

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee

21 March 2018

Options Appraisal – Abernyte Primary School

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children’s Services)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks approval of the recommendation of the options appraisal (Appendix A) which has been undertaken in respect of Abernyte Primary School. Lifelong Learning Committee is asked to agree that the Executive Director (Education and Children’s Services) proceed with further assessment of the option to change the catchment area at this time. This assessment, which will include engagement with parents in the affected area, will seek to clarify whether a proposal to change the catchment area would provide an increased and sustainable school roll for Abernyte Primary School.

1. BACKGROUND**School Estate Transformation**

- 1.1 The school estate is a significant and valuable asset to the communities of Perth and Kinross. Between 2017 and 2023, the Council will invest £141m in the school estate, including a number of new or replacement primary schools and a substantial upgrade programme for secondary schools. In addition a new £32.5m secondary school at Bertha Park will come into operation in August 2019.
- 1.2 The School Estate Strategy ([Report No. 12/370 refers](#)) sets out the Council’s aspirations for our schools, and in particular the high value we place on learning, through our vision for well designed, maintained and managed schools.
- 1.3 It is important, in light of the significant investment and cost associated with the school estate, that it is managed in an efficient and effective manner, and that the priorities which are addressed meet the wider strategic objectives of the Council and the needs of our communities.
- 1.4 There are significant challenges for managing the school estate over the coming years. These include changing demographics including population growth and movement, house building in certain locations, ongoing deterioration in building infrastructure, pressure on planned maintenance budgets, increasing revenue costs and the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare from 600 to 1140 hours.

- 1.5 The Council's Transformation Strategy 2015-2020 'Building Ambition' and Organisational Development Framework were approved by Council on 1 July 2015 ([Report No. 15/292 refers](#)). Together they detail how Perth and Kinross Council will deliver transformation over the next five years. Accompanying the strategy is a programme of major reviews which are considered to be key drivers and enablers of transformation across the organisation.
- 1.6 On 24 August 2016, Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report No. 16/347 refers](#)) approved principles to be used as a basis for the transformation review, 'Securing the Future of the School Estate'. The principles approved by Lifelong Learning Committee as a basis for the transformation review were as follows:
- (i) schools should have an occupancy rate where possible greater than 60% of the capacity and ideally should be operating at over 80% capacity;
 - (ii) every school should be rated as A or B ie at least satisfactory for condition and suitability; and
 - (iii) life expired buildings¹ within the school estate should be prioritised for replacement.
- 1.7 On 2 November 2016, Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report 16/485 refers](#)) approved the development of a number of options appraisals to consider in detail schools which were identified as requiring further consideration.
- 1.8 Abernyste Primary School was included in the schools to be considered by an options appraisal as a result of being under-occupied at Census² 2015. The school had 8 pupils and an occupancy level of 18% at that time.

The overall suitability of the building is rated 'A' (performing well and operating efficiently).

A survey of the building was carried out in January 2017 to assess the current condition of the building. Condition is an assessment of the physical condition of the school and its grounds. The condition of the building is rated 'B' (Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration).

Key Legislation

- 1.9 Councils, as Education Authorities, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand.
- 1.10 Councils also have a statutory responsibility in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to achieve best value.

¹ Life expired buildings are defined as buildings which are uneconomic to maintain.

² An annual pupil census in publicly funded schools in Scotland is carried out every year for publication by the Scottish Government. This usually takes place in September.

- 1.11 The Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 provides a strong, accountable statutory consultation process that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools. These consultation processes are expected to be robust, open, transparent and fair, and seen to be so. They are also expected to be consistent across Scotland.
- 1.12 The 2010 Act makes special arrangements in relation to rural schools, establishing a presumption against closure of rural schools. The result of this is that education authorities must have special regard to a number of factors before formulating a proposal to close a rural school and in consulting on and reaching a decision as to whether to implement a rural school closure proposal. These factors are:
- Effect on the Community
 - Effect on Travel Arrangements
 - Educational Benefits

2. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 2.1 An options appraisal has been undertaken to consider the future of Abernyte Primary School. The options appraisal is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.2 The options appraisal considered the under-occupancy of Abernyte Primary School, which had 8 pupils and an occupancy level of 18% at Census 2015. The roll decreased further and there were 5 pupils at the school at Census 2017 giving an occupancy level of 11%. The roll had fallen due to small numbers of children living in the catchment area and pupils choosing to attend other primary schools in the area.
- 2.3 The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2017 classifies Abernyte Primary School as an "accessible rural" school under Section 14 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Therefore in considering the options the rural school factors detailed in paragraph 1.12 were explored fully in the options appraisal.
- 2.4 The findings contained within the options appraisal indicate that extending the catchment area of Abernyte Primary School could make the school roll sustainable. Further assessment, including engagement with parents living in the affected area, is proposed at this stage. This assessment will ascertain whether a change to the catchment area would create an increased, sustainable pupil roll. This assessment will relate to that part of the Inchture Primary School catchment area which lies north of the A90, for the reasons detailed in the options appraisal.

