



LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

DECISIONS to be made by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change,
Councillor Nick Bennett

**THURSDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 3.00 PM OR AT THE CONCLUSION OF PENSION
COMMITTEE, WHICHEVER IS THE LATER**

REMOTE MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

AGENDA

1. Decisions made by the Lead Cabinet Member on 12 August 2025 (*Pages 3 - 4*)
2. Disclosure of Interests
Disclosure by all Members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct
3. Urgent items
Notification of any items which the Lead Member considers urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda.
4. Playing field adjacent to the Tilling Green Community Centre - outcome of the public consultation of the Council's proposed disposal of the land (*Pages 5 - 10*)
Report by Chief Operating Officer
5. Award a building contract for the provision of new secondary school accommodation at Acre Wood Academy, Crowborough (*Pages 11 - 14*)
Report by the Chief Operating Officer
6. Any non-exempt urgent items previously notified under agenda item 3
7. Exclusion of Public and Press
To consider excluding the public and press from the meeting for the remaining agenda item on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
8. Award a building contract for the provision of new secondary school accommodation at Acre Wood Academy, Crowborough - Exempt information (*Pages 15 - 20*)
Report by the Chief Operating Officer
9. Any exempt urgent items previously notified under agenda item 3

PHILIP BAKER
Deputy Chief Executive
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent
LEWES BN7 1UE

17 September 2025

Contact Sophie Webb, Governance and Democracy Manager,
01273 337495
Email: sophie.webb@eastsussex.gov.uk

NOTE: *As part of the County Council's drive to increase accessibility to its public meetings, this meeting will be broadcast live on its website. The live broadcast is accessible at:*
<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council/videos-of-council-meetings/webcasts>

LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change, Councillor Nick Bennett, on 12 August 2025 at Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Councillors Denis, Maples and Stephen Shing spoke on items 4 and 5 (see minutes 20 and 21)

16. DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER ON 8 JULY 2025

16.1 The Lead Member approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2025.

17. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

17.1 There were none.

18. URGENT ITEMS

18.1 There were none.

19. REPORTS

19.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

20. FAIR FUNDING REVIEW 2.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSE

20.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer.

DECISIONS

20.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

- (1) Approve the proposed consultation response; and
- (2) Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to make any further minor amendments and to submit the final response by 15 August 2025.

REASONS

20.3 The Council has considered the government's proposed funding reforms, which are likely to mean a loss of settlement funding for 2026/27. While aspects of the reforms are welcome, East Sussex County Council has concerns with some of the proposals and how this will impact the Council's financial position over the settlement period.

20.4 East Sussex County Council hopes that the response, together with those of other authorities within the Council's networks, will be reflected in the government's policy statement and final settlement due before the end of 2025.

20.5 The proposed response set out at Appendix 1 of the report is in draft format. Further work continues in consultation with other local authorities and network bodies.

21. PHOENIX CENTRE, LEWES - OPTIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

21.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer.

DECISIONS

21.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

- 1) Declare the Phoenix Centre, Lewes (the Property) to be surplus to the Council's requirements; and
- 2) Agree that the Property be let in accordance with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

REASONS

21.3 The Council has no ongoing operational use for the Property. The Property is surplus to the Council's requirements and the letting of it will reduce revenue liabilities relating to the management and holding costs of this surplus asset, as well as providing the Council with an income stream.

Report to: Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

Date of meeting: 25 September 2025

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Playing field adjacent to the Tilling Green Community Centre – outcome of the public consultation of the Council’s proposed disposal of the land

Purpose: To consider the responses to the public notice of the Council’s intention to dispose of the land and to consider the options for the next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change is recommended to:

- 1) Note the summary of the responses to the public notice of the Council’s intention to dispose of the site;
- 2) Approve that the site is to be marketed on the open market by an appointed marketing agent; and
- 3) Approve the exercise of the Landlord’s option to break the lease relating to the site at an appropriate time.

1 Background

1.1 On 22 April 2025, the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change approved that the Council commence consultation under Section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of the playing field adjacent to the Tilling Green Community Centre, Rye (the site). A record of the decision can be found here: [Decision - Playing Field Adjacent to the Tilling Green Community Centre, Rye | East Sussex County Council](#)

1.2 The consultation focussed on the intention to dispose of the playing field adjacent to Tilling Green Community Centre. There is no intention to dispose of Tilling Green Community Centre.

1.3 The site is subject to a lease that includes a rolling Landlord break option.

1.4 The site is allocated for housing in the Rye Neighbourhood Plan, the latest version of which can be found here: [Rye Neighbourhood Plan – Rye Town Council](#). It is considered to be appropriate for the development of at least 20 dwellings, subject to various considerations. The community centre is to be retained in-situ.

