

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2015
BARSHARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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
Calum Maxwell, Senior Education Manager
John Wilson, Senior Education Manager
Education Scotland Rep
Janie Allen, Senior Manager (Early Learning & Childcare)
Simon Bell, Capital Programme Manager
Claire McNally, Curriculum Manager – Curriculum for Excellence
Kerr Chalmers, Traffic and Road Safety Manager
Craig McArthur, Head of Finance
Emma Fyve, Principal Planning Officer
Craig Young, Litigation Team Leader
Lorraine Facchini, Head Teacher, Barshare Primary
Angela Hastings, Depute Head Teacher, Barshare Primary
Councillor Primrose
Councillor Crawford
Councillor Menzies

20+ parent/carers/staff

ISSUES RAISED

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 Barshare Primary School, Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre be discontinued with effect from June 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Education provision at Greenmill Primary School and Early Childhood Centre be discontinued with effect from June 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- That young people attending these establishments transfer to a new non-denominational primary school, supported learning centre and early childhood centre with effect from August 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- The site of the school will be in the area of Cumnock presently occupied by Broomfield Playing Fields.

- That the delineated area of the new primary school be created from August 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter, from the amalgamation of the delineated areas of the present of Greenmill Primary School and Early Childhood Centre and Barshare Primary School and Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre.
- Views are also sought on the proposal that the newly merged Primary School, Early Childhood Centre and Supported Learning Centre should be co-located with a new build Hillside School on the Broomfield site.
- Views are also sought that the newly merged Primary School, Early Childhood Centre and Supported Learning Centre should be co-located with a new build school resulting from the merger of Auchinleck Academy and Cumnock Academy and Supported Learning Centre on the Broomfield site.

He further advised that this proposal also has implications for:

- Hillside School
- Cumnock Academy and Supported Learning Centre
- Auchinleck Academy

Mr Ward then went on to explain that the:

- Proposal document clearly indicates that this consultation is a continuation of an existing process opened in January 2014
- Proposal is based on agreed, mutual, educational benefit.
- The consultation process is subject to the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

He explained changes in legislation as follows:

- Restriction on repeating a school closure proposal for 5 years.
- Requirement to provide financial information in closure proposals.
- New fuller 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 officer 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 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.

Mr Ward advised that following recent pre-consultation meetings the following concerns had been noted:

- Concerns regarding college facilities and young children
- Concerns about other primary schools being able to access the facilities
- The size of the secondary school
- What happened to the original proposals?
- Concerns about placing requests
- What about existing sports facilities on the Broomfield site?
- What recreation facilities will there be in school?
- Will there be a swimming pool?
- How does the public know that concerns are being listened to?
- Travel to school distances for Barshare parents and pupils
- Concern about the name of the site
- Will there be a separate Head Teacher?
- Will staff lose their jobs?

Mr Ward advised that it is not fully envisaged what extent the college element of the campus will be but young people in the academy that are ready to move to college will be able to attend.

With regards to other primary schools in the area having access to the building, Mr Ward stated there is a need to look at transition arrangements and outreach programme to allow all schools to have a share of the campus.

He noted that the highest roll possible for the secondary campus would be 1,682, which is not unusual.

He went on to advise that following the public meetings on the original set of proposals, no decision had been taken and it was decided to continue the consultation and open up a new set of proposals based on today's proposal. The authority have been allocated additional funding to allow a more ambitious project.

Mr Ward advised that with regards to the placing request concern, capping numbers could be put in place to ensure that no huge deluge of pupils attending the new school. He stated that he is looking for a comprehensive, well managed outreach programme to ensure all pupils have access to facilities.

Mr Ward advised that with regards to existing sports facilities, a number of discussions with local community groups had/will take place regarding working in partnership. He went on to advise that the campus would not have a swimming pool, but a swimming programme will be available at Visions Centre. However, he advised that Hillside will have a hydrotherapy pool for special needs pupils.

Mr Ward advised that the authority are listening carefully to concerns that are being brought up and will take every concern into consideration.

