

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2015
CUMNOCK ACADEMY

ATTENDING:

Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
Alan Ward, Acting Head of Service: Schools
Andrew Kennedy, Acting Head of Facilities Management
Alex McPhee, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Support
John Wilson, Senior Education Manager
Simon Bell, Capital Programme Manager
Kerr Chalmers, Traffic and Road Safety Manager
Ian Burgoyne, Senior Manager (Opportunities for All)
Christine Wilson, Head Teacher, Greenmill Primary School & ECC
Kerr Chalmers, Traffic and Road Safety Manager
Craig Young, Litigation Team Leader
Councillor Barney Menzies
Councillor Billy Crawford
Councillor Eoghann MacColl
Councillor Stephanie Primrose
Karl Doroszenko, Planning Officer
Jackie Livingstone, Parent Representative on Education Cabinet
Angus McVake, Head Teacher, Cumnock Academy
50+ parent/carers/staff

Graham Short welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Council Officers and elected members.

Alan Ward introduced himself to everyone and advised that the public consultation was being held to discuss the following proposals:

- Education provision at Auchinleck Academy be discontinued with effect from June 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Education provision at Cumnock Academy and Supported Learning Centre be discontinued with effect from June 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- The children and young people attending these establishments transfer to a new merged secondary school with effect from August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter;
- The site of that school will be in the area of Cumnock presently occupied by Broomfield Playing Fields.
- That the delineated area of the new secondary school be created from August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter, from the amalgamation of the delineated areas of the present Auchinleck Academy and Cumnock Academy and Supported Learning Centre.

He also explained that:

Views are also sought that the newly merged Secondary School and Supported Learning Centre should be co-located with a newly merged Primary School, Early Childhood Centre and Supported Learning Centre resulting from the amalgamation of Greenmill Primary School and Early Childhood Centre and Barshare Primary School, Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre, and a new build Hillside School on the Broomfield site.

He further advised that this proposal also has implications for:

- Hillside School
- Greenmill Primary School and Early Childhood Centre
- Barshare Primary School and Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre

Mr Ward explained that the:

- Proposal document clearly indicates that this consultation is a merger between the two academies
- Proposal is based on agreed, mutual, educational benefit.
- The consultation process is subject to the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

He then went on to explain changes to the legislation:

- Restriction on repeating a school merger proposal for 5 years.
- Requirement to provide financial information in closure proposals.
- New requirements regarding corrections to proposal papers.
- Revised arrangements for rural school closure proposals.
- Requirement for an education authority to publish a notice regarding representations to Scottish Ministers.
- Extension of the period for Ministers to consider call-in from 6 to 8 weeks.
- Duty for HMIE to provide advice to Scottish Ministers when they are considering call-in or determining a case which has been called in.
- Power to make regulations regarding the establishment of the School Closure Review panels.

Mr Ward then went on to explain the consultation process as follows:

- Proposal document discussed and decided upon at Cabinet on 28 January 2015.
- Approval to open consultation is advertised in the media on 5 February with formal opening date 12 February.
- Consultation is open until 27 March, which allows more than 30 school-day minimum.
- Public meetings held within that period with all interested groups informed of dates and times.
- All comments, queries and questions will be recorded and responses provided at the meeting where possible, or with an assurance of a follow-up response. The record of the meeting is published on the East Ayrshire Council website.

- All responses to the consultation are recorded and are acknowledged.
- Queries about specific factual issues will get an individual response.
- Responses are available to elected members
- At the close of the consultation all comments and records are provided to Education Scotland officers to verify East Ayrshire Council's process. This includes visits to establishments to speak to parents and staff.
- Common Ground Mediation is an independent organisation which will be employed to speak with a broad sample of pupils about the proposals. The results are published as part of the process.
- Education Scotland will compile a response which comments on East Ayrshire Council's process and this too is included in the final consultation report.
- East Ayrshire Council produces a consultation report which includes information and feedback from all aspects of the process.
- The published report is publically available online and in hard copy for a period of 3 weeks before going to Cabinet for a decision on the report's recommendations.
- If a merger or closure is involved the Executive Director writes to the Scottish Government Ministers for their consideration of East Ayrshire's decision. This stage can take up to 8 weeks and can lead to the whole process being called-in.