1.5 The Rye Neighbourhood Plan has recently been subject to public consultation, which closed on 21 July 2025.

1.6 The site is identified in Appendix 1 to this report.

2 Supporting Information

2.1 There is a statutory duty imposed by Section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 to advertise a proposed disposal of Public Open Space and to consider any objections made. In accordance with this duty, the Council gave public notice of the intention to dispose of the playing field. A notice was placed in the Hastings Observer for Rye for 2 consecutive weeks on 23 May 2025 and on 30 May 2025, giving a deadline of 16 June 2025 for objections to be made. Notices were positioned around the boundaries of the playing field. A notice was also available to view online on the Public Notice portal here: [Notice near TN31 7BE from Sussex World](#).

2.2 Four written responses were received. All responses were acknowledged by the Council as soon as possible after receipt. Correspondence has been sent to each person that contacted the Council, to notify them of the date of the Lead Member meeting where this report is to be considered and to advise that a decision is to be made.

2.3 Broadly, 2 of the responses were supportive and 2 of the responses were not supportive of the intention to dispose of the site.

2.4 The general theme of the objections is summarised below:

- Tilling Green does not need more houses, it needs a community space which people can use;
- If developed, there would be a further burden on the roads, infrastructure and flood risks in the area.

2.5 The 2 responses received in support of the intention to dispose of the site acknowledged that the site was allocated for housing in the Rye Neighbourhood Plan and outlined a preference for the site to be developed as affordable housing.

2.6 In light of the responses, the following options have been identified for the site:

- **Option 1:** To retain ownership of the site and not exercise the Landlord's break option to bring the existing lease on it to an end.
- **Option 2:** To market the site for sale on the open market and to exercise the Landlord's break option to bring the existing lease on it to an end at an appropriate time.

2.7 Option 1 maintains the current use as playing fields associated with the Community Centre, but means that a key site identified for housing in Rye is not brought forward.

2.8 A number of organisations have publicly expressed an interest in developing the site for housing. If Option 2 is progressed, it is recommended that the site is marketed on the open market to ensure a fair and transparent disposal process. Given the site allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered to be most likely that offers will be received from developers wishing to build housing on the site. The site will be marketed for an appropriate amount of time, with offers invited by a given deadline. Offers received will be considered by the Lead Member at a future decision-making meeting.

2.9 Development of the site will be subject to the grant of planning permission. Rother District Council, as the local Planning Authority, will ensure that matters raised by local residents, as set out in paragraph 2.4 above, will be considered as part of the public consultation stage of the planning process, once a planning application has been submitted for approval. Matters such as Local Plan Policy compliance, drainage, access, development density, design and affordable housing provision, environmental and highways impacts will be considered during such a planning process before any development scheme is granted planning permission.

2.10 The Council has a duty to dispose of assets for the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained, in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, unless the Secretary of State consents to the disposal. General consent from the Secretary of State is given to local authorities in certain specified circumstances, as outlined under Circular 06/03: Local Government Act 1972 general disposal consent (England) 2003 (disposal of land for less than the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained).

2.11 It is therefore recommended that the Lead Member approves Option 2, i.e. to market the site for sale on the open market and to exercise the Landlord's break option to bring the existing lease on the site to an end at an appropriate time.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Council has considered the outcome of the responses from members of the public concerning the intention to dispose of the site, as summarised in this report. The feedback on the proposal to dispose of the site is balanced in terms of the numbers for and against. The Lead Member is recommended to note the feedback, as set out in this report.

3.2 As set out above, in the absence of consent from the Secretary of State, the Council is obliged under s.123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of assets at the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained. In addition, the proposal to dispose of this land will support the likely provision of housing in the local area. The Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve that the site be marketed for sale on the open market.

3.3 In order to dispose of the Site, it will be necessary to exercise the Landlord's option to break the existing lease relating to the site. The Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve that, at a time that is considered to be appropriate, the Council exercises the Landlord's option to break the existing lease on the site.

ROS PARKER
Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officer: Rebecca Lewis
Tel: 01273 335873
Email: rebecca.lewis@eastsussex.gov.uk

