

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY

Paul Carter, Leader of Kent County Council

DECISION NO.

16/00053

Unrestricted

Subject: Proposed expansion and relocation of Ridge View School, Tonbridge

As Leader, I agree to:

- a) Allocate an additional 2.1m from Special School Review budget to rebuild and expand Ridge View School (Tonbridge).
- b) 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.
- c) 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.

In relation to other required officer actions not specifically delegated above, the Executive Scheme of Delegation for Officers set out in Appendix 2 Part 4 of the Constitution (and the directorate schemes of sub-delegation made thereunder) provide the governance pathway for implementation by officers.

Any Interest Declared when the Decision was Taken

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform declared an interest in the decision being taken and under the rules set out in Appendix 6 (e)iv and vi of Kent County Council constitution, the Leader of Kent County Council will take this decision on his behalf.

Reason(s) for decision, including response to any Cabinet Committee recommendations, and any alternatives considered

- 2.1 As the strategic commissioner of school provision, the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent. This duty applies to special school provision, as well as mainstream settings. These proposals reflect KCC's aspirations to increase the number of SEN school places across the County, as set out in Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2016-20.
- 2.2 Ridge View School is currently located in unsuitable buildings in North Tonbridge in a campus with two mainstream schools, preventing expansion. Despite the inadequate buildings Ridge View School continues to provide outstanding education, as recognised by Ofsted.
- 2.3 A public consultation on the proposed relocation and expansion of Ridge View School took place between 7 October 2015 until 11 November 2015. The outcome of the consultation was reported to the Education and Young People's Cabinet Committee on 15 December 2015 which recommended the proposal be supported. The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agreed to the proposal, and the Record of Decision was signed on 16 December 2015. A Public Notice was issued and no objections were received. The Decision (15/00091) was confirmed and £16.8m was agreed from the Special School Review budget. This included £2.3m of targeted basic need funding to support the expansion of the school from 180 to 228 places, with places due to be delivered by 1 September 2017.
- 2.4 Significant delays have been experienced on this project resulting from numerous planning issues associated with the previous planning application at Higham Lane (now withdrawn), particularly relating to drainage. The new site known as 'Yeoman's Field' is located at Upper Haysden Lane, Tonbridge and is currently used by The Judd School as playing fields. Acquisition of additional land by the Judd School has enabled the release of the Yeoman's Field site for the Ridge View Special School development.
- 2.5 The key impacts of failing to progress this scheme are listed as follows:

- The school would be left in a position that would not provide the increased pupil numbers required within the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education and would result in children travelling long distances to be educated outside of their community.
- The existing school premises would remain unsuitable in terms of space provision and would become an increased maintenance liability.
- It can reasonably be expected that the TBN funding of £2,383,261 may be refundable to the EFA.

3. Proposal and Cost Pressure

3.1 Planning approvals for the Ridge View School and the sporting facilities on the land acquired by The Judd School, have been granted and it proposed that commencement on site in July 2016 in order to complete the scheme in August 2017. However, delays to the progression of the project have placed increased financial pressure on the project budget due to construction inflation and market conditions. This delay, alongside the land acquisition and additional costs associated with special requirements linked to the new site of the school has led to an additional capital pressure of £2.1m. The specific reasons for the increased financial pressure is set out below:

- The Judd School Sports Project. This is an enabling development associated with enabling the use of Yeoman's Field.
- Yeoman's Field site specific requirements which are additional to the original design. This is mainly due to specific location – requirements for mechanical ventilation; enhanced acoustics; abnormal drainage (foul).
- Additional Planning and Building Control submissions.
- Additional site surveying and site specific design requirements.
- Construction inflation.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Capital – The Ridge View School project has received planning permission, however, progress has to be made to complete the rebuild and expansion. The capital pressure is £2.1m, requiring a revised budget allocation of £18.9m, which includes £1.1m contribution to the relocation of the Judd Schools playing facilities as enabling development.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

5. Education Cabinet Committee Opinion

1 July 2016

At its meeting on 1 July 2016 the Committee resolved to endorse that the Leader of Kent County Council take the decision to:

- Allocate an additional 2.1m from Special School Review budget to rebuild and expand Ridge View School (Tonbridge).
- 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.
- 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.

15 December 2015

At its meeting on 15 December 2015 the Committee resolved to endorse that the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform take decision 15-00091.

14 March 2014

At its meeting the Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform that the public consultations on the proposals set out in the report be undertaken.

Background Documents:

6.1 Vision and Priorities for Improvement

http://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/29074/EYPS-Vision-and-Priorities-for-Improvement.pdf

- 6.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2016-20
http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/56329/Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-in-Kent-2016-2020.pdf
- 6.3 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment: www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations
- 6.4 Report to the Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee 15 December 2015 - Proposed alterations to Ridge View School (Tonbridge)
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s61285/RG%20APPROVED%20Final%20ECC%20report%20-%20Ridge%20view%20School.pdf>
- 6.5 Report to Education Cabinet Committee 14 March 2014 – Re-designation of Special schools across Kent
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s45427/Re-designation%20of%20Special%20Schools%20across%20Kent.pdf>



27/07/2016

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signed

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Date