

SPECIAL EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 28 October 2010. – Minute of Meeting of the SPECIAL EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor May, Convener; Councillor Greig, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Allan, Boulton, Cooney, Corall, Cormack, Donnelly (substituting for Councillor Wisely), Dunbar (substituting for Councillor Kevin Stewart for part of meeting), Farquharson, Graham (substituting for Councillor Collie), Laing, Leslie, McCaig, Robertson, Jennifer Stewart, Kevin Stewart (for part of meeting), John West (substituting for Councillor Kirsty West) and Yuill (substituting for Councillor Reynolds). External Members:- Mrs. M. Abdullah, Mr. A. Aitken (for part of meeting), Mr. G. Bruce and Mr. P. Campbell.

WELCOME

1. The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, and noted that it was one of the most important meetings for the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, given that the decisions taken would impact on the future of the school estate and its pupils. He advised that there was a commitment to ensure that all school buildings were brought up to the same high standard as those which had recently been built under the 3Rs Project.

The Convener advised members that any request to refer the report to Council for consideration would be taken at the end of the meeting, following the decision of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. He noted that several local Councillors were in attendance and advised that they were entitled to address the Committee, but would not be allowed to vote.

The Convener welcomed Mr. Alistair Aitken to the meeting. Mr. Aitken was the replacement Roman Catholic representative on the Committee, following the retirement of the previous member, Mr. Mario Vicca. The Convener thanked Mr. Aitken for taking on the role and paid tribute to the contributions of Mr. Vicca during his time on the Committee.

Finally, the Convener advised that officers wished to give a short presentation on the proposals before Committee for consideration.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to write to Mr. Mario Vicca and thank him for his years of support to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee; and
- (ii) to agree to hear the presentation from officers.

REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATION

2. In accordance with Standing Order 10(1), the Convener advised that requests for deputations had been received on behalf of (1) Hazlehead Academy Parent Council; (2) Torry Community Council; (3) Torry Academy Parent Council; (4) Cove and Altens Community Council; (5) Aberdeen Grammar School Parent

Council; (6) Ashley Road Parent Council; (7) Harlaw Academy; and (8) Northfield Academy Parent Council.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that Torry Community Council had since withdrawn its request for a deputation, but to consider a written submission which had been received from their Secretary; and
- (ii) to accept and hear the deputations.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Convener declared an interest in the following article and advised that he knew Mr. Forsyth who was representing Torry Academy Parent Council. Councillor Kevin Stewart declared a personal interest in the following items due to a family member attending Northfield Academy. Councillor Yuill declared an interest in the following articles as family members attended Broomhill School and Harlaw Academy. He also declared an interest as a Council appointed Governor of Robert Gordon's College. Councillor Jennifer Stewart declared a personal interest due to a family member attending Aberdeen Grammar School. Councillor John West also declared an interest as two family members attended Aberdeen Grammar School. None of the Councillors mentioned above considered it necessary to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business.

DEPUTATIONS

3. The Committee heard from Mr. Stephen Hadden, on behalf of Hazlehead Academy Parent Council. Mr. Hadden advised that the school had made a great deal of progress over the past eighteen months, and requested that the Committee allow Hazlehead a period of stability to maintain the good progress which had been made. He noted that the report mentioned the financial and property implications of the proposals, but stressed the need to also consider the pupils, staff and parents who would be affected. He advised that the Head Teacher, Alison Murison, had been in post for eighteen months, and during that time had worked hard to improve the ethos in the school. Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2 results had risen and work was ongoing on the roll-out of the Curriculum for Excellence and the school's behaviour management plan. Mr. Hadden advised that HMIE had undertaken an inspection of the school in March, 2010 and that the results had been positive, particularly in relation to support for learning and extra curricular activities. While the inspectors had noted that the management of pupil behaviour needed some improvement, they had felt that with support from the Education Authority there would be an improvement in this area, and no further visits would be necessary. Mr. Hadden noted that the stakeholder event in Hazlehead had the second largest attendance of all the events and felt that this demonstrated the concern of parents at the proposals. He felt that the proposals would risk the improvement shown by the school and would demoralise staff. Mr. Hadden noted that the proposals needed to outline the operating costs of a new school and the source of funding for any new build. He welcomed the proposal to close the

attainment gap in Aberdeen but stated that it would require the support of parents as well as motivated staff. Mr. Hadden finished by stressing that the proposal should not create an educationally divided city, with schools of excellence in some areas but not others.

