



**Perth & Kinross Council
Education & Children's Services
Statutory Consultation Public Meeting**

Minute of Meeting Held on Tuesday 20 September 2016

At 7.00pm in Blair Atholl Primary School

Present

Councillor Bob Band	Convener, Lifelong Learning Committee
Sharon Johnston	Head of Service, Early Years & Primary
Karen Robertson	Service Manager - Business Services
Carol Taylor	Service Manager - Resources

In Attendance

Lorna Barr	Headteacher - Blair Atholl Primary School
Caroline Nash – Minutes	Perth & Kinross Council

3 members of the public

1. Welcome and Introductions

Sharon Johnston opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public in attendance to the statutory consultation public meeting. Sharon Johnston introduced herself, the Convener and Council Officers to the members of the public.

2. Format of meeting

Sharon Johnston explained the format the meeting would follow.

3. The proposal

Sharon Johnston advised that Struan Primary School had been mothballed since August 2011 and explained the consultation proposal to the attendees.

Education provision at Struan Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 31 March 2017, or as soon as possible thereafter;

That the pupils of Struan Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Blair Atholl Primary School, from 1 April 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter; and

That the delineated area of Blair Atholl Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated area of Struan Primary School from 1 April 2017.

4. Presentation

Karen Robertson gave a presentation explaining the Proposal and educational benefits in further detail.

Background

Karen Robertson gave a presentation on the background to the proposal and outlined that the reasons for the Council proposing to close Struan Primary School. In 2010 the school roll declined and 2011/2012 the school was

mothballed. An options appraisal was developed at this time; however the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education was set up and a moratorium was imposed. The Commission published a report on 19 April 2013 making 38 recommendations relevant to rural education. The recommendations required legislation to be changed which was concluded in March 2015. The previously agreed arrangements to mothball Struan Primary School continued during this time, with pupils attending Blair Atholl Primary School.

On 4 November 2015 the Lifelong Learning Committee approved the review and updating of the options appraisal for Struan Primary School. Public engagement sessions took place in March 2016 to inform the options appraisal. There were differing views at the meeting; however, the parents who attended were not in favour of the school re-opening. 22 people attended in total and gave views.

Councillor Band informed the meeting that the Lifelong Learning Committee is made up of 2 church representatives, 3 Union representatives as well as Elected Members.

Transport Arrangements

Travel distance between Struan Primary School and Blair Atholl Primary School is 5 miles. In good weather this takes approximately 11 minutes. The range travelled by pupils is between 5 – 16 miles and this has been happening for the last 5 years without any significant issue.

Educational Benefits

Karen Robertson detailed a summary of the key Educational Benefits which are set out in detail in the Proposal Paper.

Statutory Consultation Process

Karen Robertson detailed the statutory consultation process including the legal framework, consideration by Lifelong Learning Committee, the content of the proposal including the Educational Benefits statement, statutory consultation period and representation from interested parties as the first part of the consultation process. Karen Robertson then went on to explain the next stages of the process which includes the involvement of Education Scotland, the preparation and publication of the consultation report and the decision made by the Lifelong Learning Committee.

Karen Robertson assured that the Committee have made no decision at this time; they have only given approval for the consultation exercise to be undertaken.

Any comments or views must be submitted by 5.00pm on 28 September via online form, email or in writing to the Council.

If the decision is to proceed with closure, then Scottish Ministers must be informed and they will decide if approval to close the school is to be given and whether any conditions are required.

Karen Robertson then opened up the meeting to any questions or observations from the floor.

Comment 1

There is no evidence to suggest that it is detrimental to a child to work in family groups / pair up with an older or younger child in school.

A. Sharon Johnston explained that in Blair Atholl Primary School, as well as many other schools, they have composite classes where children are working with different age groups. However, these are in larger class groupings than could be delivered at Struan Primary School.

Question 1

I question the 'parents were not in favour of re-opening' comment. I have spoken to parents that have implied they would like the school to re-open. How was this advertised?

A. Karen Robertson informed that the Public Engagement sessions were arranged through the Community Council. This consultation is part of the statutory process which determines who the Council is required to inform and advised that the parents of all the pupils living in Struan catchment area and those attending Blair Atholl Primary School were sent letters to the home addresses advising of the consultation and public meeting.

The consultation and public meeting has also been advertised on the Council website and in the local press and the consultation has been open since 17 August 2016. The public meeting is part of the formal consultation and will run until 28 September 2016.

Carol Taylor confirmed that she had met the parents who attended the Public Engagement Sessions.

Question 2

Parents may have picked up the vibe that it was either Struan or Blair Atholl Primary School which was to close and have had no option for the last 5 years other than Blair Atholl Primary School, so their judgement may have been affected as Struan has not been a choice for parents for the past 5 years.

A. Karen Robertson explained the time lapse due to the moratorium, the Rural School Commission Report and legislation changing. Karen confirmed that all options were considered as part of the Options Appraisal.

Question 3

The window of opportunity was too short to do anything to stop Struan Primary School closing as the mothballing happened really quickly and didn't follow Scottish Government procedures.

A. Karen Robertson explained that the process for mothballing schools has changed as a result of the recent changes in legislation. This was not the procedure in place 5 years ago when Struan Primary School was mothballed. The school was mothballed having reached agreement with the parents of the remaining pupils attending in 2011.

Question 4

No one realises how many people live in the area – the numbers need to be re checked. There is a parent who lives in the Struan catchment area and would like her children to have gone to Struan Primary School.

A. Karen Robertson confirmed that all parents of pupils at Blair Atholl Primary School and those living in Struan Primary school catchment area were all written to by the Council. Karen advised that the Council is aware of all the children living in Struan catchment area regardless of where they attend school. Karen advised that if there is someone who it is felt has not been contacted by the Council, then these details can be provided to her outwith the meeting and this can be checked.

Post Meeting Note – This was checked and it was confirmed that the person in question had been written to.

Question 5

I wrote in to the Council saying that the school should be used not only as a Primary School but as a Community Education Centre which could be used for hot desking etc. Rural Education is really popular and I feel that the Council are missing an opportunity that we value in rural Perthshire.

A. Carol Taylor informed the meeting that the Council is currently not seeking premises for wider community facilities.

Question 6

We would still value a Primary School at Calvine as we have 220 people in the catchment area.

A. Councillor Band advised that the officers of the Council present were aware of the population numbers and the numbers of pupils living in each catchment area.

Sharon Johnston thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.