

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
HILLSIDE SCHOOL – THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY**

ATTENDING:

Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
Alan Ward, Acting Head of Service: Schools
Kay Gilmour, Head of Service: Community Support
Debbie Skeoch, Head Teacher, Hillside School
Jackie Livingstone, Parent Representative of Cabinet
Andrew Kennedy, Acting Head of Facilities Management
Julie Muir, Senior Manager, Additional Support Needs
Councillor Eoghann MacColl
Councillor William Crawford
10 parent/carers/staff

Graham Short welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced council officers and elected members.

Alan Ward thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He explained the proposal as follows:

- Education provision at the current location of Hillside school should be discontinued with effect from June 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- The children and young people attending Hillside School should transfer to a new build Hillside school with effect from August 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Views are also sought on the proposal that the new build Hillside School should be co-located
- A) with a new Secondary School resulting from the merger of Auchinleck Academy and Cumnock Academy and Supported Learning Centre in addition to the newly merged Primary School, Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre resulting from the merger of Greenmill Primary School and Early Childhood Centre and Barshare Primary School and Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre. OR
- B) with a new Primary School, resulting from the merger of Greenmill Primary School and Early Childhood Centre and Barshare Primary School, Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre.
- The new build Hillside School will be situated in the Broomfield site.
- This proposal also has implications for:
 - Greenmill Primary School and Early Childhood Centre
 - Barshare Primary School and Supported Learning Centre and Early Childhood Centre
 - Cumnock Academy and Supported Learning Centre
 - Auchinleck Academy

He went on to advise that the:

- Proposal clearly indicates that Hillside School will remain open as a separate establishment and learning community
- Proposal is based on agreed, mutual, educational benefit.
- The consultation process is subject to the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

Mr Ward then explained 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 provides 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. This stage can take up to 8 weeks and can lead to the whole process being called-in.

He then advised that at the recent pre-consultation meeting the following concerns had been raised:

- Volume of traffic and start and finish times
- Design. Will it be one building?
- Can the proposal go ahead without the secondary schools merging?
- Will afterschool care be included or will that still be at Yipworld?
- What are the plans for energy efficiency?
- Will the opportunity be there to consult parents whose children are not attending the new campus?

He advised that these concerns will be considered carefully, and noted the following:

- There will be one building.
- The proposal can go ahead without the secondary schools merging.
- Afterschool Care will remain at Yipworld.
- Energy efficiency is at the forefront of all new builds and materials used are very effective.
- All interested parties are welcome to be involved in the consultation process.

The focus of the proposal document was then explained as follows:

- 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 with severe and complex learning difficulties;
- The need to address significant under occupancy in the school estate and create a sustainable school estate for future generations;
- The need to retain the identity of Hillside School
- Specialist facilities and equipment replicated
- Expertise of staff will transfer and be retained
- Partnership working will be improved

Mr Ward then went on to explain that the:

- Educational Benefit
 - 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

Everyone at the meeting was encouraged to respond to the proposal document using either of the following methods:

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 3 of the proposal document.

He advised that responses should be received at Council Headquarters by 4 pm on Friday 27 March 2015.

ISSUES RAISED

A Ward advised that Hillside School will retain its identity. Specialist equipment, staff etc will move to new build in whole. He further advised that the main focus is on educational benefit and what can be done to change and improve the educational experience for all pupils.

Graham Short noted that this is quite a complex consultation, statutory guidelines dictate that each school that is involved in the proposal has to be consulted. He urged everyone to read the Auchinleck/Cumnock Academy and Barshare Primary, SLC & ECC/Greenmill Primary consultation documents also, and advised that everyone is more than welcome to comment on all proposal documents.

He also noted that it is important to understand the origin of the consultation process, which started last year with the proposal to merge Barshare PS, SLC & ECC and Greenmill PS. He stated that some really strong thoughts were expressed at the consultation meetings which were influential in the consideration by elected members. He advised that key points raised included how much Hillside and Barshare PS valued the link they had and that Hillside did not want to be separated from Barshare PS and the good practice experienced. The second issue noted was if Hillside was left here on its own it would be very much left on the edge of the community and would feel a sense of isolation. The Scottish Government had added additional money to the schools programme at the end of last year which allowed the Council to look at the situation further. The importance of the support of the primary and secondary aged pupils at the Supported Learning Centre that is associated with Cumnock Academy was recognised and should the proposal go ahead, can make sure that all resources of this campus will be at disposal of children at Hillside School, and Hillside facilities, expertise and resources can also be made available to the mainstream school. It's a good opportunity for all children in the community to be educated together. He further advised that the Broomfield site was being considered given that it is in the centre of the community.

Parent stated that she commended the Council for listening to parent/carers/staff and for the proposal, but expressed concern that Riverside Centre may be isolated from the new campus and was concerned for the safety of pupils/staff etc getting to the building from the campus. Kay Gilmour advised that it was her understanding that Riverside would be closer to the new campus. She further advised that the whole nature of day services is not necessarily to be centre based and that the final aspiration for pupils in the future would possibly be employment. There is a much wider view now and the Education Department is working very closely with colleagues in health and social care. A discussion took place about the bridge leading to Riverside and the accessibility of the centre from the new campus. It was advised that all comments will be taken into consideration and that all parents/carers/staff and pupils will be involved in the final design of the new build, if proposal is agreed.

Parents stated that if the new build was similar to Willowbank School it would be amazing for pupils and the community.

Mr Ward advised that it is proposed that the new campus would have college facilities, and that there is a strong possibility there would be a business enterprise start up facility.

Kay Gilmour advised that a visit to Willowbank School could be arranged if parents/carers were interested.

Parent stated that at the moment Hillside has a strong family element to it and would not want this being lost in a big campus. Mr Short advised that Park School is part of Grange Campus and should anyone wish to visit to get you an idea and reassurance of how a campus can come together, this could be arranged.

Debbie Skeoch stated that it is important that both sides appreciate that the school relish the thought of a state of the art facility but also understand that every school community has its own ethos, parents feel that the family feeling aspect that the school have is very important. The views of staff and parents are important and the new school should be built around this. She stated that if the campus is designed properly, keeping the family feeling should be achievable.

Mr Short stated that the involvement of parent/staff and pupils is important in the design of the campus and again advised that he would be pleased to arrange a visit for parents/carers to see either Willowbank School or Park School.

Jackie Livingstone stated that the Council has shown that each school can keep its own identity. She spoke of other schools in the authority who have gone through similar changes which have been very successful. She advised that it is an exciting venture for young people to become involved in.

Parent asked when parents/carers will know of the final decision. Mr Ward and Mr Short explained the procedure from start to finish and advised that the final decision should be available around August this year. They encouraged everyone to make a formal response to the authority, which will be included in reports for consideration.

Parent asked if the new school would have a swimming pool. Kay Gilmour advised that there will be a hydrotherapy pool that will also be available for use by Riverside.

Mr Ward advised that architects are also looking at outside areas for outdoor learning.

Parent asked if there be community use in the evening at the new campus. Kay Gilmour advised that the community would be able to use the building in the evening. The Council are aspiring to achieve a community use/feel.

Mr Short thanked everyone for attending and encouraged everyone to respond to the proposal by 4 pm on Friday 27 March 2015.