There being no questions from the Committee, the Convener thanked Mr. Hadden for his presentation.

The Committee then heard from Mr. Gary Forsyth, on behalf of Torry Academy Parent Council. He advised that the perception in Torry was that the options before Committee for approval had been cherry-picked to favour those which supported the proposal and noted his disappointment that they appeared to be financially rather than educationally motivated. Mr. Forsyth advised that the savings in the report needed to be off-set against the staffing and potential severance costs of moving to a single management structure for Torry and Kincorth Academies. He noted that Torry had already been affected by the closure of Victoria Road School and that there was the potential for the children affected by that closure to have to attend four different schools over their education career if the report proposals were approved by Committee. He advised that a meeting had been held between Torry Community Council, Kincorth and Leggart Community Council and Cove and Altens Community Council, at which there had been unanimous opposition to Torry and Kincorth Academies operating out of a split site. He requested that the Committee disregard the recommendation for a split site and management structure and allow the two schools to remain operational until a new school could be built. Mr. Forsyth advised the Committee that the school had an additional allowance of teaching staff for pupils with special needs and also had many pupils for whom English was a second language. He noted that the school was no more expensive to run than any of the other academies. He concluded by requesting that the Committee amend recommendation (e) in the report to consult on a new school for Torry and Kincorth, and to also consider providing individual schools for both areas.

The Committee asked several questions of Mr. Forsyth and the officers from Education, Culture and Sport. The Convener thanked Mr. Forsyth for his presentation.

At this juncture the Convener advised that Torry Community Council had withdrawn its request for a deputation but had instead provided a written submission which was circulated to the Committee for information. The letter outlined the meeting of the Community Councils previously referred to by Mr. Forsyth and advised that the members present had been totally opposed to recommendation 2(d) in the report and considered that Torry Academy and Kincorth Academy should continue to operate as individual schools, with separate zones and management structures. With regard to recommendation 2(e) in the report, the letter advised that the meeting had indicated that there was a desire for a new school to be built in the south of the city, however, there was considerable sensitivity about where this new school would be built with each community commenting that they would like it to be in their area.

The Committee then heard from Mr. Neil Stewart and Mr. Andy Finlayson, who were representing Cove and Altens Community Council. Mr. Stewart also highlighted the Community Council meeting mentioned by Mr. Forsyth in the previous deputation, and agreed that Torry and Kincorth Academies should remain as they were until a new school was in place, but stressed that whatever the

outcome in relation to the schools, Cove would require a new school to be built. He advised that two-thirds of children at Kincorth Academy were from Cove, and that when the Cove community was asked what they would like to see in their area, a new secondary school was always at the top of the list. Mr. Stewart highlighted the transport problems currently faced by pupils at Cove and the lack of facilities in the area, and asked that the Committee did not split up the community. Mr. Finlayson advised that Cove had areas of deprivation and that an academy in the area would be a great asset.

The Committee asked questions of the deputation and the Convener thanked Mr. Stewart and Mr. Finlayson for their presentation.

The Committee then heard from Mr. Alasdair Stevenson and Mr. Neill Renton, on behalf of Aberdeen Grammar School Parent Council. Mr. Stevenson advised the Committee that the Parent Council was concerned about the recommendation to re-zone the catchment area for Aberdeen Grammar School. He stated that the school had the lowest cost per pupil in the city and that the school's occupancy rate was very high. He noted that the school had high academic standards and was ranked among the best schools in Scotland. Mr. Stevenson advised that the existing diverse catchment area contributed to the ethos of the school, and that over 25% of pupils at Aberdeen Grammar School lived outwith the catchment area. Any alteration to the catchment area would also require a resource to manage the change. Mr. Renton advised that parents were keen to ensure that an area previously zoned to Aberdeen Grammar School would not be re-zoned to another school if there was a change to the catchment areas. He proposed that the cap on the school roll could be raised and highlighted the statement in the report that additional accommodation might be required at Aberdeen Grammar School. In connection with this, Mr. Renton suggested that the Council could investigate using the old junior school building, currently occupied by the Total French School. He concluded by advising that the Parent Council were ready to work with Aberdeen City Council to find the best way forward.

The Committee asked several questions of the deputation and of Education, Culture and Sport officers. During the discussion that followed, members requested that officers investigate whether the former junior school referred to in the deputation could potentially be used as additional accommodation for Aberdeen Grammar School. Following investigation, it was noted that the current lease did not expire until 2014. The Convener thanked Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Renton for their presentation.

