

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:
Richard Long TD
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:
20/00053

For Publication

Subject: Proposed increase to the Designated Number of places at Broomhill Bank School, Broomhill Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 0TB.

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills I agree to:

- (i) increase the Designated Number of places at Broomhill Bank School, Broomhill Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 0TB from 210 to 318 places from September 2020.
- (ii) agree to fund the expansion from the CYPE Basic Need Capital Budget.
- (iii) authorise the expenditure of up to £2m to deliver the additional accommodation required for the first phase of building works, required for the School Year commencing in September 2020.
- (iv) delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into necessary contracts or taking other legal actions as required to implement the decision.

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.

Reason(s) for decision:

Kent County Council (KCC), as the Local Authority, has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. This duty applies to Special Education Needs (SEN) provision, as well as mainstream settings.

The Commissioning Plan highlights the SEN place pressure that Kent has experienced, with the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) increasing significantly in recent years. The most prevalent and fastest growing need type is ASD and data indicates that 40% of children and young people aged 0-25 years with EHCPs have ASD as their primary need type.

The demand for places at Broomhill Bank School has increased commensurately, with strong parental preference. Broomhill Bank has a Designated Number of 210, but there is pressure for the school to accept additional pupils to meet demand in both West and North Kent.

The Broomhill Bank Governing Body, with support from Kent County Council (KCC), is proposing to increase the school's Designated Number of places from 210 to 318 places from September 2020. KCC has identified that Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the fastest growing need type and that additional places are needed to meet the demand for places in West and North Kent.

Legal Implications

Legislation requires that statutory processes are undertaken where:

The proposal is an increase of the designated number by 10% or 20 pupils (whichever is lesser).

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. The screening found there is no evidence that the change will impact negatively on pupils from Protected Groups or lead to them being treated less favourably. The school will remain co-educational and continue to welcome pupils placed by KCC regardless of gender identity, race, ethnicity or religion beliefs. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

Financial Implications

Capital – Feasibility work has been undertaken which estimates the total cost of additional accommodation to be circa £4m, which would be wholly funded by the CYPE Basic Need Capital Budget.

The delivery of the additional accommodation to provide capacity for the increased Designated Number is proposed to be delivered over two phases. The first phase of works will deliver the accommodation required for the School Year beginning in September 2020. Detailed costings have been undertaken for these works and a cost of £2m identified. Planning permission would not be required for the works. This would provide the school with the initial capacity it would need to accommodate a staggered increase in pupil numbers.

The first phase of works would entail the relocation of the sites' receptions, remodelling within the existing accommodation to create additional teaching spaces, the placement of supplementary temporary mobile classrooms and car parking improvements.

A second phase would then be undertaken to provide the school with the new additional accommodation required to gradually admit pupils to a total roll of 318 in subsequent years. This would include the provision and enhancement of sports facilities. Detailed costings for this phase are not yet available and planning permission would be required. Following receipt of planning permission, a refined cost estimate would be presented to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills for a Key Decision to be made to release capital funding for this phase.

Revenue Funding – Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to special schools through KCC's funding formula.

Human - The school will appoint additional staff as and when appropriate.

In reaching this decision I have taken into account:

- the views expressed by those who responded to the public education consultation
- the views expressed by those put in writing by the Area Education Officer, the School and the Governing Body.
- the Equalities Impact Assessment regarding the proposed change.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The report was shared with Members of the CYPE Cabinet Committee for comment, prior to a decision being taken.

A public education consultation carried out by the school's Governing Body, with support from the KCC, from 1st May 2020 to 8th June 2020. To date 5 responses to the consultation have been

received, 4 from parents/carers and one from Rusthall Parish Council. Of the parents/carers who responded, 3 were in support of the proposal with one commenting that it would be 'an excellent move. It will provide more opportunities for current and new students'. One parent/carers responded as 'undecided' due to concern regarding the potential for 'the continuous change in dynamic of students' that had been evident to them as the school has grown. The Rusthall Parish Council responded as 'undecided' but provided no commentary.

In order that his decision is fully informed by the consultation, the Cabinet Member will be provided with a summary of the full responses at the conclusion of the consultation period and before the PProD is published.

Any alternatives considered:

There is limited ASD specific provision available in the West and North of the county, with the nearest Special School to the Broomhill Bank sites with ASD as its main need type having already recently expanded. After exploring the options, the increase in Designated number for Broomhill Bank School was deemed the suitable option.

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



24 June 2020

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Signed

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Date