

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Town House,  
ABERDEEN, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2008

MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

S e d e r u n t :

Lord Provost Peter Stephen, Chairperson;  
Depute Provost John West; and

COUNCILLORS

GEORGE ADAM  
YVONNE ALLAN  
MARIE BOULTON  
SCOTT CASSIE  
RONALD CLARK  
NORMAN COLLIE  
NEIL COONEY  
JOHN CORALL  
IRENE CORMACK  
WILLIAM CORMIE  
BARNEY CROCKETT  
KATHARINE DEAN  
JAMES DONNELLY  
JACQUELINE DUNBAR  
JAMES FARQUHARSON  
NEIL FLETCHER  
GORDON GRAHAM  
MARTIN GREIG  
JAMES HUNTER

LEONARD IRONSIDE  
MURIEL JAFFREY  
JAMES KIDDIE  
JENNIFER LAING  
CALLUM McCAIG  
MARK McDONALD  
AILEEN MALONE  
ANDREW MAY  
ALAN MILNE  
JAMES NOBLE  
GEORGE PENNY  
JOHN REYNOLDS  
RICHARD ROBERTSON  
JENNIFER STEWART  
JOHN STEWART  
KEVIN STEWART  
KIRSTY WEST  
WILLIAM YOUNG and  
IAN YUILL

Lord Provost Peter Stephen, in the Chair

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Throughout the course of the meeting, the following declarations of interest were noted:-

- (1) Councillor Noble as a representative of the Council on the Board of Grampian Housing Association;**
- (2) Councillor Cassie as a representative of the Council on the Board of Tenants First;**
- (3) Councillor Robertson as Convener of Grampian Housing Association;**
- (4) Councillor Crockett as a member of a subsidiary of Langstane Housing Association;**
- (5) Councillor McDonald as a representative of the Council on the Board of Langstane Housing Association;**
- (6) Councillor Dean as a representative of the Council on the Board of NHS Grampian;**
- (7) Councillors McCaig and Kevin Stewart declared pecuniary interests arising from their employment by Maureen Watt MSP; and**
- (8) Councillors McCaig, Kevin Stewart, Jennifer Stewart, Kirsty West and Yuill noted personal and non-pecuniary interests.**

None of the above members considered that the nature of their interests required them to leave the meeting during consideration of the matter.

## **MATTER OF URGENCY**

Lord Provost Stephen intimated that he had directed in terms of Section 50(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, that the following item be considered as a matter of urgency as it had been referred to the Council by the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2008, and in order that the proposals relative to the School Estate Strategy might be implemented within the current academic year.

## **SCHOOL ESTATE STRATEGY - OUTCOME OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee of 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2008, which had been referred to it for consideration by four members of that Committee, the Council had before it (1) a report by the Head of Planning and Policy for Services to Children and Young People and the Head of Resources Development and Delivery on the outcome of the statutory consultation process undertaken between 3<sup>rd</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April,

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2008 on the five short term options within the overall School Estate Strategy, containing recommendations for determination by both the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee and the Council, relative to the powers vested in them by way of the Council's approved Orders of Reference; (2) the decision of the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee to approve recommendations (A)(1) - (5) of the report; and (3) requests for deputations on behalf of St. Machar and Donbank schools, Victoria Road School, Causewayend School, Hilton Nursery and the public in general (David Henderson).

The report detailed the overall requirement for and methodology of the consultation process, the details of each specific proposal submitted to the consultation process, the outcome of the consultation process in terms of issues raised, the risks associated with the proposals and the educational, social, property and financial implications associated with each of the individual proposals.

The report set out detailed recommendations in respect of each of the proposals as follows:-

**Byron Park Nursery/Infant School and Westerton School**

- (1) To implement the proposed closure of Byron Park Nursery/Infant School and Westerton School and make educational provision from nursery to primary 7 in a new school within the existing building on the Westerton site.
- (2) That officers implement the proposal in order that the new school be operational for the start of the school session in August 2008.
- (3) To quickly identify an alternative service use once the Byron Park building is vacated or alternatively a rapid disposal of the property as an asset.

**Donbank School and St. Machar School**

- (1) To implement the proposal and close Donbank School and St. Machar School to create a new combined school on the current Donbank School site to incorporate ASN and nursery facilities.
- (2) That officers implement the proposal in order that the new combined school be operational for the start of the school session in August 2008.
- (3) To identify suitable and sustainable accommodation for the provision of an English as an Additional Language service within the city.
- (4) To undertake a statutory consultation process in relation to the re-zoning of schools within the St. Machar ASG that may be required as a result of the implementation of the proposal.
- (5) To quickly identify an alternative service use once the St. Machar School building is vacated or alternatively a rapid disposal of the property as an asset.

**Causewayend School**

- (1) To implement the proposal and close Causewayend School and relocate pupils to other schools in the area through rezoning at the end of the current school session.
- (2) To undertake a statutory consultation process in relation to the rezoning of Skene Square School, Gilcomstoun School and Aberdeen Grammar School.