The Committee then heard from Mr. Donald Elliot, Mr. John Anderson and Dr. Neil Hamilton, on behalf of Ashley Road Parent Council. Mr. Elliot noted that the Parent Council had consulted on the proposals in the report and advised that parents had concerns in relation to the future outcomes for those children currently in nursery and primary education. They felt that there should be a commitment to provide local schools for local pupils. Mr. Elliot advised that the Parent Council had undertaken a survey and that 97% of parents surveyed wished to maintain the link with Aberdeen Grammar School. He highlighted the links between Aberdeen Grammar and Ashley Road schools noting that many children had older siblings or friends who attended Aberdeen Grammar, and who expected to attend that school upon reaching secondary school age.

There being no questions from the Committee, the Convener thanked the deputation for their presentation.

The Committee heard from Mr. Thomas Mackintosh and Ms. Bryony Hart, Head Boy and Head Girl of Harlaw Academy. Ms. Hart noted that legislation required that there were educational reasons behind school mergers and closures, and stressed that, in her view, there was no educational reason to close Harlaw Academy. Mr. Mackintosh highlighted that the majority of responses to the stakeholder engagement process were submitted by parents of children at Harlaw Academy, which highlighted the level of concern at the proposals. Ms. Hart informed the Committee of the work of the MICAS base at Harlaw and the loss to pupils if this was to close. She noted that the report had mentioned that the layout of the school caused difficulties to those with disabilities, but highlighted the case of one disabled pupil in particular who had never experienced any difficulties while attending the school. Mr. Mackintosh mentioned another pupil with dyslexia who felt he had achieved great results through the support of the staff at the school. Ms. Hart noted that she did not feel that the layout of the school affected learning, as was stated in the report, and that the location of the playing fields was not an issue for most pupils. She stated that the new 3Rs school would require to be rebuilt before granite schools such as Harlaw. Mr. Mackintosh compared the costs of each academy and noted that the city centre schools were cheaper to run than others. They highlighted the extensive extra curricular activities at Harlaw and commended teachers at the school for giving up their free time to assist pupils. They felt there was a unique bond between staff and pupils at the school, and that the Primary 7 to S1 transition was second to none. They concluded by stating that the closure of Harlaw Academy would leave a hole in the city.

The Committee asked questions of Mr. Mackintosh and Ms. Hart and the Convener thanked them for their deputation.

Finally, the Committee heard from Mr. Keith Paterson, Mr. Jim Wiseman and Ms. Hannah Wright on behalf of Northfield Academy Parent Council. Mr. Paterson stated that the Parent Council felt that it had been misled during the stakeholder engagement process, and had been led to believe that Northfield Academy was not under threat of closure. He advised the Committee that the attainment at Northfield was improving. The school had good links with the business world and pupils made significant contributions to the community. There had been real achievements in further education and many pupils had also received awards. The Parent Council felt that the school was progressing well. Mr. Paterson noted that there were pockets of deprivation in Northfield but that there was a real sense of community in the area and Northfield Academy fought hard to give its pupils a real learning experience. He felt that it was contradictory to close a school where the focus was on improving and closing the gap in attainment.

Mr. Wiseman noted that the proposals had impacted on staff morale, with many staff believing that the proposals were a “done deal”. He highlighted the concern at the disruption to pupils, as well as the potential cost for parents if pupils were moved to Hazlehead Academy. He advised that there was no direct bus route from Northfield to Hazlehead and that the additional travel would add to the length of the school day, could potentially increase truancy levels and could cost parents up to £20 in fares per week. He also noted that the music service had recently moved from Summerhill to Northfield Academy and that the closure of the school would mean another facility taken away from the area.

Ms. Wright advised the Committee that she currently attended Northfield Academy. She reiterated the cost of transport to Hazlehead Academy, and noted that many parents would be unable to afford the extra cost. While many pupils had been considering staying on at school to take their Higher exams, Ms. Wright advised that if the proposals were approved, many would leave school or go to college instead as their parents would simply be unable to pay the transport costs. She highlighted the extra curricular activities at Northfield Academy and explained to the Committee that the behaviour at the school had improved. She stressed that pupils wanted Northfield Academy to remain open.

The Committee asked several questions of the deputation and the Convener thanked them for their presentation.

PRESENTATION

4. The Convener advised the Committee that officers from Education, Culture and Sport would give a short presentation on the proposals in the report.

