concerns about current problems with cars blocking the road and a wall being knocked down twice by a car. There are concerns with the volume of traffic increasing due to the expansion of the school.

Proposal to expand Birchington CE Primary School from 2FE to 3FE

**Consultation Meeting for Parents/Carers, Governors and Staff
Thursday 19 October 2014**

Summary of the Meeting

The meeting was an informal event to give parents/carers, governors and members of staff an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the proposal.

Marisa White, Area Education Officer gave short presentation outlining the proposal, explaining why the local authority was bringing forward the proposal to expand Birchington CE Primary School.

Revd Simon Foulkes paid tribute to the leadership and staff of Birchington CE Primary School and spoke of the Diocese's commitment to the school and its values. Revd Foulkes said the Diocese was proud of what the school had achieved. Revd Foulkes has confidence in the process being open and fair and that a fair decision would be made.

Kath Barham, Headteacher spoke about the schools popularity and how expanding will give local children the opportunity to attend their local school. Siblings take a lot of places and some may live outside the village, taking places from Birchington children. All the governors and staff are behind this proposal. We want to make sure the standards continue to rise and that the school remains a family, village style school. The school already works in collective blocks and even with expansion we will be working in zones, creating a small school environment. Expansion would provide new bigger classrooms with their own facilities. We would have a studio for work groups, dinners, clubs and meetings. We have plenty of space which will allow playground space to be extended to meet the requirements of a larger school.

Comments from parents , governors and staff	Responses from Marisa White and Kath Barham
I would want the school to retain the personal touch. Emotional wellbeing is very important and goes hand in hand with education.	The buildings will be organised so that the children are contained within one unit in caring environments. Any facility that is removed because of the expansion has to be replaced elsewhere on the site. Families choose this school because they like the ethos, but this can impact on local children getting a place.
I do not want the quality of education compromised by the expansion.	The school would gradually increase in size enabling the school to plan effectively and to no detriment to the pupils already here. The school population is increasing and it is important and right for children to have a good education locally.
The quality of teaching will not be compromised.	
It is not the buildings that make a school; it is the body of people that create it.	

The school has always held on to the fact that it is a village school and has a unique ethos.	
I am lucky to have my children here.	
The school has dedicated staff that choose to stay at the school.	Expansion brings further opportunities for staff and helps to retain and attract staff.
This will enhance our lovely environment.	