

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	16 September 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Northfield Area Asset Review – Strategic Outline Business Case
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/216
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Andrew Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1, 1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a Strategic Outline Case, which summarises the findings of the recent Northfield Area Asset Review, and includes high level options for improving future primary and secondary education and potential consolidation of other assets in the Northfield area, to bring about improvements in the delivery of Council services to members of the Northfield community.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the findings of the Northfield Area Asset Review as set out within the Strategic Outline Case at Appendix A of this report, and refers the document to the Finance and Resources Committee for approval;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to develop an Outline Business Case, to present detailed options and costings for the creation of new community campus facilities to serve the Northfield Area, which would support the delivery of the Family Support Model in Northfield, allow for the reduction of excess school capacity, and provide opportunities for the consolidation of existing Council buildings in Northfield; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to submit the completed Outline Business Case for approval to the budget setting process for 2026/27.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 A feasibility study was undertaken in 2023, focusing on the primary schools within Northfield and with the intention of identifying options for reducing excess pupil capacity within these. The feasibility study did not lead to any conclusive recommendations, and officers were instructed by the Education and Children's Services Committee in February 2024 to carry out further work to identify potential future options for primary school provision in Northfield, alongside a

review of the long term future for Northfield Academy, to provide solutions for removing any risks associated with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) known to be present within the building.

3.2 At its meeting of 17 September 2024, the Committee further instructed officers to widen the scope of the review to include all Council owned assets in the area, alongside the schools. This was to allow for a wider range of options to be considered, in terms of consolidating buildings and offering services in different ways, which would help to maximise the potential savings and improvements which could be achieved. The decision of the Committee was:

- *to agree that the aim and priority of the asset review in Northfield was to invest in the area and enhance community and learning provision locally and there would be no detrimental impact on services;*
- *to note that the Community Campus Model, approved by Committee in November 2021 was a community - based education model that ensured improved learning environments and opportunities for our children and young people;*
- *to note that the Family Support Model, approved by Committee in July 2024, aimed to empower residents, build trust and consistent relationships through support that was flexible and responsive to local needs;*
- *to agree that the Northfield Community asset review would encompass the principles of both the Community Campus Model and the Family Support Model to deliver services for our children and families in line with our commitment to drive targeted improvement in our SIMD1 quintiles;*
- *to agree that new purpose-built learning environments in Northfield would represent an appropriate opportunity to meet the inclusion needs of primary and secondary pupils;*
- *to agree the intended scope of the proposed asset review in Northfield to include all public assets, and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to proceed with the review and to commence engagement with all partners working in the wider Northfield area;*
- *to instruct the Chief Officer –Education and Lifelong Learning to work closely with the Northfield community throughout this process to ensure community empowerment and resilience was prioritised in all stages of planning;*
- *to instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to work with the Northfield Advisory Group to invite and support their guidance in shaping improvements and outcomes*

3.3 In response to the above instruction, an area wide asset review was carried out between March and June 2025, which focused on all Council operational assets within the Middlefield, Mastrick, Cummings Park, Northfield, and Heathryfold

localities (collectively referred to within this report as 'the Northfield area'). This included education, sports, leisure, and community facilities, with the objective of identifying potential asset consolidation and enhancing Council services across the area.

- 3.4 The Strategic Outline Case, presented at Appendix A of this report, provides the findings of the asset review and sets out a number of high level options for improving and consolidating assets in the Northfield area.
- 3.5 In line with the Committee's September 2024 instruction noted above, the options presented within the Strategic Outline Case focus on opportunities to enhance community and learning provision, which follow the principles of the Community Campus Model and Family Support Model.
- 3.6 The Council's Community Campus model was approved by the former Education Operational Delivery Committee in November 2021, and aims to encourage the shared use of facilities by communities, to improve collaboration and integrated service delivery, and encourage more effective and efficient use of resources to meet a broader range of community needs at a single location. This approach supports delivery of multi-agency spaces, drives efficiency through the co-location of services, supporting the needs of a particular community, and has the potential to maximise opportunities for early intervention, in keeping with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- 3.7 The high level options set out within the Strategic Outline Case at Appendix A therefore include opportunities for providing new primary and secondary education facilities in Northfield, which would support the principles of the Community Campus model. This would allow for some existing primary school provision to be consolidated, helping to reduce the excess capacity which exists within the primary schools, and provide solutions for removing RAAC at Northfield Academy. The options also give consideration to the possibility of improving the delivery of other Council services in Northfield, which could lead to the consolidation of other Council assets in the area.
- 3.8 The Family Support Model, approved by the Education and Children's Services Committee in July 2024, is intended to help tackle poverty and deprivation by improving wellbeing, increasing income and employability and reducing the cost of living for individuals and families, especially in priority areas such as Northfield. It focuses on building stronger communities and emphasises early intervention and prevention rather than just a crisis response. This approach recognises the importance of establishing a community space that is accessible without 'referral' and which provides an environment that is welcoming and trauma informed.
- 3.9 The Family Support Model is currently in development, and officers have identified an opportunity for the outcomes of the Northfield Asset Review to be linked to the development and rollout of the model, by including provision for a new type of community space within the options to be explored for Northfield. This would ensure that any new assets for providing education and wider community services in the Northfield area are planned and designed to facilitate the delivery of the model, for the benefit of the Northfield community.