He advised that pre-consultation meetings had been mainly positive with some concerns raised as follows:

- Concerns about primary schools other than those directly affected by the proposals being able to access the facilities. Mr Ward advised that associated primaries in the area will have the opportunity to use facilities through a well-structured programme.
- Placing Requests to the new schools. Mr Ward advised that there can be capping of pupil intake if necessary.
- Property maintenance during the transition phase. Mr Ward advised that the Council has a statutory duty to maintain buildings to a certain standard.
- Savings. Mr Ward stated that any saving to be made are clearly documented but the main aim is to have good facilities for pupils.
- What about existing sports facilities on the Broomfield site? Mr Ward advised that the authority will work with local groups.
- What recreation facilities will there be in school? Mr Ward advised that the design of new buildings has moved on since the Council had its last major building programme. He advised that he had visited new builds in other authorities and spoken to pupils. He envisaged a great range of modern social areas, first class dining and PE facilities in the proposed new build.
- Will there be a swimming pool? Mr Ward advised that there would not be a pool in the new build, but there would be continued use of Visions swimming pool.
- How does the public know that concerns are being listened to? Mr Ward advised that the Council is happy to hear everyone's comments, which will be recorded and considered.
- Architecture. Mr Ward advised that no plans have been decided as yet, however, he noted that the outside of the campus would be sympathetic to the area it would be set in, and would be a terrific facility for the area.
- Staffing issues. Mr Ward advised that there are a clear set of HR policies and guidelines to be followed. He noted that the overall staffing complement is

dependent on pupil: teacher ratio. The number of management posts may change, non-substantive posts in school can be redeployed. He advised that a steering group would be identified to look at staffing.

- Concern about the name of the site. Mr Ward advised that the title is a working title only at the moment.
- Will there be a separate Head Teacher? Mr Ward advised that each establishment would have its own head teacher, identity, budget etc.
- Temporary site arrangements. Mr Ward advised that health and safety is of great importance and that access to the site will be dealt with through the steering group. Parents will be kept informed regularly on progress.
- Working with local groups. Mr Ward advised that the authority has already undertaken meetings with local groups.
- Overall campus numbers. Mr Ward advised that each of the separate establishments will have their own designated areas, none unusually big, and he noted that the most pupils that could be at the secondary school would be 1,682.
- College/Business facilities. Mr Ward advised that there is no clear defined idea of what college facility will be at the moment, but pupils who attend Cumnock/Auchinleck Academy will be able to access college on site, rather than travel to college. Business enterprise facilities will also be available, offering powerful links for high quality work experience.
- Campus management arrangements. Mr Ward advised that the three head teachers of the campus would be responsible for the day to day running of the facility. He advised that lunch times, break times, finish times will need to be staggered, which the Council has experience in developing.
- Inter-community relations. Mr Ward advised that all points will be considered at length. He noted that there were really positive comments made at the pre-consultation group meeting, and that those who attended were keen to secure a good quality educational facility.

Andrew Kennedy explained the following points:

- School Transport Policy
- Traffic Management Considerations
- Traffic Impact Assessment
- Investment in improved pedestrian routes

He went on to explain the school transport policy which includes assessments with the road safety team and adherence to national guidelines. Problems highlighted around traffic management last year have been taken into account in the new proposals with site access routes being considered.

Mr Kennedy advised that a traffic impact assessment will be completed for the Broomfield site to identify if the area could cope with the volume of traffic expected. He also advised that the Council has committed an additional investment of £1m towards improving streets around Auchinleck and Cumnock to provide sustainability of walking routes, eg expanding narrow pavements and improving crossing points.

