
To: Sevenoaks Locality Board

Subject: Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision

Summary: To request the Locality Board, or a sub-group of it, set up a mechanism to review the Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision on an annual basis.

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) has two fundamental educational duties: the provision of sufficient, high-quality school places and the improvement of school standards.
- 1.2 In October 2012, KCC published the first iteration of Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, and a district-specific version of the plan can be found in the appendix. The Commissioning Plan sets out the requirement for places in early years provision, and in primary, secondary and special schools until 2017; it identifies the areas where providers will need to match supply with demand. It provides the context for the future organisation of school places in Kent and sets out the principles that need to be given serious consideration when commissioning school places. It is KCC's intention that the Commissioning Plan will be re-published annually.
- 1.3 The Commissioning Plan for Educational Provision in Kent supports KCC's objective to be one of the best places for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve. Good and outstanding schools are the basis of strong communities and a strong local economy. Parents want their children to go to a good school and a choice of schools to select from. One of KCC's aims is to ensure that there is a good choice of local schools within reasonable travelling distance and that the number of parents who are satisfied with the school places offered for their child increases. Securing good quality school places in every community is essential for every young person to have the best start in life.
- 1.4 The data within the Commissioning Plan will be used by KCC to decide where new schools should be built and where existing schools should be either expanded or reduced in size. It is therefore vitally important that the figures contained within the Commissioning Plan are accurate, up-to-date and sufficiently localised to support school place planning.
- 1.5 The forecasts for pupils' numbers will be affected by families moving into an area and by the changes in birth rate. KCC is therefore reliant on close partnership working with other agencies, such as the District Council and the Health Agencies, in order to be kept informed of new housing developments and changes in live birth data.
- 1.6 Any new school builds required would be funded from section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy, in addition to the modest amount of basic needs funding provided to KCC by Central Government. District Councils determine the level of section 106 agreements through their planning committees and so partnership working is vital to ensure the section 106 contributions for educational purposes are appropriate.

1.7 Furthermore, District Councils may be aware of new providers entering the market now that parents and communities are able to make free school applications. Improved communication lines between the Councils will support KCC place the right type of educational provision in areas of growth.

PROPOSAL

- 2.1 KCC intends to re-publish the Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision annually, every October. The plan will be reviewed by KCC's Education Cabinet Committee every six months.
- 2.2. Whilst the duty to ensure sufficient high-quality school places lies with the County, a greater level of involvement between the County and District Councils would be beneficial for the reasons outlined in paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6.
- 2.3 The proposal therefore is for the Locality Board to agree a mechanism by which it can bi-annually acquaint itself with the requirements, as set out in the Plan, and review them against local pressures (such as new housing developments and changes to the migrant population) and produce recommendations. A mechanism the Locality Board may wish to consider is the creation of the sub-group of the Locality Board which meets twice a year with planning officers from both the District and County Councils to provide in-depth scrutiny and input into the figures, before producing recommendations.
- 2.4 If this proposal is approved, KCC would ask that the recommendations from the Locality Board would be fed back every April and September to KCC's Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills and KCC's Education Cabinet Committee. Those recommendations would form the basis of any revised numbers in the Commissioning Plan to be re-published in October.
- 2.5 Officer support for the review process from KCC will be provided by the Area Education Officer and the Head of Development.

RECOMMENDATION

The Local Board is asked to agree to the proposal described above.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision (2012 version) – Sevenoaks extract.