

Report to: Lead Member for Resources

Date of meeting: 26 January 2021

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: The Ropemakers' Academy 125-year Free school Lease

Purpose: To authorise ESCC to enter a 125-year Free school Lease for premises known as The Ropemakers' Academy, Hailsham.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended for the Lead Member for Resources to:

1) authorise the Chief Operating Officer to agree and enter into a DfE standard 125-year Free School Lease for premises at Reef Way, Hailsham known as The Ropemakers' Academy, Hailsham; and

2) authorise Property Services to agree terms in line with the standard Department for Education 125-year Free School lease at a peppercorn rent.

1 Background

- 1.1 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) purchased land at Reef Way, Hailsham on 8 January 2019 following approval given by the Lead Member for Resources on 23 March 2018. The land was acquired as there was a requirement for constructing a new school for pupils with special educational needs.
- 1.2 As a local authority, ESCC has powers to plan new provision and provide capacity and this was required for pupils in the Hailsham area. The school will support ESCC's strategy to increase the number of special school places, and will help to meet the needs of increased numbers of pupils with an for Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), as well as with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at primary level. The school will provide 80 places across the primary and secondary phases.
- 1.3 The Council has funded the construction of the new build school as part of the Schools Capital Programme 2020-2021, and it will be operated by the Beckmead Trust. The planned completion date is January 2021.
- 1.4 The newly created school will become a Free School, as outlined in the Education Act 2011 and section 6A Education and Inspection Act 2006. All new schools since February 2012 will be opened as a Free School based on this legislation. The Council will therefore be required to grant a standard Department for Education 125-year Free School lease at peppercorn rent. A plan showing the land to be demised (outlined in red) is attached at Appendix 1.

2 Supporting information

- 2.1 Under the Academies Act 2010 (as amended), there is provision for existing maintained schools to transfer to Academy status. There has been a long-standing authority granted on 16 November 2010 by the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness. The delegated authority allows for the transfer of schools to Academy Trusts using these delegations.

2.2 However, this delegated authority doesn't cover Free Schools and the associated grant of a long 125-year Free School lease. A standard 125-year lease issued by DfE for a Free School lease is slightly different to that for an existing school converting under an Academy conversion process. Therefore, Lead Member approval is requested for this Free School lease to the Beckmead Trust.

2.3 It is intended to review the Scheme of Delegations for property transactions to include Free School 125-year leases going forward.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Ropemakers' Academy is being constructed and will be operated as a Free School by the Beckmead Trust.

3.2 It is recommended for the Lead Member for Resources to authorise the Chief Operating Officer to agree and enter into a DfE standard 125-year Free School Lease at a peppercorn rent to the Beckmead Trust for the premises known as The Ropemakers' Academy, Hailsham.

Phil Hall Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officer: Zoe Tweed, Estates Team Manager
Tel. No. 07701 021868
Email: zoe.tweed@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Bob Bowdler

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None