2.5 The findings of the options appraisal are summarised below:

	Option Description	Outcome
Option 1	School remains open with existing catchment area	Rejected. Not a reasonable option due to not being able to maintain a sustainable school roll.
Option 2	Consider mothballing the school – pupils moved to Inchtute Primary School	Rejected. Not a reasonable option due to not being able to develop a sustainable school roll within 3 years.
Option 3	Consider closing the school – pupils moved to a neighbouring catchment School	Not a reasonable option until option 4 is explored fully.
Option 4	Catchment area is reviewed to determine whether this would increase the school roll sufficiently to ensure the future sustainability of the school	Accepted as a reasonable option. Further assessment to take place to ascertain whether a change to the catchment area for Abernyte Primary School to incorporate the Inchtute Primary School catchment area north of the A90 would create a sustainable pupil roll for Abernyte Primary School.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 It is proposed to embark upon further assessment to ascertain whether a change to the catchment area for Abernyte Primary School for that part of the Inchtute Primary School catchment area which lies north of the A90 would create an increased, sustainable roll.
- 3.2 Following this assessment, an updated options appraisal report will be submitted to a future Lifelong Learning Committee with recommendations.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Following the preparation of a comprehensive options appraisal, it is proposed that further assessment in relation to extension of the catchment for Abernyte Primary School should take place.
- 4.2 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (i) Approves the recommendation of the options appraisal that the Executive Director (Education and Children’s Services) proceed with further assessment of the option to change the catchment area as

- detailed in the options appraisal in order to ascertain whether it is possible to create a sustainable pupil roll; and
- (ii) Instructs the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to update the options appraisal and bring it back to a future meeting of the Lifelong Learning Committee.

Author(s)

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Carol Taylor	Service Manager (Resource Management)	ECSCCommittee@pkc.gov.uk 01738 475000
Gareth Findlay	Project Officer - Transformation	ECSCCommittee@pkc.gov.uk 01738 475000

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Sheena Devlin	Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)	16 February 2018

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	Yes
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:
- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
 - (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
 - (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
 - (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
 - (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to all of these objectives.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The Perth and Kinross Community Plan 2013-2023 and Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Plan 2013/2018 set out five strategic objectives:
- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
 - (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
 - (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
 - (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
 - (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to all of these Objectives.

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

- Maximising Resources

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report other than those reported within the body of the main report.

Workforce

2.2 As a result of this report there will be workforce implications in terms of resourcing further assessment, for several teams across Council Services which include ECS Resource Management, ECS Business Services, ECS Finance, Human Resources and Legal Services.

As part of any future statutory consultation there is a requirement to consult with staff affected by the proposal.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 There are no direct asset management implications arising from this report at this point. Asset management implications will not be known until any future statutory consultation is complete.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

3.1.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed as part of any future statutory consultation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

3.2.1 The environmental impact of each option is considered in the options appraisal; however there are no implications at this stage of the process. The

environmental impact will be considered further through any future statutory consultation.

Sustainability

- 3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.3.1 There is no direct impact on sustainability as a result of this report, and sustainability will be considered further as part of any future statutory consultation process.

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report. Any future consultation would require to be carried out in accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010

Risk

- 3.5 A risk log is being maintained for the School Estate Transformation Programme. A further risk log will be created as part of any future statutory consultation process.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Head of Legal, Head of Property Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

- 4.2 The options appraisal details the consultation which has been carried out in the development of this report.

5. Communication

- 5.1 A communication plan has been prepared which will support effective communication and engagement with stakeholders, and to promote the anticipated efficiencies and benefits of this Transformation Project as well as the links to the wider Transformation Programme. A range of methods will be used to consult with internal and external stakeholders as identified in the draft communication plan, such as meetings, briefings, community consultation and focus groups. A separate communications plan will be developed for any future Statutory Consultation process.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 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.

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1 Appendix A - Options Appraisal Report – Abernyte Primary School