He advised that with regards to the name of the site, this is a working name at the moment and consideration will be given to the final name at a later date. With regards to teaching staff, there will be one head teacher for the merged primary, one head teacher for the merged secondary and one teacher at Hillside. Each school will retain their own identity but will also have use of shared areas on the campus. Concern had been expressed about the possibility of staff losing their jobs. Mr Ward advised that he would not expect anyone to lose their job, but if staff were surplus to the schools on the campus they could be transferred to another establishment. He advised that the number of catering staff on the campus will be based on the number of meals served each day. The cleaning regime may change, but any surplus staff will be moved to another establishment.

With regards to concerns about class sizes, Mr Ward advised that there are national guidelines which have set the maximum number of pupils to a class and the authority can not go above that.

Mr Kennedy then spoke about 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 subsidised transport is available 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 would be entitled to subsidised transport would continue 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 advised on the 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 went on to explain that:

- Educational Benefits are:
 - 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 is important

Mr Short explained that the proposal is at this stage as a consequence of the first stage of consultation that took place last year and is a continuation of that process. He encouraged everyone to formally respond with comments. He explained that there are essentially 2 other proposal documents being considered under the same campus and he urged everyone to read all documents for information. He went on to explain that the campus would have three separate schools, maintaining their own identity, staffing, budgets etc, but will work together to provide a continual educational experience from 2-18. The educational benefit and quality of learning and teaching is good at the moment, but feel it would be even better in an up to date building, with up to date IT facilities, parent's facilities etc, and facilities for use by the community. If realised this would be a £63.5m development, an investment in the community of Auchinleck and Cumnock producing a 2-18 campus with college facility and business enterprise opportunities.

Parent asked if there was the option of other areas being considered for the new campus. Mr Short advised that this proposal is for the Broomfield site. The parent stated that she felt the school had been misled as Barshare parents were happy with the previous site proposed but Greenmill parents weren't and now site has been changed. The Broomfield site was previously not thought to be a possibility, but now it seems to be. Mr Short responded advising that conditions have changed over the year with additional money being offered from the Scottish Government, which has allowed a bigger project to be considered.

Mr Ward advised that access to the Broomfield site was not available previously. The overall cost envelope would have been too much to propose Broomfield at that point, build would have to be at top end, Cumnock Academy would remain where it is, and the authority would have to spend a significant amount of the budget in adaptations in the area to allow traffic access. At that time, there were also issues with who had rights to that road.

Parent expressed concern about the sewage works at underwood being next to the site and asked if consideration is being given to moving the sewerage works. Mr Short advised that there is now the opportunity to build the campus at the other end of the Broomfield site.

Parents asked if the proposal of the new school all hinges on the two academies merging. Mr Short advised that if the proposal doesn't go ahead new site and access problems would be evident.

Mr Short advised that there is quite a considerable educational advantage to having an Early Childhood Centre, Primary School, Secondary School and Supported Learning Centre and a Special School in the one campus.

Parent ran through the figures of the proposal and asked where the additional money came from and who would be funding the new build. Alex McPhee explained that additional money had become available from SFT which allowed the Council to explore a more comprehensive project. He stated that the Knockroon Project would be fully funded by the Council.

Parents asked if the 3 separate schools would be in 3 separate buildings. Mr Ward advised that it would be one building but the design and layout of the campus would allow separate entrances into the building.

Parents asked about security management between between primary and secondary pupils. Mr Ward advised that in other joint campuses staff have worked well together to manage movement in the school.

Parent asked if are there would be separate playgrounds. Mr Ward advised that there would be separate play areas and that intervals and lunch times would be staggered for the different age groups.

Parent asked if there would be a police presence, like Grange Campus. Mr Ward advised that the campus police officer is there for community liaison and not to police the school.

Councillor Menzies stated that as the community has little or no experience of shared campuses it may be worthwhile to offer parents the opportunity to visit joint campuses in the authority. Mr Short agreed and advised parents that if they would like to visit any of the campuses to let their head teacher know. Councillor Menzies noted that last year there had been extreme concern about the use of the viaduct as a route to school and was disappointed that this area was not mentioned in the presentation.

