



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

Minute of meeting held on Thursday 6 September 2018

7.00pm at Fossoway Primary School

Present

Sharon Johnston	Head of Education – Early Years & Primary
Karen Robertson	Service Manager - Business Services
Councillor Caroline Shiers	Convener, Lifelong Learning Committee

In Attendance

Councillor Michael Barnacle	Perth and Kinross Council
Councillor Richard Watters	Perth and Kinross Council
Ken McAra	Education Scotland

Andrew Magee – Minute Perth and Kinross Council

0 members of the public.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Shiers opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. The panel members introduced themselves. Despite there being no members of the public, Council officers agreed to talk through the presentation for the benefit of those in attendance.

2. Context for Statutory Consultation

Sharon Johnston explained the background and context for the School Estate Review. The review stems from the Council's vision to make the best use of resources while optimising the educational experiences for pupils in Perth and Kinross. In November 2016, Lifelong Learning Committee agreed to include Blairingone Primary School in the review. For ease of reading, questions and comments are detailed at section 5 and 6 respectively.

3. The Proposal

Sharon Johnston explained the consultation proposal to the attendees:

The Council proposes that:

- Provision of a school at Blairingone Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 28 June 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- That the pupils of Blairingone Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Fossoway Primary School, from 1 July 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- That the delineated catchment area of Fossoway Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School from 1 July 2019.

4. Presentations

Sharon Johnston and Karen Robertson gave a presentation explaining the proposal in further detail.

Sharon Johnston outlined the process of review so far. Communities were encouraged to respond using a wide variety of mechanisms, including drop-in sessions, email as well as the availability of an online questionnaire. This information was presented to Lifelong Learning Committee on 16 May, who approved statutory consultation on the proposal to close Blairingone Primary School and this meeting is part of that process.

Sharon Johnston explained the details of Blairingone Primary School including, the capacity of the school, pupil roll and placing requests. Based on feedback gathered during the appraisal of options, the Council believes closure of Blairingone PS is likely to have minimal impact on the community.

Councillors Barnacle and Watters sought clarification of which authority Strathdevon Primary School was in. It was confirmed that the Dollar based school is in Clackmannanshire Council.

Sharon Johnston handed over to Karen Robertson who proceeded to detail the possible impact on travel for both pupils and the community of Blairingone. Pupils living in Blairingone would be eligible for free home-to-school transport and it is considered that there would likely be no significant impact for other community members, as the school is not used significantly by the wider community and community members already travel to access other services. Additionally, pupils who live in Blairingone but attend Fossoway as the result of placing requests would become eligible for free home-to-school transport.

Sharon Johnston went on to outline the educational benefits of Blairingone pupils attending Fossoway PS. Advantages include attending a school with a larger pupil roll, opportunities to work in learning groups across stages, a wider range of learning experiences and that the building itself is more suited to modern teaching methods. Sharon concluded that the children would have a good educational experience at Fossoway PS. An overview of comments from the community drop-in sessions was provided.

(Comment from Councillor Watters Re. educational benefits) "We are trying to give a value that is hard to put a cost to".

Karen Robertson outlined the process of statutory consultation. She highlighted that the process is strictly determined by legislation to ensure thorough and robust process across authorities in Scotland. The legislation sets out how and when we must undertake certain activities. The process started with the consideration of Lifelong Learning Committee on 16 May which granted permission to undertake a statutory consultation. Karen Robertson emphasised that no decisions have been made. The Council must first seek the views of statutory consultees and report back to Committee with recommendations.

The period of consultation will run from **Monday 27 August to Friday 5 October** which includes 30 school days. The purpose of this consultation is to seek representation from interested parties. The Council ensures these consultations are open to all, anyone who wishes to make views known to the Council can do so, and there are a number of ways they can do this, whether online or in person. Any representations are minuted and then published so that anyone who cannot attend public meetings can see the views which have been expressed.

At the end of the consultation period the Council is required to send the consultation documentation to Education Scotland, who then have 3 weeks to consider representations, visit affected schools and speak with staff, parents and pupils.