Annette Bruton, Director of Education, Culture and Sport, introduced the presentation, and advised that the proposals had been produced in conjunction with officers in Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure. The report set out options for individual schools which were all part of an interlinked plan. The proposals had been designed to maximise efficiency. Mrs. Bruton advised that officers had recognised that many children currently travelled across the city to attend school and the proposals aimed to increase the number of in-zone children attending their local schools. Officers had taken account of the Local Development Plan and had tried to ensure that planning for the city was in line with planning for education. The proposals aimed to provide quality schools for all children in all parts of the city.

The Committee then heard from Derek Samson, Service Manager, and Scott Dalgarno, Senior Planner. Mr. Samson explained the current and forecasted spare capacity in the city schools, as well as the condition and suitability of the buildings and operational and maintenance costs. He outlined the short-term recommendations proposed in the report. Mr. Dalgarno advised that officers had analysed the development proposed in both the City and Shire Local Development Plans, and that these had informed the longer term proposals. The officers presented three maps, which showed the existing secondary schools, the short-term recommendations and the longer term recommendations. Mr. Dalgarno highlighted to Committee where it was proposed that new schools would be required as a result of housing developments arising from the Local Development Plan. Mrs. Bruton advised Committee that officers were considering innovative approaches to S5 and S6 education, and were in discussions with Aberdeen College about a potential virtual campus.

The Convener thanked the officers for their presentation. Members then asked several questions of the officers.

21ST CENTURY SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION – ECS/10/096

5. With reference to Article 11 of its minute of 27 May 2010, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which detailed the outcome of the stakeholder engagement on the Learning Estate Strategy in relation to secondary school provision in the city. The report also provided options for the immediate and longer term provision and management of sustainable, cost-efficient and suitable educational secondary school facilities which were fit for the 21st Century.

The report advised that the options before Committee for consideration took account of the developments allocated as part of the Local Development Plan. The proposals were also set within the context of the five year business plan currently being developed for the Council. The report noted that consolidating existing school provision could make savings for the Council in terms of reduced operational costs, while providing replacement facilities which were more efficient and cost-effective. The proposals would also provide improved curricular choice and progression for pupils. It was noted that any new or replacement school would require an element of funding by the Council through the capital prioritisation process, however, Policy 11 of the proposed Local Development Plan and supplementary guidance required developers to make a fair and reasonable contribution towards the cost of any new school required as a result of the increased pupil numbers from a new housing development.

Following the decision of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee of 27 May 2010, officers had undertaken a wide stakeholder engagement exercise between 30 May and 4 October, 2010 on the future of the Secondary School Estate. The exercise sought to capture stakeholders' views on the content of the engagement document which had been prepared but also invited the submission of alternative suggestions for the Learning Estate. The document had been made available on the Council website and within schools, and various engagement events had been held by officers between May and October 2010.

The report advised that nearly 1,000 written submissions had been received from Parent Councils, parents and pupils. Most of these submissions had been received from parents and carers of pupils currently at school, and therefore the feedback was mainly in relation to the potential impact of any changes on current pupils.

As part of the engagement exercise, officers had produced a detailed assessment of the existing secondary schools in terms of sufficiency, suitability and condition and any scope for consolidating school provision. Furthermore, through considering the school estate alongside the Local Development Plan proposals, officers had been able to undertake a more comprehensive review of the learning estate, taking account of immediate and longer term demands.

The report advised that there were significant numbers of spare places in Aberdeen schools. Many of the existing schools were also unsuitable for providing facilities for 21st century learning. The secondary school estate currently consisted of two recently opened, state of the art schools, several granite-built schools and other more recently built schools, some of which were now significantly inferior when compared with those built under the 3Rs programme. Replacement facilities would be more conducive to providing improved curricular choice for pupils and could also house sporting and community facilities where required. The report noted that the

short term recommendations sought to address the availability of spare places and the condition of schools in order to provide a more effective and cost efficient service. The longer term proposals for the school estate had to be considered alongside the Local Development Plan. The aim of the report was to set out the management and provision of secondary schools over a twenty year period in order to make Aberdeen a “City of Learning”, while bringing all schools up to an equivalent standard to the 3Rs project.

The report advised that the Local Development Plan team had worked closely with Education, Culture and Sport officers to examine implications of the plan on existing schools and to highlight where new schools or extensions could be required as a result of new housing developments. Officers had estimated the number of additional pupils likely to be generated as 0.175 pupils per household. Consideration had also been given to the projections from the school roll forecasts for 2012 and 2018.