Andrew Kennedy advised that the viaduct area had not actually been identified as a preferred walking route, but if it was felt that this would be a used route, further consideration to area can be given. He further advised that walking route and traffic management assessment will look at additional measures to alleviate any concerns.

Kerr Chalmers advised that initial assessments showed narrow pavements in the area that may have scope to be widened, and that Auchinleck/Lugar bridge had been identified as a possible constraint. Parents stated that she could not see how this area can be changed. Another parent expressed concern that there are no pavements at all in some areas, which is a major concern with volume of traffic in area. Mr Chalmers advised that the potential for traffic management in area has been considered and will be taken into consideration.

Parent expressed concern about shared accommodation. She expressed concern about the influences secondary pupils may have on younger children and that she was uneasy of idea of pupils of all ages sharing facilities. Mr Ward advised that should the consultation be approved, there will be 3 head teachers working together to ensure that the campus works efficiently. There would be staggered breaks, separate playgrounds, and lunch times in the new build may have electronic finance which reduces the time queuing, reduces difficulties at lunch time, which allows pupils to have a much better dining experience. He also noted that secondary aged school will not be using the dining area at the same time as primary pupils. He advised parents to take up the offer of a visit to one of the campuses to see how they run.

A parent stated that she had read research (from Harvard, Norway and Australia) on literacy review and that the evidence had shown attainment falls in a larger learning environment. She questioned why not have smaller schools.

Mr Short advised that Onthank Primary School and Early Childhood Centre, which is in an area of deprivation, is one of the biggest primary schools in the authority and that pupils are achieving well there. John Wilson explained that in a larger school with more staff, there is a breadth of experience to be shared. He advised that Onthank Primary and ECC is a school that is thriving, with staff working closely together to offer a great educational experience. He also noted that the authority have links with Norway teaching staff, who have visited the Grange Campus and were really enthused with what they saw.

Mr Ward noted that there is no set evidence either way, but that in his opinion the quality of the learning and teaching being offered is what makes the difference.

Parent expressed concern that there will be no facilities in the area if Barshare Primary closes, the leisure facilities are all 1.5 mile away.

Mr Ward advised that it is important to recognise that elected members would want to hear parents/carers views and urged everyone to put their concerns in their responses to the consultation.

Parent asked how, under GIRFEC, are the authority going to 'get it right for every child' in such a large campus. Mr Ward advised that a diverse community in the campus is achievable, the separate establishments in the area would work together, offering support to pupils with an additional learning plan, help can be planned around pupils. Mr Short advised that GIRFEC is a legal obligation that the authority has to fulfil.

Parents stated that Barshare Primary is at the heart of the community and expressed concern that the community feeling may be lost if the school was taken away.

Parent advised of problems experience on school transport with pupils from secondary schools.

Parent asked if the stated occupancy level of 90%, takes into account projected increase in rolls, given new builds in area. Mr Ward advised that the authority have a process to identify projected rolls.

Parents asked what would happen to facilities at Auchinleck Academy, should the proposal go ahead. Mr Short advised that the school would be demolished, but the leisure facility kept

The Parent Council Chair requested the opportunity to speak at Cabinet before a final decision is made. Mr Short advised that this would be possible.

Parent asked how much money would be used for each facility. Mr McPhee advised that there is a formula that is used to identify costs. Parent asked if separate builds

could be achieved with the same money. Mr McPhee advised that this would not make financial sense.

Parent asked if there would be a different floor for each age group. Mr Ward advised that designs will be looked at closely.

Parents spoke of classroom sizes and expressed concern that they may be smaller under the guidelines being used. They were advised that the standard space allowed per pupil is 1.7m².

Parent asked about the 30 year maintenance cost for Knockroon Learning Campus. Simon Bell advised that the SFT model was used as it's a recognised model, ongoing maintenance would be the Council's responsibility.

Parent asked if a SEPA report would be requested to look at air pollution in the proposed area. Simon Bell advised that various environmental investigations will be done.

Mr Short thanked everyone attending and encouraged all to send in written responses by 4 pm on Friday 27 March 2015.