Mr Kennedy went on to explain:

Map 1 – showing proposed site and main walking routes. He advised that transport that is in place for pupils at the moment will remain, and ASN transport will remain.

Map 2 – from secondary school perspective, of all pupils going to school, about 1000 will receive transport. He advised that if pupils lived over 3 miles from the school they would receive free transport, if they live between 1.5 – 3 miles away will receive subsidised transport at a cost of £1.20 per day, for first child in family, 60p for 2nd child, no payment for any additional children. He also advised that pupils receiving free school meals who are entitled to subsidised transport would continue to receive free transport.

Map 3 – part of the outcome of the transport assessment identified a couple of areas, although meeting national guidelines, as areas that would benefit from improvement, which the council are willing to consider, eg by improving lighting, erecting barriers, widening pavements and improving school crossing areas.

Mr Ward explained the main focus of the proposal as:

- The opportunity for co-location on a fully inclusive learning campus for children and young people of all ages, irrespective of any additional support need, to serve the Cumnock and Auchinleck communities;
- The need to develop inspirational learning environments which raise the aspirations of children and young people, staff and the wider community;
- The need to have a state of the art, fit for purpose educational environment for children and young people of all learning abilities
- The need to address significant under occupancy in the school estate and create a sustainable school estate for future generations;
- The need to retain separate school stage identities
- Specialist facilities and equipment replicated
- Expertise of staff will transfer and be both retained and enhanced
- Partnership working will be improved

He further advised the:

- Educational Benefits as:
 - Raising Attainment
 - Equality, inclusion and diversity
 - Design which supports child-centred learning
 - Getting it Right For Every Child
- Disadvantage is acknowledged
- Balancing advantage and disadvantage

Mr Ward then highlighted the ways to respond to the proposal:

To the Executive Director in writing by letter to
Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock KA3 7BU
by e-mail: education.consultation@east-ayrshire.gov.uk .
or by response form attached as Appendix 12 of the proposal document.

ISSUES RAISED:

Mr Short explained that this is a continuation of the consultation that began last year involving Barshare PS, SLC & ECC and Greenmill PS & ECC, there was uncertainty of the site to be built on and there was also concern of Hillside School being left isolated on their own. He stated that additional funding had been received from the Scottish Government which allowed the authority to consider a much bigger and better project to involve Auchinleck and Cumnock Academies and Hillside School with Barshare PS, SLC & ECC and Greenmill PS & ECC. He went on to explain that the proposal is based on three separate proposals and to get a full sense of what the proposal aims at he encouraged everyone to read all three documents. He also advised that consultees are more than welcome to respond to all three consultation proposals.

Parent asked if this is just a proposal at this stage. He was advised yes. He went on to ask if the authority had tried to influence people already, as he had heard that teachers in the school had been telling pupils that the school was closing. Mr Short advised that if any member of staff is making any such assertion they are ill-informed, and he went on to explain that the Council has a legal process to follow before any decisions can be made. Angus McVake stated that he would be disappointed to hear if any member of his staff was making such an assumption and would like to know more about that.

Craig Young assured the meeting that no decisions have been made, this is only the initial stages of a proposal to look for views and thoughts from pupils/parents/staff/members of the community in terms of the proposal. He went on to advise on the various stages of the process, noting that not only will the authority's Education Cabinet and Governance and Scrutiny Committee be involved, but Education Scotland and Scottish Ministers are also involved. He advised that the authority do value everyone's thoughts and comments.

Graham Short advised that children and young people have a clear voice in the proposal process and stated that he would be very annoyed to hear if staff were trying to influence pupils.

Mr McVake advised that Common Ground Mediation had been in contact with him to arrange discussions with groups of pupils to get their views and ideas regarding the proposal. Parent asked what age group of children would be consulted. Mr McVake advised that as many pupils as possible from all year groups, S1 – S6, would be involved in the consultation exercise.