The report set out the options which had been considered for the future of secondary school provision. Officers had considered the implications of retaining all twelve academies, and whilst this would allow for continuity of provision and would cause the least disruption, it was noted that there was insufficient spare capacity at existing schools to accommodate all developments allocated in the Local Development Plan. Ten of the existing schools would also require significant investment to take them to a standard equivalent to those built under the 3Rs programme, however there would be no income generated for this as there would be no disposal of surplus sites. The work required was estimated to cost approximately £70.5m, although this figure did not include any allowance for furniture, fittings, equipment, ICT installations and any temporary decanting of pupils. There would also be no reduction in operating costs and a continued restriction on pupil curricular choice. In light of this, it was considered to be unlikely that retaining all twelve schools would provide the most cost-effective means of providing suitable secondary school education for pupils in the longer term. However, certain schools could provide spare capacity to accommodate some of the pupils generated through new housing developments. The report outlined any opportunities which existed to utilise any spare capacity in existing schools.

The analysis undertaken of Bridge of Don and Oldmachar Academies indicated that closure of either school and rezoning of their pupils to adjacent schools would not be possible due to the lack of spare capacity available. The report noted that the cost to maintain the schools to minimum appropriate standards would be between £0.5 and £1 million for each academy. Full refurbishment to a standard similar to the 3Rs schools would cost approximately £6.3 million per school. In light of this, the report advised that the upgrade costs should be met in the short term to provide suitable facilities for existing pupils. The report further advised that the Local Development Plan proposals for the area could generate up to 1,474 pupils which alongside the projected school roll could lead to 2,929 pupils in the area. Developers of the Grandhome site had been asked to reserve land for a secondary school within the development to accommodate these additional pupils.

The report advised that in the longer term, it would be beneficial to close Oldmachar Academy and provide a new secondary school within the early stages of the Grandhome development. In addition, a replacement school should be provided at Bridge of Don Academy to accommodate the remaining Oldmachar pupils and existing pupils from the surrounding area. As a result, existing

catchment areas would require to be amended to distribute pupils appropriately across the area.

In relation to Dyce and Bucksburn, the report noted that Bucksburn Academy was opened in 2009 under the 3Rs programme. Therefore, the report assumed that the school would not be affected by any closures. Officers recommended that Dyce Academy be maintained at the minimum appropriate standard at a cost of £100,000 to £500,000. Full refurbishment of the school was estimated to cost £5.75 million. It was advised that the local development proposals for the area could generate up to 977 pupils, which taken alongside the school roll projections, could equate to 2004 pupils in the area. It was felt that the spare capacity at Dyce Academy could be utilised by developments at Newmachar, while the spare capacity at Bucksburn Academy could accommodate pupils from the proposed developments at Stonewood, the site adjacent to Bucksburn Primary School and some of the pupils generated by the Newhills expansion area. It was also proposed that a new secondary school be provided on a site within the Newhills, Kingswells or Countesswells area to accommodate the additional pupils generated from these developments. Therefore, officers proposed that Dyce Academy be retained and upgraded to appropriate standards and that Dyce and Bucksburn Academies continue to develop contiguous timetable agreements. Bucksburn Academy would remain in its current state, and accommodate some of the Newhills expansion, while a new school would be required to serve the Newhills expansion, Kingswells and the Countesswells area.

The report advised that officers considered that to close both Northfield and Hazlehead Academies and rezone their pupils to adjacent schools would not be possible due to lack of spare capacity available. To maintain both schools to the minimum appropriate standard would cost between £500,000 and £1 million for Northfield and £100,000 to £500,000 for Hazlehead. Full refurbishment of both schools to the 3Rs standard would cost in the region of £13.4 million in total. The Local Development Plan proposals for Northfield and Maidencraig could generate 236 pupils in the Northfield area and 132 in the Hazlehead area, both of which would take the existing schools over capacity. The report advised that a single school to accommodate all pupils from Hazlehead and Northfield would require to have a combined capacity of over 2,000 pupils, which was not considered desirable on educational grounds. The report therefore recommended that in the short term, Northfield Academy could be replaced by a new school which accommodated those from the new development at Greenferns and Maidencraig North, and the northern section of the existing Hazlehead catchment area. It was also recommended that a replacement school be provided for Hazlehead Academy to accommodate existing pupils and those generated by the Maidencraig South development. In light of this, the report recommended that Northfield Academy pupils be reallocated to Hazlehead Academy in the short term until the proposals for a new school to replace Northfield Academy could be implemented.