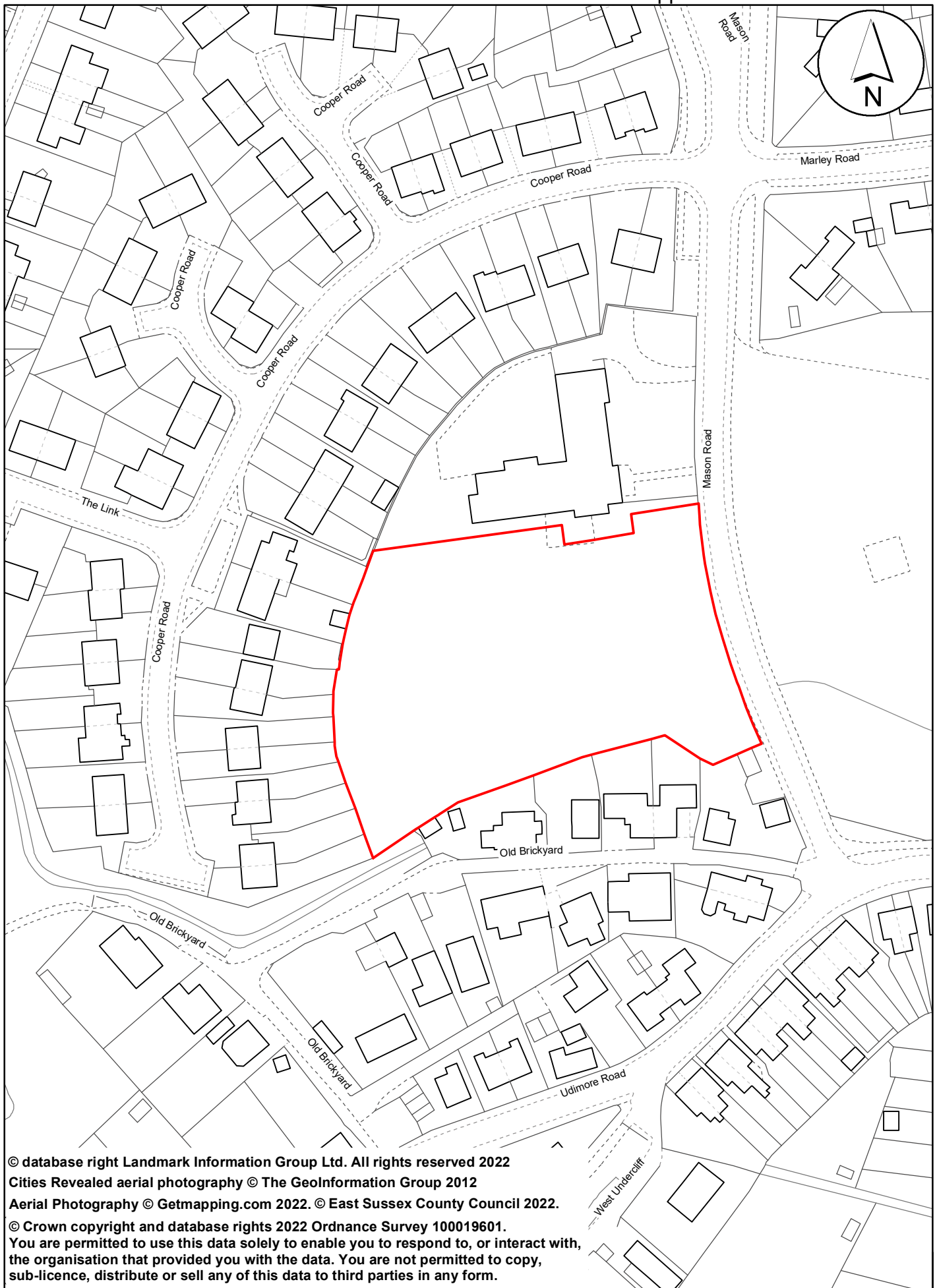
LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Keith Glazier OBE – Rye and Eastern Rother

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Copies of all responses received

Copy of notices placed in the Hastings Observer for Rye



© database right Landmark Information Group Ltd. All rights reserved 2022
 Cities Revealed aerial photography © The GeoInformation Group 2012
 Aerial Photography © Getmapping.com 2022. © East Sussex County Council 2022.

© Crown copyright and database rights 2022 Ordnance Survey 100019601.
 You are permitted to use this data solely to enable you to respond to, or interact with,
 the organisation that provided you with the data. You are not permitted to copy,
 sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.

Tillling Green Community Centre Field

Author: FM

Page 9

Scale: 1:1,250

Date: 08/04/2022

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to: Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

Date of meeting: 25 September 2025

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Award a building contract for the provision of new secondary school accommodation at Acre Wood Academy, Crowborough.

Purpose: To seek approval for the award of a building contract for new secondary school accommodation at Acre Wood Academy, Crowborough.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the award of a building contract to Willmott Dixon to construct new secondary school accommodation at Acre Wood Academy adjacent to the primary school accommodation; and
 - 2) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to take all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.
-

1 Background

1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient good school places for all pupils, including for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The numbers of pupils with Education Health and Care Plans is on an upward trajectory, nationally and locally which places significant pressure on the High Needs Block Funding that the Council receives to meet the educational needs of these pupils.