Alex McPhee advised that he and the Chief Executive have met with representation of Dumfries House Estate and were made aware that the Great Steward of Scotland's Architect would be available to East Ayrshire Council if needed but that the design and architecture of the building would be sympathetic to the environment.

Mr Short advised that pupils of all ages are welcome to respond to the proposal. Associated primaries are all being consulted.

Parent stated that there are various football clubs and a rugby club that use pitches at Broomfield and expressed concern at the possible loss of this area.

Parent stated that given the present obesity concern will the Council ensure sports facilities will be available to all.

Mr Ward advised that should the proposal go ahead, all users of the area would be fully consulted. He also advised that advice will be sought from SportsScotland on what to offer in the way of sporting facilities. He advised that there are no plans set at the moment but the hope would be to provide facilities such as trim trails throughout the course and all weather pitches. He further advised that the authority want to enhance what's already on offer for community groups.

Parent stated that the running track at Broomfield used to be cinder and that the athletics club paid for this to be updated. He asked if the track was going to be removed, and if so, would the athletics club be compensated for the loss.

Craig Young advised the athletics club to write to the Council requesting this to be considered.

Parent Council representative asked if consideration could be given for Wood Road to be used as interim facilities. Mr Short advised that consideration would be given to developing facilities in the area, even on a temporary basis. He advised that when the new Galston Primary School was built, the pitches at Loudoun Academy were extended so they could be used by the community. The Parent Council representative stated that some parents are concerned about the number of pupils that would be in the campus and that parents may take more comfort from hearing from other parents, rather than hearing from members of the Council. Mr Short advised that visits to other campuses can be arranged if required.

Angus McVake advised that he could arrange for the Parent Council representation to visit Grange Campus to meet with parents from the Grange Parent Council and Annanhill Primary Parent Council.

Member of the Cumnock Rugby Club stated that he has had a lot of questions from parents who have concerns about the proposal and he asked if there was a timescale for beginning any works. Mr Ward advised that it will be late August before any final decisions will be made.

Member of the community requested assurance that any facilities built are built fit for purpose. Simon Bell advised that should the proposal go ahead all stakeholders in the community will be consulted to ensure facilities are fit for purpose, and that they would be aiming to start building work time during 2017 and finish 2019.

Mr Short advised that the Council has consulted local residents and the community more generally by advertising public consultation meetings in the local press.

Parent expressed concern about bad publicity on leased buildings.

Mr McPhee advised that the proposed new build would not be funded by SFT and would be entirely funded and maintained by the Council.

Member of the community passed a picture of Cumnock Rugby Club in 2013 to the panel. He advised that he agreed with the merger of Auchinleck and Cumnock Academy and the proposed new build, but expressed concern about the use of Broomfield, which is the principal area for sport and recreation. He asked if clubs and members of the community would be able to continue activities at Broomfield during the construction period and after the new campus opens. He advised that there are approximately 200 people in the picture, who all use Broomfield during the rugby season. He stated that Cumnock Rugby Club alone have 400 people depending on the Broomfield site for recreation purposes during the week and at the weekend.

Mr Ward stated that the authority would want to work with all of the users of the Broomfield site and would want to enhance what is available and not detract from it. He advised that there would be a transition period where provision would have to be made to make sure there is access to all parts of the site. He further advised that the planning may be simpler because no buildings are being knocked down, and that the authority would do their best to ensure access to the area. He went on to say that he would want to reassure the meeting of the Council's good intent and have stated openly the willingness to work with local groups to ensure the best use of any new site.

Mr Short advised that the authority are willing to invest £63.5m in the community.

Parent asked if we could guarantee that class sizes will not be increased as a consequence of the plans. Mr Ward advised that there is national guidance which dictates the class sizes, which the authority can't go over. He advised that the primary school would be designed into the campus in such a way that it can work in its own isolation. Pupils would not be able to wander around the campus. If primary classes were undertaking work in secondary classes eg music classes, art etc, they would be accompanied by a member of staff.