The report advised that Cults Academy was built under the 3Rs programme and was opened in 2009, and therefore it was assumed that it would not be affected by any proposed closure. Although housing developments in the Local Development Plan could generate up to 118 pupils, which would take the school over capacity by up to 56 pupils, it was felt that the school could be managed effectively in order to accommodate this excess occupancy.

In relation to Torry, Kincorth and Loirston, it was noted that there were currently two secondary schools in the area. Analysis had indicated that closing Kincorth Academy and rezoning its pupils to adjacent schools would not be possible due to insufficient spare capacity. Torry Academy pupils could be redistributed to adjacent schools in the short term, but the ease of access from some areas of Torry to other schools could result in transport costs being incurred. The report advised that the cost of maintaining both schools to the minimum appropriate standard was approximately £2 million in total. Full refurbishment to a similar level as the 3Rs schools would cost approximately £12 million in total. The report noted that the Local Development Plan proposed an additional 1,500 dwellings at Loirston which could generate up to 265 additional pupils. Considered alongside the projected school roll, this could lead to 1,300 pupils in the area. The developers of the Loirston site had been asked to reserve land for a new secondary school within the proposed development to accommodate the additional pupils alongside a consolidation of Torry Academy and Kincorth Academy. Analysis had indicated that only one school would be required to accommodate the combined school roll at Torry and Kincorth Academies as well as the additional pupils generated by the Loirston development. In light of this, the report recommended that in the short term, Kincorth and Torry Academies should be consolidated to a single management structure, operating years S1 and S2 on the Torry site and S3 to S6 on the Kincorth site. A replacement school of up to 1,300 capacity could be built to accommodate existing pupils and any generated by the Loirston development. This would require existing catchment areas to be amended and subsequently merged.

The report then outlined the three remaining schools in the City, namely Harlaw Academy, Aberdeen Grammar School and St Machar Academy. Analysis had indicated that the closure of any of these schools would not be possible due to the lack of spare capacity for rezoning of pupils. The report advised that the costs of maintaining the schools to the minimum appropriate standard would be between £100,000 and £500,000 each for Harlaw Academy and Aberdeen Grammar School and between £500,000 and £1 million for St Machar Academy. Full refurbishment of the three schools to 3Rs standards would cost in the region of £26.6 million in total. The report noted that the Local Development Plan included a number of brownfield developments which could potentially deliver between 5,800 and 9,400 dwellings. As the extent of development was not yet known, it was considered that some additional capacity could be required at existing schools. The report therefore recommended that officers continue to monitor the annual Brownfield Capacity Study and progression of any development proposals alongside the annual school roll forecasts, as additional accommodation could potentially be required in future.

The report also detailed a number of other opportunities for improving the delivery of education services in secondary schools. It was felt that there could be enhanced use of ICT technology, with the potential development of a "virtual campus" which would allow pupils to have access to interactive, online learning opportunities which would complement the traditional classroom learning experience. The report advised that the initial work would focus on S5 and S6 pupils undertaking Higher and Advanced Higher courses. It was noted that making better use of ICT technology would require additional investment of approximately £850,000.

The report considered the establishment of an estate of schools with only some providing a full six years of education. It outlined two options, namely the creation of four schools accommodating S1 to S6 pupils with the remaining schools providing S1 to S3 education only, or the provision of a sixth form college for pupils in their sixth year at school. The report detailed the advantages and disadvantages of these options and advised that it was not recommended to pursue either option at present.

Finally, the report considered the provision of “all through” schools, which provided education from primary one to the end of secondary school. It was noted that some of these schools in the UK also provided nursery education. These schools were mainly in rural areas where local authorities received additional financial resources from central government. The report advised that although there were some advantages to this proposal, there would be no improvement in the curricular choice due to relatively small numbers of pupils in the middle and upper stages of secondary schools. Additional expense would also be incurred as the result of the provision of enhanced staffing and there would be an increase in the occurrence of bi and multi level teaching. It was therefore recommended not to investigate this proposal any further at this time.

Appended to the report was a summary of the stakeholder engagement process, including a list of the engagement events attended by council officers and a summary of feedback received throughout the process. Also appended to the report was the detailed analysis of the existing secondary schools and their suitability, as well as the costs for maintaining each existing building.