- 3.10 It is recommended that officers are now instructed to develop an Outline Business Case, to further develop the high level options presented at Appendix A of this report. During the development of the Outline Business Case, further work would be undertaken to tie in with the emerging findings from the work on the Family Support Model, so that the options to be presented in the Outline Business Case include further details of how any proposed new assets could support the delivery of the Family Support Model. The Outline Business Case will also present more detailed cost estimates for the available options, to enable an affordability check and to assist the Committee in making a decision on preferred next steps.
- 3.11 The high level options within the Strategic Outline Case include the potential for the development of the existing Northfield Academy site and adjacent playing fields, for the provision of new community campus facilities. Desktop studies undertaken during the asset review have confirmed that this area of Northfield is a former quarry. There is therefore a risk of poor ground conditions, which could add significantly to the cost of any development, and also to delivery timescales. Officers propose to undertake detailed physical site investigations, during development of the Outline Business Case, so that the extent of this risk and likely cost implications can be fully understood, to support Elected Member decision making. Findings from the site investigations will be reported within the Outline Business Case.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The cost of developing the Outline Business Case and costs associated with site investigations will be met from existing budgets for delivery of the School Estate Plan.

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.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report outlines the approaches which could be taken to bring about positive impacts on the environment in the future, through proposing new build assets which would contribute to the Council's net zero carbon ambitions, and through ensuring improved resource efficiency by rationalising assets where appropriate.
- 6.2 All new build and refurbishment projects are compliant with the Council's Building Performance policy, and through the location and design of new buildings we will seek to promote active and sustainable travel to school.
- 6.3 Designing new assets for the future presents opportunities to make positive impacts on other aspects of the natural environment, including, for example, making space for nature through sustainable approaches to landscaping, avoiding over-use of synthetic materials in school grounds, and providing space for food growing initiatives. Officers will continue to work closely with colleagues in Environmental Planning when designing new and refurbished outdoor spaces, to ensure consideration is given to these important factors.
- 6.4 However it is also recognised that carrying out physical changes to the Council estate, such as removing surplus capacity or constructing new buildings, could potentially result in a negative impact on the environment, for example through disturbance to habitats and roosting animals, or affecting existing open spaces. Any such activity will be planned carefully to minimise any such negative impacts wherever possible.

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	(1) Failure to plan effectively for the school estate, leading to the Council being unable to fulfil its duty to make adequate and	1) The report sets out opportunities to ensure adequate and efficient provision is maintained (2) Any proposed changes to schools arising from the proposed Outline Business Case will incorporate full	L	Yes

	<p>efficient provision</p> <p>(2) Failure to consult formally with stakeholders on changes to schools would be in breach of legislation</p>	statutory consultation to ensure compliance with legislation		
Operational	Failure to engage and consult with communities on the future of the school estate which serves them, could lead to reputational damage for the Council.	Any proposed changes to existing assets and services arising from the proposed Outline Business Case will be subject to full community consultation prior to any final decisions being taken.	L	Yes
Financial	There is currently a high risk of poor ground conditions at the Northfield Academy site and adjacent playing fields which could add significant costs to the project.	Physical site investigations to be carried out during development of the Outline Business Case would ensure any risks can be fully identified and would allow mitigations to be put in place.	M	Yes
Reputational	Failure to engage and consult with communities on the future of the school estate which serves them, could lead to reputational damage for the Council.	Any proposed changes to existing assets and services arising from the proposed Outline Business Case will be subject to full community consultation prior to any final decisions being taken.	L	Yes

Environment / Climate	Development of new assets could lead to increased carbon emissions	Climate risks and the need for the estate to contribute to the Council's net zero carbon emissions targets will be embedded into planning and decision making.	L	Yes
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8. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The report supports the delivery of the following policy statements:</p> <p><u>A City of Opportunity</u> 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 improving the school estate in Northfield.</p> <p><u>A Prosperous City</u> Policy Statement 8 - Seek to buy goods, services and food locally whenever possible, subject to complying with the law and public tendering requirements. Opportunities to do this will be considered for any projects which are progressed as a result of the proposed Outline Business Case.</p>
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The report supports the delivery of Stretch Outcome 6 in the LOIP – children living in our priority neighbourhoods will sustain a positive destination on leaving school – proposals in this report will assist in improving education provision in Northfield.
Regional and City Strategies	The recommendations in the report support the delivery of the Council's Property and Estates Strategy.

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 and Children's Services Committee, 17 September 2024: [Agenda Item 12: School Estate Plan Annual Update](#)

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A: Northfield Area Asset Review Strategic Outline Case

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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