Parent stated she was a pupil at Cumnock Academy and had witnessed some traumatic behaviour between pupils and disputes between pupils from different areas, and expressed concern that her children may witness or be exposed to this in the new campus. Mr Ward advised that from experience of working in a shared campus the head teachers worked in preparation before the school was built to set the ethos and expectations, the behaviour in the campus overall was a significant improvement. He advised that he was at the school gate every morning welcoming pupils into school and being vigilant. He advised that it would be useful for parents to visit a campus school to see how things work. He went on to advise that start times, interval times and lunch times would be staggered and primary pupils would have separate play areas from secondary pupils.

Mr McVake advised that he was previously a teacher at the Grange Campus, and during his time there very rarely saw confrontation in the school. He further advised that at the moment there are a lot of activities that Cumnock and Auchinleck pupils share, they attend joint activities and joint work experience. He went on to advise

that the Depute Head Teacher from Auchinleck Academy had asked him to nominate 10 pupils to join 10 pupils from Auchinleck Academy to attend a weekend activity.

Parent expressed concern about classrooms being the right size, and other facilities being sufficient for the number of pupils concerned. Mr Ward advised that the proposed new build would be fit for purpose, a state of the art design to support learning and engage pupils. He advised that there are no plans in place, but a desk top exercise would be undertaken to look at overall cost for schools, and that there would be detailed discussions with members of staff about what they feel would be required. He stated that visits to new school builds could be organised and he would encourage staff and parents to take up this offer to see the new design and layouts in other schools that help to encourage children to be productive and active.

Simon Bell advised that the method used in the document to come to the size and cost for the proposed campus, is one set out by SFT which is a government body developed to improve spending of money. He advised that the matrix is based on roll, square metreage per pupil etc.

Mr Short advised that a local resident Dr Brooks, who was unable to attend the meeting due to an injury, had asked if his letter could be read out at the meeting. He went on to ready the letter, the main points being:

- **Education**: The plans and explanations for 'Knockroon' are not simple and acceptable as the council appear to present. Many negative and oppositions are being express by parents and residents. There are many reasons for NOT building and installing infants, juniors, secondary and senior pupils on the same development. Adding, handicapped children, advanced-level pupils, adult students and others into the proposed enterprise is not favoured by many educationalists, parents or neighbours.
- **Environment**: Various and many questions arise on the local environment following any development, structure and use of 'Knockroon'. A featured public park and playing field areas would be destroyed. Broomfield Park is one of Cumnock's major feature areas used by residents - old and young. Cumnock residents do not wish to have a "builder's yard" [buildings, builders, large machinery, noise, dirt etc on site for up to 4 years. Then followed by noise, dirt, damage, nuisance, pollution etc for evermore.
- **Transport**: transport and movement of children, staff, workers, cars, buses etc in the area will cause major disturbances - probably for most of every day and for long hours. Remember Auchinleck -Cumnock is a "B Road". I understand the 'Cumnock By-Pass' was built to assist and reduce transport along Auchinleck Road. It would ALL potentially change for the worse. Very little has been explained or questioned by the council.
- **Neighbourhood**: Introduction of 2000+ children, 200-300 staff and assistants, 100+ daily buses, 300-400 daily cars, daily multi-drop-off parents, daily domestic and support staff etc will certainly change the movement of people in the neighbourhood. Such is not a welcome thought or sight for Cumnock residents.

Mr Short asked Karl Doroszenko to explain the planning process to the meeting. Mr Doroszenko advised that the school proposal must be developed with the environment, transport etc being taken into account. The Council have to submit plans to the Planning Department, which have to be assessed. Separate independent consideration will be taken into account. Scottish Ministers will have to be notified because the Council own the land and the Council are proposing the build.