**The report recommended
that the Committee:-**

- (a) note the summary of Stakeholder Engagement (Appendix A);
- (b) note the immediate and longer term options for managing secondary school provision in each area of the City, based on the information presented on projected pupil numbers, capacity, suitability, condition and educational benefit, taking account of the likely impact of development allocated in the proposed Local Development Plan and feedback received during the stakeholder engagement exercise;
- (c) instruct officers to fully develop the following proposals as soon as practicable:
 - (i) maintain the existing buildings at Oldmachar Academy (at an indicative cost of £0.5 - £1.0 million) to the minimum standard in order to make them serviceable until longer term options linked to the Local Development Plan can be implemented. Further develop consortium timetable arrangements between Oldmachar Academy and Bridge of Don Academy;
 - (ii) maintain the existing buildings at Bridge of Don Academy (at an indicative cost of £0.5 - £1.0 million) to the minimum standard in order to make them serviceable until longer term options linked to the Local Development Plan can be implemented. Further develop consortium timetable arrangements between Bridge of Don Academy and Oldmachar Academy;
 - (iii) maintain the existing building at Dyce Academy to the minimum standard (at an indicative cost of £100,001 - £500,000) in order to ensure it continues to be serviceable. Further develop contiguous

- timetable arrangements between Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy;
- (iv) consolidate Torry Academy and Kincorth Academy under a single management structure and operate years S1 and S2 on the Torry Academy site and years S3 to S6 on the Kincorth site;
 - (v) replace Torry Academy and Kincorth Academy with one single larger school of up to 1,300 capacity on an appropriate site to accommodate all existing secondary pupils and any pupils generated by the development proposed at Loirston;
 - (vi) redefine the catchment area of Aberdeen Grammar School to maximise the number of in-zone pupils attending the school enabling a more equitable and efficient distribution of pupils across this and adjacent schools;
 - (vii) redefine the catchment area of Harlaw Academy to maximise the number of in-zone pupils attending the school enabling a more equitable and efficient distribution of pupils across this and adjacent schools; and
 - (viii) re-allocate Northfield Academy pupils to Hazlehead Academy and close Northfield Academy until proposals for a new school to replace Northfield Academy can be implemented. This proposal is dependent upon the proposed rezoning of Aberdeen Grammar School and Harlaw Academy as recommended above.
- (d) instructs officers to develop fully detailed proposals for the longer term management and provision of secondary schools which will result in twelve academies in total, as follows:
- (i) provision of a new school of up to 1,500 capacity within the early stages of the proposed development at Grandhome;
 - (ii) consolidation of Bridge of Don and Oldmachar Academies into one single larger school of up to 1,500 capacity on an appropriate site, distributing pupils as appropriate between the new academy at Grandhome and this new school;
 - (iii) provision of new school to the west of the City on an appropriate site to accommodate Northfield Academy pupils with a larger school of up to 1,200 capacity on an appropriate site;
 - (iv) replacement of Hazlehead Academy with a larger school of up to 1,100 capacity on an appropriate site, and
 - (v) provision of a new school of up to 1,300 capacity on an appropriate site to serve the proposed development at Countesswells, part of the proposed development at Newhills expansion, as well as all secondary pupils residing in Kingswells.
- (e) instruct officers to continue to monitor brownfield developments through the annual Vacant and Derelict Land Survey, the progression of any development proposals towards implementation and the annual School Roll Forecasts, to provide a review of the potential need for additional accommodation at Harlaw Academy, Aberdeen Grammar School and St Machar Academy;
- (f) note the additional opportunities described in the following sections:
- (i) enhanced use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and creation of a “virtual campus”;
 - (ii) reduced number of secondary schools with S1-6 provision; and
 - (iii) provision of all-through schools.
- (g) instruct officers to arrange a series of visits to new schools completed under the 3Rs project for parent councils and other stakeholders.

The Vice-Convener, seconded by Councillor Jennifer Stewart moved:-

“to reallocate Northfield Academy pupils to Hazlehead Academy and close Northfield Academy until proposals for a new school to replace Northfield Academy can be implemented. This proposal is dependent on the proposed rezoning of Aberdeen Grammar School and Harlaw Academy as recommended in the report.”

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Laing, moved as an amendment:-
to remove this recommendation.

