

From: Matt Dunkley, CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Richard Long, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Proposal to expand Meopham School, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Kent DA13 0AH by increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 140 places to 200 places from September 2021

Decision No: 19/00094

Classification: Unrestricted

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

Electoral Division: Gravesend Rural, Bryan Sweetland

Summary:

This report informs members of a proposal to expand Meopham School by increasing the Published Admission Number from 140 places to 200 places in September 2021.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- i. agree to expand Meopham School, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Kent DA13 0AH by increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 140 places to 200 places from September 2021;
- ii. agree to fund the expansion from the schools' basic need capital budget; and
- iii. delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into necessary contracts or taking other legal actions as required, to implement the decision.

Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2020-24 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

- 1.2 It is anticipated that there will be significant short and medium-term pressure for additional Year 7 places in the Gravesend and Longfield Non-Selective Planning Group which indicates that additional capacity will be needed for 2021/22, continuing for later years.
- 1.3 KCC forecasts indicate a growing demand for Year 7 places in Gravesham from the start of the 2019-20 academic year. The Gravesend and Longfield Non-Selective Planning Group is forecast to have a deficit of 102 Year 7 places (3.5FE) from 2021-22 that increases to a deficit of 203 places (7FE) by 2023/24.
- 1.4 Meopham School is a popular school and the proposal to increase the number of secondary places at the school is therefore, in line with the expectation of expanding popular & successful schools. The proposal will add an additional 60 places taking the school PAN up to 200 for September 2021. It will be achieved through building additional accommodation and service space on the Meopham site.

2. Alternative Proposals

- 2.1 There are seven secondary schools in the Gravesend and Longfield Non-Selective Planning Group. These are: Longfield Academy, Northfleet School for Girls, Northfleet Technology College, Saint George's CE School (Gravesend), St. John's Catholic Comprehensive School and Meopham School.
- 2.2 Of these, St George's CE School, Northfleet School for Girls and Thamesview School are either being expanded or have been identified as the subject of a future proposal to expand. Northfleet Technology College is under feasibility for an expansion and Longfield School and St John's Catholic Comprehensive School have been offering additional places under a local arrangement for several years. Meopham School is the only remaining candidate for expansion.

3. Financial Implications

Capital

- 3.1. A feasibility study has been carried out which estimates the cost of delivery being £7.5m, wholly funded by the CYPE Basic Need Capital Budget.
- 3.2. The capital figure reported here is a budget estimate for information only. These estimates will be refined as detailed design work is undertaken and the scheme progresses through the planning process. Following receipt of planning permission, the refined cost estimate will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills for a key decision to be made.
- 3.3. If Members support the progression of this proposal, capital will be spent developing the design. This expenditure will be below the level requiring a key decision and within that delegated to officers.

- 3.4. In addition, an allowance of up to £2500 may be payable to outfit the teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment.

Revenue

- 3.5. Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space will be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This will be given to the school to purchase the required equipment.
- 3.6. The school will receive pupil growth funding in accordance with the Pupil Growth Policy established by KCC and its Schools' Funding Forum.

Human

- 3.7 The school will appoint additional staff as it grows over the years.

4. Kent Policy Framework

- 4.1. The 'Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2020-24 identified a pressure on 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'.
4.2. The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory duty and contributes to the Strategic Business Plan Priorities to ensure that "Children and Young People in Kent get the best start in life".

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Academy Trust held a consultation from 19 November 2019 to 16 December 2019, with a drop-in event for stakeholders to raise issues and concerns on 3 December 2019.
- 5.2 The Academy Trust have considered the response received from the consultation and have confirmed that they will proceed with the expansion proposal.
- 5.3 The consultation can be found via this link:

<https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/meopham/consultationHome>

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory duty and contributes to the Strategic Business Plan Priorities to ensure that "Children and Young People in Kent get the best start in life".

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 An EqIA has been completed and with no adverse effects to any groups being identified. The following positive impacts were identified: An increase in total

number of places available to meet the needs of students with disabilities and/or SEN; more families able to access good school places; school places available to students with and without faith-based backgrounds.

8. Data Protection implications

- 8.1 An impact assessment identified no adverse implications as KCC did not handle any personal data relating to this decision.

9. Views

9.1 The Local Member

Mr Bryan Sweetland was informed of the proposal through the consultation mechanism. Mr Sweetland said, "Meopham School is an outstanding school, highly regarded and valued by the residents of the Gravesham Rural division. I am pleased to offer this proposal my full support."

9.2 Area Education Officer:

The analysis of the demand for secondary non-selective provision in the area, indicates that there are immediate and future pressures and we urgently need the additional capacity provided by this proposed expansion. I therefore support the proposal.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 Forecasts indicate a growing demand for Year 7 places in Gravesham from the start of the 2021-22 academic year. The Gravesend and Longfield Non-Selective Planning Group is forecast to have a deficit of 102 Year 7 places (3.5FE) from 2021-22 that increases to a deficit of 203 places (7FE) by 2023/24.
- 10.2 All other schools in the planning group are either being expanded or are the subject of a future proposal to expand. Meopham School is the only remaining candidate for expansion.

11 Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- i. agree to expand Meopham School, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Kent DA13 0AH by increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 140 places to 200 places from September 2021;
- ii. agree to fund the expansion from the schools' basic need capital budget; and
- iii. delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into necessary contracts or taking other legal actions as required, to

implement the decision.

12 Background Documents

- Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020.
<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-thecouncil/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/increasing-opportunitiesimproving-outcomes>
- Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision
www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision
- Equality Impact Assessment
https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1088162/59090917.1/DOCX/-/Meopham_EqIA.docx

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