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- (3) To quickly identify an alternative service use once the Causewayend building is vacated or alternatively a rapid disposal of the property as an asset.

**Hilton Nursery**

- (1) To implement the proposal and close Hilton Nursery School at the end of the current school session.
- (2) To commence discussions with NHS Grampian and relevant Council services with regards to the adjoining Hilton Centre property.
- (3) To quickly identify an alternative service use one the Hilton Nursery School building is vacated or alternatively a rapid disposal of the property as an asset.

**Victoria Road School**

- (1) That officers develop an operational plan to realise the city wide learning strategy as it relates to south of the Dee.
- (2) To implement the proposed closure of Victoria Road School and to transfer pupils to Tullos School and/or Walker Road School, in line with the above learning strategy and operational plan and in any event by August 2008.

The report recommended:-

- (A) that the Committee approve:-
- (1) the closure of Byron Park Nursery/Infant School and Westerton School by August 2008, to make educational provision from nursery to primary 7 in a new school within the existing building on the Westerton site and the specific recommendations as set out above.
- (2) the closure of Donbank School and St. Machar School by August 2008 to create a new combined school on the Donbank site to incorporate additional support needs and nursery provision and the specific recommendations set out above.
- (3) the closure of Causewayend School by August 2008 and relocation of pupils to other schools in the area through rezoning and the specific recommendations set out above.
- (4) the closure of Hilton Nursery School by August 2008 and the specific recommendations set out above.
- (5) the closure of Victoria Road School and transfer of pupils to Tullos School and/or Walker Road School by August 2008 and the specific recommendations set out above.
- (B) (1) that the Council approve the resource implications of the proposals other than those relating to teaching staff which were within the remit of the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee.

Councillor Farquharson, seconded by Councillor Ironside, moved:-

That the recommendations in the report be considered and dealt with on an individual basis.

Councillor Dean, seconded by Councillor Kevin Stewart, moved as an amendment:-

That the recommendations be taken together.

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On a division, there voted:-

For the motion (14) - Councillors Adam, Allan, Boulton, Collie, Cooney, Crockett, Donnelly, Farquharson, Graham, Hunter, Ironside, Laing, Milne and Young.

For the amendment (24) – Lord Provost Stephen; Depute Provost John West; and Councillors Cassie, Clark, Corall, Cormie, Dean, Dunbar, Fletcher, Greig, Jaffrey, Kiddie, McCaig, McDonald, Malone, May, Penny, Reynolds, Robertson, Jennifer Stewart, John Stewart, Kevin Stewart, Kirsty West and Yuill.

Absent from the division (2) - Councillors Cormack and Noble.

**The Council resolved:-**  
to adopt the amendment.

**The Council further resolved:-**  
to hear all the deputations.

In terms of Standing Order 10, the Council was then addressed by the deputations:-

(1) St. Machar and Donbank School - Rev. Jim Weir

Rev. Weir referred to the likely negative effects of the closure of St. Machar and Donbank schools on the community of Tillydrone; expressed the view that the proposals in the report would deprive those most in need in Tillydrone, and that in an area of deprivation resources should be targeted at, not diverted from, education; paid tribute to the staff working at the two schools; stated that the Council would have a duty to replace those schools proposed for closure with improved educational provision; suggested that measures taken to make short-term savings may result in expenditure in the longer term; and stated that, in light of anticipated new housing in the Tillydrone area, there was a legitimate demand for two primary schools.

(2) Victoria Road Primary School - Bruce Noble and Hazel McAllan

Mrs. McAllan referred to the benefits of small class sizes at Victoria Road School and to the dedication of the teachers, stating that the closure of the school would be a great loss to the community; expressed concern that there would be very limited capacity for an increased roll at Walker Road School if all children were to be moved there from Victoria Road School; referred also to the influx of eastern european migrants to Torry which was a regeneration area, and to the pressure this would continue to place on schools in the area; considered that the education being provided at Walker Road School would suffer as a result of overcrowding, and that other negative effects may include bullying and stress on teaching staff; expressed concern that there would be inadequate dining facilities at Walker Road School and that the building works would not be complete by the time

the school session 2008/09 was due to commence; and in relation to the cost of adapting Walker Road and Tullos schools to accommodate additional pupils, took the view that money spent in making improvements to Victoria Road School would be wasted if it were to be closed as proposed.

Mr. Noble queried whether the capacity figure for Victoria Road School, cited as 469, was accurate; and made reference to the legitimacy of the sale of the Victoria Road School playing field and to the replacement thereof.