Member of the community stated that the Council's Local Development Plan highlights Broomfield as an area for recreation use by the people in the area and asked at what point did this change. Karl Doroszenko stated that the Council's Local Plan hasn't changed, however, it was prepared in 2010 and is due to be replaced. He advised that although Broomfield has been identified as a possible site for a new school, this is a consultative process and the proposal hasn't been agreed. He further advised that the proposed Local Development Plan is a separate proposal that will go out for consultation on 31 March and as a planning authority the Planning Department would be happy to hear proposal responses on that. He advised that the plan will be available on the Council's web page, and public consultation meetings will be advertised and held as part of the consultation.

Parent expressed concern about flooding in Auchinleck Road which hasn't be sorted and if a campus is developed situation may become worse. Simon Bell advised on flood issues regarding fluvial (rain) and pluvial (rivers). He advised that any design would include very detailed drainage plans. Parent stated that the problem exists today and wanted to know what will be done about it now. Mr Bell advised that he would discuss the matter with Roads Department colleagues and the Council's Flooding Officer.

Councillor Menzies stated that he would have grandchildren attending the new school, and asked what learning experience his grandchildren would get from a merged campus. Mr Ward advised that the best of all possible opportunities, eg continuity in progression in the one campus ie early years to primary school and moving into secondary, and later into further education or world of work, we would want the young people making the transfer do so easily. Familiarity with staff and surroundings is important. Each school on the campus could work on their own, but also experience the breadth and range of experience that can be shared by all members of staff.

John Wilson advised that there is no doubt that the biggest impact in learning is the quality of teaching available to young people, however, it's also about how the new build could also help, a larger campus with more staff available to share expertise. He advised that it can be an anxious time for pupils moving from primary to secondary, which may be easier in familiar surrounds. He also advised that it's important to have buildings that are fit for purpose for modern use, with science and technology opportunities, which can help enhance the quality of learning and teaching,.

Cumnock Parent Council asked how the Council will maintain the inspirational learning that pupils experience, need assurance that people are going to get the very best attention, as well as looking to the future.

Mr Short stated that the community is already served by some excellent schools and teachers, and that he is very proud that our schools are amongst the best schools in Scotland, which is down to the quality of leadership in these schools, and he stated that the commitment of teachers in their job will continue. Mr Ward advised that he had recently visited Cumnock Academy to discuss a range of issues, but the key part of the discussion with the Head Teacher and Senior Management Team was to talk about standards of attainment in schools. He advised that part of his job is to make sure that standards are maintained and improved in each school, the future of pupils is very important, and the results that pupils achieve is very important. Mr McVake stated that should this proposal go ahead there would be additional work between head teachers and senior management to make sure that pupils achieve their full potential, as attainment achievement is very important.

Mr Kennedy advised that the potential for the proposal is a new build in 4 years. He advised that this current remit is facilities management within covers janitation, cleaning and transport, with more of the property side of things being added to his remit as o 1 April. He further advised that the Council is looking to offer better facilities and buildings for the future, but meantime still have to meet the needs of pupils, health and safety and maintenance of schools.

Parent stated that information in the proposal report has comparison to new build costs and cost of maintaining existing buildings. Mr Kennedy stated that the proposal and aim of the project, if taken forward, is to create a facility that creates the best opportunities for pupils. He further stated that there are a range of issues, eg current buildings in a B condition that could slip into a 'C' condition in time, although figures are provided for maintaining existing buildings, there are issues around facilities available in the present buildings, a new build could offer much more.

Parent expressed concern that he has grown up in Barshare area, attended Cumnock Academy and has chosen to purchase a house in the area overlooking Broomfield, but now has difficult decision to make, given that there will be a change in local environment and also the educational future of his children.

Parent asked if consideration could be given to merging the academies and building on the Broomfield site and building merged primary schools on Cumnock Academy site. Mr Short advised that the present proposal is what is for consultation, any changes to the proposal, and if Council still wish to proceed, would have to go into continuation of consultation again.

Mr Short thanked everyone who attended the meeting and encouraged everyone to respond to all consultation documents by 4 pm on Friday 27 March.