

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Finance and Resources
DATE	24 June 2025 06 August 2025
EXEMPT	The report is public, but Appendix A is exempt under Paragraph 8: <i>Estimated expenditure on Contracts</i> . The appendix refers to the potential acquisition or supply of goods/services where disclosure to the public of the amount to be spent would be likely to give an advantage to a person or organisation seeking to enter a contract with the Council.
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Bucksburn and Dyce Long Term Secondary School Provision: Outline Business Case
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/159
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Andrew Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	ECS: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2, 1.3 F&R: 4.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a completed Outline Business Case detailing options for ensuring appropriate long term secondary education provision to serve the communities of Dyce and Bucksburn and seeks approval for discussions to be undertaken with Aberdeenshire Council on catchment area adjustments for Dyce Academy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Education and Children's Services Committee :-

- 2.1 Notes the preferred option for ensuring appropriate future provision of secondary education at Dyce and Bucksburn, as detailed within the Outline Business Case at Appendix A of this report; and:
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord in consultation with the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to consult with officers at Aberdeenshire Council on proposals for adjusting the Dyce Academy catchment area to align with the City boundary, therefore removing all areas of Aberdeenshire including Newmachar and Kingseat from the catchment area, and to report back to this Committee on the outcomes of these discussions and recommendations for next steps, within the next two committee cycles.

That the Finance and Resources Committee :-

- 2.3 Notes the preferred option for ensuring appropriate future provision of secondary education at Dyce and Bucksburn, and:
- 2.4 Notes the decision of the Education and Children's Services Committee at its meeting on 24 June 2025 in relation to the proposed changes to school catchment areas.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 At its meeting on 8 September 2022, the former Education Operational Delivery Committee approved the Council's School Estate Plan, and instructed the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to take forwards a detailed action plan to develop and improve the school estate. This included an instruction to carry out a feasibility study, to identify options for ensuring appropriate long term secondary school provision for Bucksburn and Dyce.
- 3.2 The Outline Business Case, included at Appendix A of this report, sets out the full findings of the feasibility study, and provides an analysis of the options available for the future.
- 3.3 As the city's smallest secondary school, Dyce Academy faces challenges in its efficient operation, and can be limited in the curriculum choice it can offer to pupils. The catchment area for Dyce Academy extends beyond the city boundary to the north, and covers areas of Aberdeenshire including the communities of Newmachar and Kingseat (see catchment area map at Appendix B). This means that all secondary aged children living in these areas of Aberdeenshire have an entitlement to a place at Dyce Academy.
- 3.4 Meanwhile, Bucksburn Academy is under pressure with rising pupil numbers, due to planned housing within the Newhills Expansion area. The planned permanent extension of the school, which will provide 300 additional pupil places, may not be sufficient to meet the continued rise in demand for places which is expected beyond 2030.
- 3.5 The School Estate Plan therefore highlighted that there may be a need to consider additional measures for managing pupil numbers in the long term between Bucksburn and Dyce. This document presents the findings of a feasibility study to assess the options for the long term planning of secondary school provision to serve the two communities.

Feasibility Study and Stakeholder Engagement

- 3.6 To assess the options available, a feasibility study was carried out between May and July 2024. The extent to which the school buildings will continue to meet the needs of Dyce and Bucksburn for secondary education provision in the future was assessed, and any required improvements or changes were considered.

- 3.7 To help evaluate the options for balancing numbers across the two schools (by making changes to catchment areas so that fewer pupils would be expected to attend Bucksburn Academy in future, and would instead be included within the catchment area for Dyce Academy) architects were instructed to assess the opportunities and estimated costs for extending the Dyce Academy building, which would enable the school to accommodate an increased pupil roll.
- 3.8 A stakeholder engagement exercise was also carried out, to gather comments and feedback from school communities on the options available, and the potential impact of making changes to school catchment areas to help balance numbers across the two schools. A summary of the feedback received from stakeholders is included within the Outline Business Case at Appendix A.

Preferred Option and Recommendations

- 3.9 Whilst work was undertaken as part of the feasibility study to produce outline plans for extending Dyce Academy, which would allow catchment areas to be amended and future pupil numbers to be redistributed between the two schools, it is acknowledged that no funding has been approved or allocated for the extension of the school, and that any extension to the school would likely result in increased running costs, which are also not budgeted for. Given the need to avoid adding further pressure to the Council's capital programme or revenue budgets, alternative options to minimise further capital expenditure needed to be considered.
- 3.10 The feasibility study also considered the possibility of reducing the overall numbers of pupils who would be eligible to attend the two schools in the future, by making changes to catchment areas, and identifying some areas of land which could instead be included within a catchment area for an alternative secondary school.
- 3.11 Current school roll forecasts indicate that none of the Aberdeen City secondary schools within reasonable travelling distance from Dyce or Bucksburn are expected to have capacity available in the foreseeable future to accommodate additional pupils from these areas. However, there may be an opportunity for the areas of Aberdeenshire which currently fall within the catchment area for Dyce Academy, including Newmachar and Kingseat, to be moved to the catchment area of an alternative secondary school in Aberdeenshire in the future. This would make space available at Dyce Academy to allow for a rebalance of pupil numbers between Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy, thus relieving the expected pressure on space at Bucksburn Academy in the future.
- 3.12 The preferred option identified within the outline business case would involve the removal of all areas of Aberdeenshire from the Dyce Academy catchment area, so that pupils living in these areas are no longer entitled to attend Dyce Academy in future, and are included within the catchment area of an Aberdeenshire secondary school instead. A map showing the areas of Aberdeenshire which currently fall within the Dyce Academy catchment area is included at Appendix B.

