

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough,

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

DECISION NO:

18/00046

For publication

**Subject: Proposal to increase the physical capacity of Meadowfield (Foundation Special) School from September 2017**

Decision:

**As Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education I agree to:**

- (i) Increase the funding allocated from the Children, Young People and Education capital budget to expand Meadowfield Special School from £3,950,000 to £4,792,000.

Reason for Decision:

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee paper of the 18 January 2018 estimated the total cost of the expansion of Meadowfield to be £3.95 Million.

The revised estimated project cost is now £4,792,000. As the revised estimated project cost is more than 10% of the original estimate, a further decision is required to allocate the additional funds of £842,000.

It has been agreed to permanently enlarge Meadowfield (Foundation Special) School, increasing the designated number from 209 to 348 and to alter the lower age range to include nursery provision.

**a. Capital**

Kent County Council's contribution was agreed on 18 January to be £3.95 million. KCC acknowledged at the time that the final amount may be higher as the costs of the project were an estimate. If the cost of the project is greater than 10% the Cabinet Member will be asked to make a further decision to allocate additional funding

The reason for the increase in cost is due to design changes to meet the need of the school's students and the addition of 3a phase to meet additional Basic Need pressures.

**b. Revenue**

The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget. Special schools are funded using the DfE Place Plus funding methodology for High Needs Pupils. Revenue funding will also be allocated to enable the School to resource the new classrooms. At present, this is funded at a rate of £6,000 per classroom.

**c. Human**

The School will appoint additional staff as the need arises.

Supporting Information:

To meet the demand for places in Swale, Meadowfield has taken additional pupils. On 30 March 2017, KCC's Children and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee endorsed the proposal to allocate £1.14 million of capital budget to provide additional accommodation in two phases

(Record of Decision reference 17/00015). Meadowfield received a reception classroom and new KS1 classrooms plus care facilities to accommodate the additional pupils in permanent accommodation.

On 18 January 2018 the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered and endorsed the recommendations to issue a public notice to permanently increase the designated number of the school from 209 – 348 for 1 September 2019 and alter the lower age range at Meadowfield to formally include nursery provision from 1 September 2019.

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee also recommended the allocation of £3.95 million to the project. (Record of Decision 17/00132).

The cost of the build has since increased by £842,000 due to the increased cost of phase 3 due to materials specification and design changes and the additional of phase 3a consisting of two additional classrooms which are in addition to the original scope of the project but are required to accommodate further pupils that the school has had to admit.

At the meeting of the Children, Young People's and Education Cabinet Committee on 25 September Committee, Mr Gough (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education) offered to provide a briefing note to Members of the Committee outside of the meeting, which would give further detail relating to the revised project cost. Mr Gough sent a letter to Members outlining reasons for the overspend on 23 November 2018 and highlighting the reduction in the estimated costs from £5,096,934 to £4,792,000.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other Consultations:

At its meeting on 25 September the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee Marisa White (Area Education Officer – East Kent) was in attendance for this item

1. Marisa White introduced the report which set out the reasons behind the request to increase the funding allocation from the Children, Young People and Education Capital Budget for the expansion of Meadowfield (Foundation Special) School and informed Members of the Committee of the revised cost of the project.

a) In response to a question relating to class sizes, Marisa White said that the class sizes varied between 5 and 8 children because the children had very complex needs.

b) In response to a question relating to the revised cost of the project, Marisa White said that some of the elements of the project had not been anticipated. She said that many discussions had taken place between the school's head of department and project managers in relation to the cost of the project, and the company undertaking the work had a duty to take the outcome of those discussions into consideration when producing the cost estimate. She said that it became clear that the company had produced unreliable cost estimates at the point that Kent County Council were undertaking much more work than anticipated to ensure that the project was ready for the planning stage.

c) In response to a question, Mr Gough (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education) said that when being made aware of this issue, he sought assurance from officers in relation to how and why this had happened and where the funding would be taken from to resolve the issue. He said that there were underspends in other areas of Children, Young People and Education within Kent and therefore other projects and other resources would not be deprived of funding.

d) In response to a question, Matt Dunkley said that Kent County Council's building costs in terms of unit costs, national government guidelines and performance compared very well. Therefore, the vast majority of the school's capital programme was delivered efficiently, within budget and at a good price compared to national comparators. He discussed the way in which

the programmes were delivered and the project management system that Infrastructure, Gen2 and providers said that the transition period occasionally lead to minor issues.

e) In response to a question, Keith Abbott said that a great amount of discussion had taken place between colleagues in Infrastructure and Gen2 as to why and how certain elements of projects were overlooked. He said that Kent County Council delivered within budget on all aspects of the school capital programme, but this did not mean that setbacks did not occur. He said that it was important to ensure that correct processes were in place to be sure that particular issues were not reoccurring and were managed within the budget that was available.

f) In response to a question, Keith Abbott said that Revenue and Capital Monitoring was discussed at the Policy and Resources Committee.

2. Mr Gough proposed to provide a briefing note to Members of the Committee outside of the meeting which would provide further detail relating to the revised project cost. A Member of the Committee proposed that the recommendation be amended to reflect this, this was supported by the Committee.

3. **RESOLVED** that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, to:

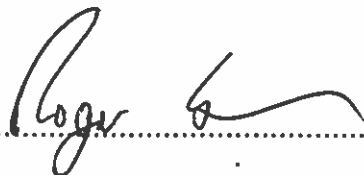
(a) **AGREE** to increase the funding allocated from the Children, Young People and Education capital budget to expand Meadowfield from £3,950,000 to £5,096,934, subject to providing a briefing note to Members of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee explaining in more detail the reasons behind the proposal, be endorsed.

Any alternatives considered:

Meadowfield special School is the District Special School for Swale meeting the needs of pupils with profound, severe and complex special educational needs (PSCN) for children 4-19 years. All Children who attend have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Meadowfield is judged to be Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted in November 2014.

There is no Special school on the Isle of Sheppey (Swale District) which means that significant numbers of pupils often have to travel long distances to the nearest suitable provision. Many pupils are transported to Maidstone and Tonbridge.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None



6 / 12 / 2018

Signed

Date



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