1.2 In responding to this increased need for school places for children with SEND the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability approved the relocation and expansion of the secondary phase of Acre Wood Academy (formerly Grove Park school) and the lowering of the age range of the school to 2 years, at his decision-making meeting on [25 March 2025](#). In addition, the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability approved on [2 June 2025](#) a change of designation for the primary type of need that the school meets to also include Severe Learning Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder alongside Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties to accurately reflect the needs of pupils attending the school.

1.3 Previously, Grove Park school, converted to an academy on 1 July 2025 with the London Southeast Academy Trust (LSEAT). LSEAT are a high performing academy trust and have been working collaboratively with the local authority on the capital project. The Council is responsible for delivery of the capital project, and the academy will be responsible for all running costs once the new building is handed over. This report sets out details of the award of a building contract to a national building contractor to construct new secondary school accommodation on the Acre Wood Academy, Church Road site.

1.4 The project is being funded largely through the High Needs Provision Capital Funding Allocation (HNPCA) that the Council receives from the Department for Education (DfE). The HNPCA is intended to support local authorities in their duty to provide suitable school placements for children and young people with SEND, or who require alternative provision (AP). The breakdown of the funding contributions is detailed in an exempt report later in the agenda.

2 Supporting information

2.1 An internal working group has been working over the last 2 years engaging with the school to design new secondary phase accommodation to be co-located on the primary school site at Church Road. The Council employed Playle & Partners to provide consultancy advice to work up a school project working with architects and other specialists. The design of the school was crucial to ensure a fit for purpose school was provided but taking into account a limited budget and the wider environmental factors of the site and the current primary school.

2.2 The Council has been working with Willmott Dixon and Playle & Partners as part of a pre-construction contract to ensure there was co-design of the school through the various Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stages. This allowed the Council to take stock at each stage to understand the costs, design and risks of constructing the secondary phase accommodation. There were engagement sessions with residents and stakeholders before a planning application was submitted. The feedback from engagement sessions helped shape the final design of the school. A planning application was submitted in late 2024.

2.3 Planning permission was granted on 30 April 2025. There were planning conditions issued with the permission and it has taken time to progress with satisfying these conditions. A summer enabling works contract was instructed to take advantage of the school holiday period and complete some works to prepare the site for development (utility service diversions, site vegetation clearance, and ecology mitigation). All pre-commencement condition information has been submitted for review and planners were satisfied ahead of the commencement of the summer enabling works. In addition, the design is well progressed and fully coordinated with Playle & Partners and Willmott Dixon. The Council opted for a 'design and build' procurement approach to achieve faster project delivery, and to improve cost certainty, as well as foster enhanced collaboration between design and construction teams. This approach also simplifies communication by managing a single contract. Willmott Dixon is a reliable contractor once in the construction phase which is particularly important in this project due to the scale of the works and the proximity to the operational primary phase accommodation.

2.4 The timeline for the construction of the secondary phase accommodation is targeted to complete by end of December 2026, assuming the building contract is awarded by 2 October 2025. Education officers will work with LSEAT to plan for the first pupils to occupy the school in a phased manner with full occupation due in September 2027.

2.5 The internal project board have reviewed the final costs submitted by Willmott Dixon for the main construction works. The construction costs have been broken down to various building work packages. For each subcontract work package (e.g. groundworks, steelwork, carpentry, windows, doors), Willmott Dixon have sought 3 quotations to ensure there is value for money from their supply chain. Playle & Partners, as the Council's specialist, analysed the costs provided in late August 2025.

2.6 Council officers have reviewed the final cost plan and recommend that a final contract is awarded to Willmott Dixon for the secondary phase accommodation project. The Council will consider how the delivery of the nursery school places can be delivered as phase 2 of the project working with LSEAT.

2.7 A breakdown of the costs as well as the Council's approach to identifying risks and how they have been mitigated, reflecting the design and build contract are detailed in an exempt report later in the agenda.

3 Conclusion and reason for recommendations

3.1 The Acre Wood Academy capital project, Crowborough is an important part of the Council's SEND place planning strategy. The new secondary school accommodation will deliver additional specialist provision to meet the needs of children with SEND requirements.

3.2 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve the award of a building contract to Willmott Dixon to undertake the construction for the provision of new secondary school accommodation on the Acre Wood Academy Church Road site in Crowborough. It is also recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to take all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

ROS PARKER Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officer: Nigel Brown
Tel: 07394 410630
Email: nigel.brown@eastsussex.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Christian Williams
Tel: 07500 701718
Email: Christian.williams@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Johanna Howell – Crowborough North and Jarvis Brook.
Councillor Philip Lunn – Crowborough South and St Johns

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[ESCC Planning Committee – 30 April 2025](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank