

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2015
AUCHINLECK 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
Simon Bell, Capital Programme Manager
Kerr Chalmers, Traffic and Road Safety Manager
David Mitchell, Head of Legal, procurement and Regulatory Services
Councillor Jim Roberts
Councillor Barney Menzies
Councillor Eoghann MacColl
Councillor Stephanie Primrose
Fiona Taylor, Senior Education Manager
Carole McConville, Senior Education Manager
Peter Gilchrist, Head Teacher, Auchinleck Academy
Craig Iles, Acting Operations Manager
David Fraser, Substitute Parent Representative on Cabinet

60+ Parent/Carers and 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.

- 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 as process:

- 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
- Placing Requests to the new schools
- Property maintenance during the transition phase
- Savings
- What about existing sports facilities on the Auchinleck site? Mr Ward advised that the school building would be demolished but the sports facilities would remain and be maintained.
- What recreation facilities will there be in school?
- Will there be a swimming pool? Pool will remain at the Auchinleck site and Visions pool will also be accessible.
- How does the public know that concerns are being listened to?
- Architecture
- Staffing issues
- Concern about the name of the site
- Will there be a separate Head Teacher?
- Temporary site arrangements
- Working with local groups
- Overall campus numbers
- College/Business facilities
- Campus management arrangements
- Inter-community relations – Mr Ward advised that inter-community relations are important and positive.....

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 are 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.

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.

ISSUES RAISED:

Parent asked if anyone at the top table had children going to the new school because he felt like this was a scientific experiment. Mr Ward advised that the consultation is about the opportunity to envisage a fantastic new learning campus for young people.

Parent stated that Auchinleck Academy is one of highest achieving schools in East Ayrshire and stated that children would not achieve any better in a new school.

Mr Ward advised that the quality of learning and teaching is down to the teacher in front of the class, but from personal experience children do thrive in modern up to date facilities that have more to offer them.

Mr Short advised that pupil rolls have diminished in both Cumnock Academy and Auchinleck Academy, and with that comes the loss of teaching staff, which means

the schools are unable to teach all courses on the curriculum. He further advised that a school of new size being offered would be able to offer the broadest of curriculum choices.

Mr Gilchrist stated that Auchinleck Academy senior school do have challenges due to limitations in levels of staffing, and by definition there would be extra opportunities of option choices in a larger school with more teaching staff.

Mr Short also advised that the transition from early childhood centre, to primary, and then secondary school can be much better planned in a joint campus. He then advised that should any parent wish to visit either Grange Campus or St Joseph's Campus to see how a joint campus works on a daily basis, then they should let their head teacher know and this will be organised.

Parent asked why the present schools can't be refurbished instead of merging. Mr Short stated that both Cumnock and Auchinleck Academy are excellent schools, but the authority want to do provide the most modern educational facilities for children of the community. He stated that nobody wants to reduce the identity of any particular community, but are trying to enhance provision available for the community and make sure there is continued investment in the area.

Mr Ward advised that he has been across the country speaking to people about rebuilds and refurbishments and the level of disruption involved in a refurbishment, it was noted that refurbishment was not as successful as a new build. He stated that the authority value staff and pupils and want to provide modern new facilities for them.

Parent expressed concern that the proposed new build is in Cumnock and not Auchinleck, and stated that local businesses who rely on income generated from schools pupils and their parents will lose money. Mr Ward advised that Broomfield was the site identified as big enough and available to build on at Cumnock.

Parent expressed concern of moving children to a bigger campus and questioned how the needs of the pupils could be met. Mr Ward advised that transition programmes would be put in place to introduce pupils before they are transferred, there is a certain amount of familiarity built in advance. Pupils will have met their peers well in advance.

Mr Gilchrist advised that staff already meet with P7 pupils very early on, and pupils visit secondary school before they transfer ensuring that they are fairly familiar with staff and surroundings. He advised that young people generally look forward to coming to secondary school, and that it's the job of guidance teachers to help make pupils comfortable in their new school.

Parent asked if pupils would have the same guidance teachers during transition to a new build. Mr Gilchrist advised that this would be maintained as far as possible.

Mr Short advised that if the proposal went ahead, staff, young people and parents would have the opportunity to have an input in the design of the building. In the

meantime, there are already joint clubs and activities between schools in Auchinleck and Cumnock.

Parent expressed concern that the economy of Cumnock would improve, while Auchinleck wouldn't. Concern was also expressed that pupils who do not have school transport would have to walk or pay for their bus travel, which is a disadvantage to Auchinleck pupils. Andrew Kennedy advised that primary pupils who live 1.5 miles from the campus would receive free transport, and secondary pupils living over 3 miles from the campus would receive free transport. Secondary pupils who live between 1.5 and 3 miles from the campus would be entitled to subsidised transport.

David Mitchell advised the meeting that the legal position is that Councils only have to provide free transport for pupils if they live further than 3 miles from their school, but East Ayrshire Council has provided a higher level of provision than required legally, by offering a subsidised option. He further advised that the Scottish Parliament sets the law on transport provision and not the Council. He encouraged the meeting to submit responses formally to the Council to ensure that they are considered.

Parent advised that as a father he would not be happy about children walking along the road in the winter nights when its raining.

Kerr Chalmers advised that the Council have an established policy to complete safe walking route assessments, and has already identified some routes in the area as unsuitable. He advised that detailed design work would need to be carried out if the proposal was agreed, eg erecting barriers, improving lighting etc, for which funds have been set aside to deliver these improvements. He also advised that traffic impact assessments have been done in the area to establish viability of roads etc. Parent asked about traffic calming areas. Mr Chalmers advised that this would all be considered as part of the review.

Parent expressed concern that there is a petrol garage and busy supermarket on route to the proposed site and would be concerned for the safety of pupils walking this area on a narrow pavement. Mr Chalmers advised that travel planning is a key part of the proposal looking at school travel plans to look at safe walking routes to schools. He also advised that pupils and parents would be surveyed to ask what their walking route would be and ask what they would perceive as a problem.

Member of the community asked if staff would have to move to Glasgow, Ayr etc to get another job if the new campus was built. Mr Ward advised that if staff are surplus to the school, they would be redeployed within East Ayrshire Council. Mr Kennedy advised that he is responsible for catering and janitorial staff and would look at each individual's circumstances to look at ways to match in options available, he noted that within Auchinleck there will still be places that require staff and that there would be 4 years to plan if the proposal goes ahead.

Parent stated that she has been redeployed 3 times without any difficulties. She also stated that pupil's parents would have walked everywhere when they were young and maybe if pupils walked more they would be fit and healthy.

Parent expressed concern that Cumnock and Auchinleck communities would not be able to merge without any difficulty.

Parent stated that Auchinleck Academy is a high achieving school and couldn't understand why the present school couldn't be upgraded as it also has a swimming pool. Mr Ward advised that it would be difficult to provide the state of the art facilities that have been envisaged for the area in the present school. He advised that the swimming pool and leisure facilities would remain in Auchinleck. He also noted that there would be no need to build a pool in the new school when Visions Leisure Centre would be in close proximity.

Mr Kennedy advised that the Council has limited amount of funds and have to prioritise where money is spent. Parts of Auchinleck Academy could be refurbished, but there are a number of others things as well as basic maintenance. He advised that the authority want to build a school with excellent facilities and advised that it would not be possible to change a huge amount of the structure of the building to accommodate this. He also noted that the building is not energy efficient, and as a balance the authority are looking to put money into a new build, use money efficiently.

Parent expressed concern about the possible loss of the running track and grounds at Broomfield that are used by clubs in the area.

Parent questioned what would happen to the area if the school was closed. They expressed concern that they would be left with waste ground and have nothing left in Auchinleck.

Mr Short advised that at present both Secondary Schools are not acceptable in modern day standards for use by people who have a mobility problem, and that the new school would be completely compliant for disabled use.

Member of the community expressed concern about the state the ground has been left in where the old Auchinleck Primary was situated and would hope that this area would not be left in the same state, should the proposal go ahead.

Mr McPhee agreed that the state of the old primary school site is disappointing.

Parent stated that the panel mentioned transparency, but she expressed concern that she is a manager of Visions Leisure Centre and has heard nothing about a meeting to discuss any proposals for the centre. Mr Short advised that a meeting has been arranged to take place with the board of Visions for the following week.

Parent stated that relations between Cumnock and Visions broke down some time ago and expressed concern how the centre could be used amicably.

Mr Short advised that the authority have had discussions with the rugby club and some football clubs to discuss the proposal, adverts have been put in the local press regarding the proposals and details of the public consultation meetings. He stated

that the authority believe that they have the ability to provide facilities in that will enhance sporting facilities in the area.

Member of the community expressed concern that if the proposal goes ahead Auchinleck Academy site will become a derelict area. He also noted that there is a memorial plaque outside Auchinleck Academy dedicated to 3 children who lost their lives a few years ago and asked if any consideration had been given to what will happen to this. He also asked if any other sites had been considered for the proposed new build.

Mr Mitchell explained the statutory process of the proposal to the meeting. He went on to advise that it makes more sense to build new modern facilities as there are limitations to what can be done with a refurbishment. He advised that in relation to sporting facilities there would no diminution of what there is at the moment, facilities will remain for community use. He went on to state that views do count and urged everyone to write formally to the authority with their responses.

Mr Short advised that with regard to preservation of the memorial plaque, the first port of call would be to discuss with the family if they want it to remain where it is or moved to proposed new school. It would be an important part of the planning process that the memorial is preserved in the way preferred by the families.

Mr Short then went on to advise that the Broomfield site was identified as the only area that was big enough to accommodate a campus of the size proposed.

Parent asked that if the primary schools were merged and the secondary schools didn't, what would happen to the money. Mr McPhee advised that Cabinet would make the final decision, they would look at other projects and use funds for best value.

Parent asked where police presence would be in the new school, given the perceived problems that may occur by the pupils from the two communities merging. Mr Short stated that the headline ran recently by the Cumnock chronicle was unfortunate. He stated that he knows pupils of both Cumnock Academy and Auchinleck Academy work really well together and care very much for their community. Mr Gilchrist added that pupils have integrated well in local clubs, etc.

Reporter for Cumnock Chronicle stood up and stated that the headline was accurate and fair, it was a true headline sourced from Facebook.

Parent reminded everyone that it's not only pupils from Auchinleck who attend Auchinleck Academy, there are a lot of pupils from rural areas who also attend.

Mr Short advised that the school's Parent Council are allowed to join the cabinet to express views on behalf of the school.

Mr Short then thanked everyone for attending and asked everyone to respond in writing with their views by 4 pm on Friday 27 March 2015 using one of the methods previously mentioned.