

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**Lifelong Learning Committee – 31 August 2011****DEFERMENT OF CONSULTATIONS FOR STRALOCH AND STRUAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS****Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)****ABSTRACT**

This report seeks approval from the Lifelong Learning Committee to defer the commencement of formal consultations on the proposals to close Straloch Primary School and Struan Primary School until the findings and recommendations of the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education are reported. The report also informs the Committee of the operational arrangements for both schools in the meantime.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1.1 Agrees to defer the commencement of formal consultations on the proposals to close Straloch Primary School and Struan Primary School until the findings and recommendations of the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education are reported;
- 1.2 Notes that the previously agreed arrangements to mothball Straloch and Struan Primary Schools from 15 August 2011 will remain in place: and
- 1.3 Instructs the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to report back to the Committee on the findings and recommendations of the Commission in due course.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 1 June 2011, the Lifelong Learning Committee approved the reports Statutory Consultation – Straloch Primary School (Report 11/254 refers) and Statutory Consultation – Struan Primary School (Report 11/255 refers). These reports sought approval to commence formal consultations on the proposals to close Straloch and Struan Primary Schools. It also sought approval of the Options Appraisals and Proposal Papers for both schools.
- 2.2 The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has announced the setting up of a Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education and has requested a moratorium on rural school closures for one year.
- 2.3 The Commission has been tasked with, among other things,
 - To review the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and its application.
 - To examine how the delivery of rural education can maximise attainment and outcomes to give pupils the best life chances, and to examine, where appropriate, how this can be applied more widely.

- To make recommendations on how to reflect best practice on the delivery of all aspects education in rural areas (pre-school through to Higher and Further Education).
- To examine the links between rural education and the preservation, support and development of rural communities and to make recommendations on how these links might be strengthened if necessary.
- To examine and make recommendations on funding issues surrounding rural education.

2.4 It is anticipated that the Commission will report back in Spring 2012 with a number of recommendations on the way forward for the delivery of education in rural areas.

2.5 The moratorium is proposed to run from 20 June 2011 until 20 June 2012.

3 PROPOSALS

3.1 It is therefore proposed that the decision to commence formal consultations on the proposals to close Straloch Primary School and Struan Primary School is deferred until the outcome of the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education is reported.

3.2 The previously agreed arrangements to mothball Straloch Primary School and Struan Primary School from 15 August 2011 will continue during this period as all operational arrangements concerning pupils and staff were progressed and completed by July 2011 in preparation for both schools to be mothballed from 15 August 2011.

3.3 The situation regarding both schools will be reassessed once the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Schools findings and recommendations are known regarding future arrangements for proposals relating to rural schools.

4 CONSULTATION

The Head of Democratic Services and Head of Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report. Staff and parents of affected pupils at both schools have been met or contacted individually to discuss the mothballing arrangements for both schools.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no resource implications arising from this report.

6 COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

6.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:-

- (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
- (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities

- (iii) A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy
- (iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens
- (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

This report relates to all of the above five objectives.

6.2 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area:

- Change and Improvement

7 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.

The procedure presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (Eq1A) with the following outcome:

- i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of Eq1A

8. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).

The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

9 CONCLUSION

Following the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to form a Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education and the subsequent request for a moratorium on rural school closures, it is recommended that the arrangements to commence formal consultations on the proposals to close Straloch and Struan Primary Schools are deferred during this period. Both schools will remain mothballed during this period until notification of the findings and recommendations of the Commission are known.

JOHN FYFFE
Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

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