- 3.13 The preferred option would also include the realignment of the catchment areas for Bucksburn Academy and Dyce Academy, so that fewer pupils are entitled to attend Bucksburn Academy in future, and are instead entitled to attend Dyce Academy. This would most likely involve all or part of the community of Stoneywood being moved from the Bucksburn Academy catchment area to the Dyce Academy catchment area.
- 3.14 Any proposed changes to school catchment areas which could affect Aberdeenshire Council's school estate would require detailed consultation and discussion with colleagues in Aberdeenshire from an early stage, so that plans and communications can be aligned and coordinated between both councils. Moreover, proposals to make any changes to school catchment areas are subject to statutory public consultation, before a decision can be made on whether the proposals should be implemented, so both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council would need to consult on changes to their respective catchment areas, prior to any decisions being taken.
- 3.15 It is therefore recommended that officers are instructed to enter into discussion with colleagues at Aberdeenshire Council, with a view to land in Aberdeenshire no longer being included in the Dyce Academy catchment area. Subject to the outcome of those discussions, officers would then make further recommendations to the Education and Children Services Committee on progressing with formal consultation on the proposed catchment areas changes in Aberdeen City, to help balance pupil numbers between Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy in the future.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 4.2 If a decision is taken in future to proceed with the removal of Aberdeenshire land from the Dyce Academy catchment area, and pupils from these areas in future attend a school in Aberdeenshire and not Aberdeen City, then the per capita funding which the Council currently receives from Scottish Government to assist with the cost of the education of these pupils, will instead be paid to Aberdeenshire Council, and the overall per capita funding paid to Aberdeen City would be reduced. The total reduction in per capita funding, following full implementation of catchment area changes after six years, is estimated at £20k per year.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education.
- 5.2 Section 17 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of an education authority in the performance of their functions under sections 1 to 6 of the Act, to provide for their area, sufficient accommodation in public schools and other educational establishments under their management

to enable them to perform their said functions. In addition, an education authority shall maintain and keep efficient every public school, and other educational establishment under their management, and shall from time to time provide such additional accommodation as may be necessary to enable them to perform their functions under the Act and may, provide, alter, improve, enlarge, equip and maintain schools and other educational establishments within their area.

- 5.3 A proposal to make changes to a school, including changes to catchment areas or closing, relocating or opening a school, is subject to consultation in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Formal consultations will require to be carried out for any proposals to make changes to the catchment areas for Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy, and consideration of this has been given in the recommendations arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified			
Compliance	Failure to plan effectively for secondary education provision leading to the Council being unable to fulfil its duty to make adequate and efficient education provision	The recommended option as set out within the business case would help to ensure that adequate and efficient secondary education provision for Dyce and Bucksburn will be in place for the foreseeable future	L	Yes
Operational	Proposed changes to catchment areas don't	Any changes to catchment areas	M	Yes

	provide sufficient re-balancing of pupil numbers	would be designed to rebalance pupil numbers according to the latest available forecasts, however there would remain a risk that the desired changes are not realised immediately. Other short term mitigating actions may therefore be required to address any further lack of capacity at either school.		
Financial	No significant risks identified			
Reputational	Failure to engage with stakeholders (including Aberdeenshire Council) on the planned changes to the school catchment areas could lead to reputational damage for the Council.	Ongoing dialogue and engagement with Aberdeenshire colleagues, staff, parents and pupils at the appropriate stage of the project	L	Yes
Environmental/Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>Council Delivery Plan 2024</u>	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	Impact of Report
<u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The recommendations within this report support the delivery of the following policy statements:</p> <p>A City of Opportunity</p> <p>Policy Statement 2 - Review and invest in our school estate, ensuring all of Aberdeen's schools are fit for the educational needs and the challenges of the 21st century. The report presents options for balancing pupil numbers and ensuring Bucksburn Academy can operate within its available capacity.</p>

Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Prosperous People: The project will support Stretch Outcome 8 in the LOIP - 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination." Ensuring sufficient capacity and resources across our school estate will support pupil needs and positive destinations.
Community Empowerment Stretch Outcomes	The report and proposed future consultation support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 16 in the LOIP – 50% of people report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.
Regional and City Strategies	This project forms part of the School Estate Plan which will support the delivery of the Council's Property and Estates Strategy and the Net Zero Routemap for Aberdeen City.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	No other assessments required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Education Operational Delivery Committee, 8 September 2022: [Agenda Item 14: School Estate Plan 2022](#).

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Exempt Appendix A: Outline Business Case – Bucksburn & Dyce Long Term Secondary Education Provision
- 11.2 Appendix B: Map of existing catchment areas for Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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