



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

**Minute of meeting held on Tuesday 11 September 2018**

**7.00pm at Braco Village Hall, Braco**

**Present**

Councillor Callum Purves	Vice Convener, Lifelong Learning Committee
Sheena Devlin	Executive Director, Education and Children's Services
Sharon Johnston	Head of Education, Early Years & Primary
Karen Robertson	Service Manager, Business Services

**In Attendance**

Councillor Murray Lyle	Perth and Kinross Council
Gareth Findlay	Transformation Project Officer

Rose Harcus – Minute                      Perth and Kinross Council

15 members of the public.

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Councillor Purves opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public in attendance to the statutory consultation public meeting. Councillor Purves introduced himself and the Council officers to those in attendance.

**2. Context for Statutory Consultation**

Sheena Devlin 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 Greenloaning Primary School in the review. For ease of reading, questions and comments are detailed at section 5 and 6 respectively.

**3. The Proposal**

Sheena Devlin explained the consultation proposal to the attendees:

The Council proposes that:

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

#### 4. Presentations

Sheena Devlin, Sharon Johnston and Karen Robertson gave presentations explaining the proposal in further detail.

Sheena Devlin outlined the process of the review so far. Communities had been encouraged to participate in the pre consultation work to inform the options appraisal using a wide variety of mechanisms, including a drop-in session, email as well as the availability of an online questionnaire. This information was presented to Lifelong Learning Committee on 21 March 2018, and it was approved that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to close Greenloaning Primary School and this meeting is part of that process.

Sheena Devlin explained that Greenloaning Primary School had been mothballed since October 2016 and provided information on the capacity of the school, pupil roll and projected pupil roll. The options appraisal had demonstrated that the option of closure was considered the only reasonable option and presents the best value for education purposes. Based on feedback gathered during the appraisal of options, the Council believes the closure of Greenloaning PS is likely to have minimal adverse impact on the community.

Karen Robertson then provided information on the possible impact on travel for both pupils and the community of Greenloaning. If Greenloaning Primary was to close permanently, pupils living in Greenloaning would be eligible for free home-to-school transport. It is considered that there would likely be no significant impact caused by different travel arrangements for the wider community as they already travel to access other services.

Sharon Johnston then outlined the main educational benefits of Greenloaning pupils attending Braco PS. Braco Primary School is to benefit from a significant upgrade and adaptations, enhancing the environment for learning for all pupils. Advantages include attending a school with a larger pupil roll, opportunities to work in learning groups across stages, allowing children to have a wide and varied range of learning experiences. The early years provision at Braco supports a seamless transition in Primary 1.

Sheena Devlin summarised the rationale for the proposal, highlighting a number of pupils attend alternative primary schools, the travel distance to Braco is not unreasonable, it is unlikely the school roll at Greenloaning will increase to a sustainable level and Braco Primary School can accommodate the projected and potential pupils from the combined catchment area.

Karen Robertson outlined the process of statutory consultation. She highlighted that the process is strictly determined by legislation to ensure thorough and robust processes across authorities in Scotland. The legislation sets out how and when the Council must undertake certain activities. The process started with the consideration by Lifelong Learning Committee on 21 March 2018 which granted permission to undertake a statutory consultation. Karen Robertson emphasised that no decisions regarding the permanent future of Greenloaning Primary School 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 representations from interested parties.

Anyone who wishes to make their views on the proposal 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 Greenloaning 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 close the school 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**

### **Q. How does this proposal fit in with the temporary decant arrangements being planned when Braco is being refurbished?**

A. A timeline has been planned for the statutory consultation and this will be concluded well in advance of the decant arrangements starting. The outcome of the consultation will be reported back to the Lifelong Learning Committee for a final decision on whether or not to implement the proposal to permanently close Greenloaning Primary School. This proposal is not seeking views on whether or not to refurbish Braco Primary School as that decision has already been taken by Lifelong Learning Committee on 21 March 2018. It has been agreed that works are to be carried out at Braco Primary School and Braco Village Hall to improve the suitability of the school environment. These works will be carried out whether or not the proposal to permanently close Greenloaning Primary School is implemented.

### **Q. If pupils live in Greenloaning catchment area and parents had already made a placing request for their child to attend Braco Primary School, will these pupils officially become part of Braco catchment area?**

A. If the decision is taken to implement the proposal, then Braco Primary School catchment area would be extended to include all of Greenloaning and all pupils living in Greenloaning would then be eligible to be included as part of the new, larger Braco Primary School catchment area. Pupils from Greenloaning would be entitled to free home to school transport to attend Braco Primary School. It was noted that some parents currently transported their own children to Braco as they had attended as a result of placing requests. Parents were advised that they could complete a transport application form online to apply for home to school transport.

### **Q. There is concern that a superior site has been abandoned at Greenloaning. Has a cost comparison been undertaken for the works required at both schools? What about the future potential growth?**

A. Yes, this has been considered as part of the options appraisal. The capacity at both sites has been considered. Greenloaning Primary School currently has capacity for 49 pupils which is not sufficient for current and future pupil numbers from both Braco and Greenloaning. Capital funding of approximately £2.2m would be required to increase the capacity at Greenloaning Primary School which is broadly equivalent to the cost of improving Braco Primary School. The cost for the refurbishment of Braco Primary School is approximately £2.1m plus additional decant costs. However, as the costs are much the same, additional consideration has to be given to the fact that the majority of pupils live in or near Braco Primary School and would have to travel further to get to school than they currently do.

In addition, the option to close Braco and move pupils to an extended Greenloaning Primary School could potentially put the future of the village hall in Braco in jeopardy. If the school no longer used and paid for the facilities, it is possible that the future of Braco Village Hall would be at risk which would have a negative impact on both communities.