On a division there voted:- for the motion (6) – the Vice-Convener; and Councillors Cormack, Leslie, Robertson, Jennifer Stewart and Yuill; for the amendment (15) – the Convener; and Councillors Allan, Boulton, Cooney, Corral, Cormack, Donnelly, Dunbar, Farquharson, Graham, Laing, McCaig and John West; and Mrs Abdullah, Mr G Bruce, and Mr P Campbell; absent from the division (1) – Mr A Aitken.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the summary of Stakeholder Engagement (Appendix A);
- (ii) to note the immediate and longer term options for managing secondary school provision in each area of the city, based on the information presented on projected pupil numbers, capacity, suitability, condition and educational benefit, taking account of the likely impact of development allocated in the Proposed Local Development Plan and feedback received during the stakeholder engagement exercise;
- (iii) to instruct officers to fully develop the following proposals as soon as practicable:-
 - (a) maintain the existing buildings at Oldmachar Academy (at an indicative cost of £0.5 - £1.0 million) to the minimum standard in order to make them serviceable until longer term options linked to the Local Development Plan can be implemented. Further develop consortium timetable arrangements between Oldmachar Academy and Bridge of Don Academy;
 - (b) maintain the existing buildings at Bridge of Don Academy (at an indicative cost of £0.5 - £1.0 million) to the minimum standard in order to make them serviceable until longer term options linked to the Local Development Plan can be implemented. Further develop consortium timetable arrangements between Bridge of Don Academy and Oldmachar Academy;
 - (c) maintain the existing building at Dyce Academy to the minimum standard (at an indicative cost of £100,001 - £500,000) in order to ensure it continues to be serviceable. Further develop contiguous timetable arrangements between Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy;
 - (d) maintain the status quo at Torry and Kincorth Academies, and instruct officers to bring a further report to this Committee as soon as possible for discussion of a single management structure, to include financial implications;
 - (e) replace Torry Academy and Kincorth Academy with one single larger school of up to 1,300 capacity on an appropriate site to accommodate all existing secondary pupils and any pupils generated by the development proposed at Loirston;
 - (f) redefine the catchment area of Aberdeen Grammar School to maximise the number of in-zone pupils attending the school enabling

- a more equitable and efficient distribution of pupils across this and adjacent schools;
- (g) redefine the catchment area of Harlaw Academy to maximise the number of in-zone pupils attending the school enabling a more equitable and efficient distribution of pupils across this and adjacent schools;
- (iv) to instruct officers to develop fully detailed proposals for the longer term management and provision of secondary schools which will result in twelve academies in total, as follows:-
- (a) provision of a new school of up to 1,500 capacity within the early stages of the proposed development at Grandhome;
- (b) consolidation of Bridge of Don and Oldmachar Academies into one single larger school of up to 1,500 capacity on an appropriate site, distributing pupils as appropriate between the new academy at Grandhome (as recommended in iv(a) above);
- (c) provision of a new school to the west of the city on an appropriate site to accommodate Northfield Academy pupils with a larger school of up to 1,200 capacity on an appropriate site;
- (d) replacement of Hazlehead Academy with a larger school of up to 1,100 capacity on an appropriate site;
- (e) provision of a new school of up to 1,300 capacity on an appropriate site to serve the proposed development at Countesswells, part of the proposed development at Newhills expansion, as well as all secondary pupils residing in Kingswells;
- (v) to instruct officers to continue to monitor brownfield developments through the annual Vacant and Derelict Land Survey, the progression of any development proposals towards implementation and the annual school roll forecasts, to provide a review of the potential need for additional accommodation at Harlaw Academy, Aberdeen Grammar School and St Machar Academy;
- (vi) to note the additional opportunities described in the following sections:-
- (a) enhanced use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and creation of a “virtual campus” [section 6.5.1 of the report];
- (b) reduced number of secondary schools with S1-6 provision [section 6.5.2]; and
- (c) provision of all-through schools [section 6.5.3];
- (vii) to instruct officers to arrange a series of visits to new schools completed under the 3Rs project for parent councils and other stakeholders;
- (viii) to instruct officers to continually liaise with their Aberdeenshire counterparts to ensure early notice of any proposals which would impact upon those pupils resident in Aberdeenshire who are currently educated in Aberdeen;
- (ix) to recommend to the Finance and Resources Committee that any receipts generated from any Education, Culture and Sport property resulting from the agreements at today’s Committee should be invested back to the Education, Culture and Sport estate; and
- (x) to instruct officers to facilitate a meeting of senior pupils from all academies across the city to allow them to discuss the proposals.

- **ANDREW MAY, Convener.**