The Council will then publish the consultation report which will include representations, Education Scotland's report and responses to any representations that were made. The report must be published for at least 3 weeks before a decision can be taken by the Lifelong Learning Committee which is likely to be March 2019. It was emphasised that these timescales are indicative and purposefully kept flexible should any part of the process require to be extended.

If the decision of Lifelong Learning Committee is to keep the school open then the Council cannot revisit the decision for 5 years. If the decision is made to close Blairingone Primary School then the Council would notify Scottish Ministers by the end of March 2019. Ministers then have 8 weeks to consider the Council's decision. Representations can be made in writing to Scottish Ministers during the first 3 weeks. If Ministers decide not to give consent to implement the proposal, then the decision could be referred to the School Closure Panel, who then have a further 16 weeks for consideration.

A discussion followed the presentations.

5. Questions

Question 1

(Regarding the proposed date that Fossoway catchment would subsume Blairingone catchment) Would it not be better to make the change on the first day of the school year rather than the 1st July 2019?

- A.** The date refers to the last day of the school session in 2019. When a new pupil moves to an area they need to have an identified catchment school. If a new pupil(s) were to move into the area over the summer break this would mean that they would be without a catchment school until the new school session in August, where this date ensures there is no break.

Question 2

When will you report to Lifelong Learning Committee on the results of the statutory consultation?

- A.** The timescale is indicative, but it is intended to report back to Committee in March 2019.

Question 3

In looking at the cost implications, did you take into account the transport of pupils?

- A.** Yes. This is detailed in the financial information in the options appraisal.

Question 4

(Re. delaying a decision to see if planned housebuilding takes place) As an interim measure could we consider a joint Headship as there is developer interest in Blairingone?

- A.** As the options appraisal was developed, we asked for comments, and the options appraisal sets out all the community comments that were put forward and this informed the options that were considered. Any additional options will be recorded and considered as part of the statutory consultation.

Question 5

In terms of process, does the Education Scotland report then come back to Lifelong Learning Committee before a decision is made?

- A.** Yes. The outcome of the statutory consultation, including Education Scotland's report, will be reported back to Lifelong Learning Committee to make a decision on whether or not to implement the proposal. All that has been agreed is to commence formal consultation.

Question 6

If Education Scotland raised significant issues with the proposal could Lifelong Learning Committee put a stop to it (the proposal)?

- A.** Council officers would have to address any issues identified by Education Scotland or say if they could not. If there were significant concerns that could not be addressed then this would be reflected in the Council's recommendation to Lifelong Learning Committee. Elected Members would have to be satisfied with how any findings would be addressed.

6. Comments

Comment 1

Could the lack of attendance by parents suggest that Fossoway parents are not concerned with the outcome either way? Blairingone parents are definitely concerned, they had representation at the Community Council meeting – (additional comment) the school is the only place to have meetings.

Comment 2

The idea of joint Headship only came to me after the original options appraisal was conducted. Due to uncertainty regarding housebuilding in the area I think this would make a good interim measure. I would contest the (housebuilding) projections for Fossoway and Blairingone because of what I know about development. The interim argument is a good one. If the development does not happen then you can still close the school and if not then you can retain the building as a community asset.

Response

The Council is required to consider any additional responses as part of the report and look at whether they are viable or not. Any alternative ideas are worthy of consideration and the Council will respond to those as part of the consultation process.

Comment 3

One of the problems with projections is, if you base it on current housing, then it will be a static situation – as opposed to using Local Development Plan 2. Over the last 20 years I have always wanted Blairingone to be a two teacher school. That is why I suggest the joint Headship – I don't know if this has been explored?

Comment 4

(Continued from above) LDP 2 is limited to 30 houses, but the pre-application discussion was completely different. Developers pitched it that way because of the Tayplan. Also there is more affordable housing planned for the Crook of Devon. Are you aware of all that in your projections?

Response

Yes. The Council has been looking at housebuilding and potential impact. We have been working closely with colleagues in Planning to inform the options appraisal.

Comment 5

I am not happy with the turn out.

Sharon Johnston thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.