The future potential growth has been considered based on what is known now and will continue to be monitored as is the case for all schools.

**Q. When the decision was made was the population looked at?**

A. Population data for under 5s was provided by the NHS for both Braco and Greenloaning communities and pupil numbers are projected to remain static over the next 4 years. Pupil projections in the catchment area do not indicate that the potential pupil numbers will increase in the future. There are low numbers of pre-school children over the next 4 years and no house building planned in the area. The demographics will continue to be monitored.

**Q. Why was the community not made aware of this meeting?**

A. Legislation sets out who must be consulted when a Council is consulting on a school proposal. The Council has specifically written to those statutory consultees who require to be notified of the proposal. Individual members of the wider community who are not parents of pupils who are attending an affected school are not statutory consultees. The Community Council is a statutory consultee representing the wider community and they have been notified of the consultation. Community Councils would normally publish this information for the wider community through their communication channels/social media etc. Public notice adverts have been published in the local press and it has also been published on the Council's website for interested members of the wider community. It was stated that most people do not read the press or the Council's website and were unaware of this meeting. It was noted that attendance at the public meeting is not the only way representations can be made and anyone wishing to express a view on the proposal, can do online or by email or in writing by 5 October 2018. It was agreed that the Council would post an article on social media regarding the consultation.

**Q. Why can't Greenloaning building be used when it is mothballed? Can it be used as a community resource?**

A. When a school is mothballed, it is a temporary ceasing of operations and the building must be able to be reinstated as a school, if required, at short notice. It was acknowledged that this is frustrating for the community not to be able to use the building when it is still mothballed. The Council has taken advice on this matter but there are risks to the Council and the Council's ability to use the building at short notice in terms of any lease arrangements and, therefore, this is not considered appropriate.

Discussion then focused on whether the building could be temporarily retained as a school but available to the community to book for let access. It was confirmed that this would need to be investigated further in terms of the requirements of the community and to see if it would be feasible to provide access to the building in terms of staffing costs, energy costs etc. It is not part of the statutory consultation proposal but will be looked at to see if costs are a factor and whether the building could be used in the evenings and weekends.

**Q. In terms of school transport, what will be provided given the unsuitability of some of the roads used with different speeds and lack of safe walking routes? Why has the speed not been reduced, there is no safe area to cross?**

A. It is acknowledged that whilst almost all the children live within the statutory walking distance to Braco Primary School and to Greenloaning Primary School during the decant, one particular part of the road does not meet the national criteria for a safe walking route to school. Therefore, home to school transport would be provided. The Council can investigate whether the speed limit could be reduced and pavement areas improved as part of the decant/refurbishment plans. It was noted that it takes a very long time to implement a speed limit reduction.

**Q. Will there be changes to the nursery hours? The nursery day is longer than the school day. To help working parents, will pre-school and school finish at the same time?**

**A.** As part of the work that is being undertaken on the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to 1140 hours, the Early Years Team will be considering this further with parents. It is recognised that there are difficulties where nursery and school start and finish times are different. It was noted that the additional hours being delivered in nursery may have an impact on parents' choices for nursery if options such as full-time was available in the local school, as many parents do not currently use the school nursery due to full-time placements not being available and lack of child care in the local area. This may increase the number of pupils attending nursery and subsequently moving into to P1 at Braco Primary School.

**Q. What is the capacity of Braco Primary School?**

**A.** The capacity at Braco Primary School is 68 pupils based on the space standard of 2m<sup>2</sup>. As at yesterday, the school roll was 44 pupils and the future projections predict the highest roll will be 56 pupils. There is an expansion plan for nursery places and there is flexibility, if required, in terms of the space standard used to calculate capacity.

**Q. Are we able to use the hall as a community facility and not just for school activities?**

**A.** The village hall is used for school activities during the school day and the Council has a management agreement with Braco Hall Committee for the village hall. The use of the hall is required by the school for lunches and PE, as well as some other activities. The refurbishment works to the hall, as part of the refurbishment of Braco Primary School, will benefit both communities. It is considered that the hall can be used by the community when not required during the school day for the school.

**Q. Is movement in/out of the community properly considered when projecting pupil numbers as the methodology does not show true figures regarding placing requests? If projections are based on those currently attending Braco and not the total number of pupils who could attend, the projections will be underestimated?**

**A.** A number of factors are considered when projecting pupil numbers. If pupils attend another school as the result of a placing request, it is most unlikely that they will return to their catchment school. Therefore, the base number for projections is based on the numbers of pupils who are actually in attendance along with consideration of NHS data for pre-school pupils and expected pupils from planned housebuilding.

**Q. Where will information be shared about the refurbishment?**

**A.** There will be a separate project to take the refurbishment forward. Pupils, staff, parents and wider community representatives will be involved as part of a User Reference Group for the project.

## **6. Comments**

It was stated by a member of the public that the Council's statement that there is little evidence that Greenloaning Primary School building was well used by the community when it was operational, is misleading. The Community Council held meetings in the school before it was mothballed and it has not been available for use since then. However, the Council charges for using the school when it was open were prohibitive for community groups to use the school. Therefore, it is not the case that the community did not want to use the school building, it was due the school being unaffordable for community groups to use and then being mothballed.

It was stated by a member of the public that a number of parents choose to send their children to schools and nurseries outwith the local area but that may not always be the case and this pattern cannot be relied upon going forward when considering future pupil numbers. With improved childcare, new families may be encouraged into the area.

**Closing**

Sheena Devlin thanked everyone for attending and for their contribution and closed the meeting.