(3) Causewayend School - Alan Milton

Mr. Milton made reference to the requirement to deliver best value, noting that the cost per pupil at Causewayend School was lower than in many other schools in the city, and that there were a number of schools with lower numbers in terms of ratio to capacity; stated that the Causewayend building was generally in good condition, that there was no evidence that improvement or development works would be unduly costly, and that there were excellent facilities on the site and good quality outdoor play areas; cited statistics from Aberdeen Maternity Hospital forecasting an increase in births in the city; made reference to the arrival of children from eastern european continues which continued to increase the school roll; expressed the view that Causewayend school provided a high standard of education, that vandalism was rare with the children having a sense of ownership, that these positive behaviours may not transfer to other schools, and that the splitting of friendship groups at this formative time may be damaging; considered that the school was ideally placed as a commuter school supporting a considerable number of families to allow parents to work or attend college, and that a significant number of the children came from single-parent families and/or areas of deprivation; suggested that, should the school close, the travel routes to school would cause some concern with children having to walk along the dual carriageway on East North Street to Hanover Street which was not considered safe, although neither was the Canal Street bridge route; suggested that a number of developments could be considered at the school including the relocation of Council staff, the development of private sponsorship, the position of wrap-around care and the incorporation of adult learning via college provision; and expressed the view that the Council had not provided a sound business case for the closure of Causewayend School which should remain open.

(4) Hilton Nursery - Brian Rhodes on behalf of parents and children of Hilton Nursery

Mr. Rhodes expressed disappointment with the outcome of the meeting of the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee the previous day; contended that the consultation process relating to the proposals had been flawed, claiming that the frequently asked questions on the website had not answered his queries, and that a two-way process for consultation had not been followed; expressed the view that the proposals were being driven by

cost savings and property issues; referred to the lack of reasons cited for proposing to close Hilton Nursery; made reference to the projected increase in births in the city, to which the proposals were contrary; considered that the report before the Council did not address issues raised during the consultation process; questioned the methods used in arriving at the projected reduced roll for Hilton Nursery, noting that the roll had only reduced this year due to the changed admissions procedures; referred to the value which the Nursery had added to the lives of those children currently attending, and expressed concern that there was no guarantee of these children finding other nursery places elsewhere; cited the high quality of provision at Hilton Nursery whose closure would be a great loss to the community; and implored the Council to reject the proposals to close Hilton Nursery.

(5) David Henderson

Mr. Henderson distributed some research which he had prepared in advance of the meeting; spoke in detail on the community schools perspective, referring to the benefits of such facilities to a community and expressing disappointment that their provision had not been taken into account as part of the proposals; and criticised the statutory consultation process, suggesting a time period in excess of the statutory minimum period of 28 days should have been provided to respond, that the process fell short of the Community Engagement Standards, and that the report ought to have been issued more than four days in advance of this meeting.

After each deputation, there was an opportunity for questions from members of the Council. The Lord Provost thanked all the deputations for their attendance and contributions.

Councillor Dean moved, seconded by Councillor Kirsty West:-

- (1) that the decision of the Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee of 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2008, listed in the report as recommendations (A)(1) to (5), be re-affirmed;
- (2) that the affected school communities be fully involved in the choice of names for the new schools and that the option remain to retain the existing names;
- (3) that officers report with proposals for the provision of outdoor play space in the Causewayend area;
- (4) that recommendation B(6) also be approved; and
- (5) that the Council (a) instruct the Head of Resources Development and Delivery to prepare a programme of works to allow the timetable to be met, and to prepare a schedule of core rates; (b) authorise the Head of Resources Development and Delivery to approach contractors to allow this to be done; and (c) note that thereafter it may be necessary to convene a meeting of the Urgent Business Committee if a suspension of Standing Orders were required to enable the works to proceed.

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Councillor Boulton, seconded by Councillor Farquharson, moved as an amendment:-

That Donbank and St. Machar schools be amalgamated onto one site at St. Machar Primary School; and in other respects that the recommendations in the report be approved.

Councillor Cooney moved as a second amendment, seconded by Councillor Young:-

That the Council reject the recommendations in the report and do not close the schools; and that steps be taken to enhance the use of the schools as community hubs.

On a division between the two amendments, there voted:-

For the amendment by Councillor Boulton (9) - Councillors Boulton, Cassie, Clark, Farquharson, Fletcher, Milne, Noble, Reynolds and Robertson.

For the amendment by Councillor Cooney (11) – Councillors Adam, Allan, Collie, Cooney, Crockett, Donnelly, Graham, Hunter, Ironside, Laing and Young.

Declined to vote (18) – Lord Provost Stephen; Depute Provost John West; and Councillor Corall, Cormack, Cormie, Dean, Dunbar, Greig, Kiddie, McCaig, McDonald, Malone, May, Penny, Jennifer Stewart, John Stewart, Kevin Stewart and Kirsty West.

Absent from the division (2) – Councillors Jaffrey and Yuill.

On a division, between the motion and the successful amendment by Councillor Cooney, there voted:-

For the motion (23) - Depute Provost John West; and Councillor Cassie, Clark, Corall, Cormack, Cormie, Dean, Dunbar, Fletcher, Greig, Kiddie, McCaig, McDonald, Malone, May, Noble, Penny, Reynolds, Robertson, Jennifer Stewart, John Stewart, Kevin Stewart and Kirsty West.

For the amendment by Councillor Cooney (14) - Councillors Adam, Allan, Boulton, Collie, Cooney, Crockett, Donnelly, Farquharson, Graham, Hunter, Ironside, Laing, Milne and Young.

Declined to vote (1) – Lord Provost Stephen.

Absent from the division (2) – Councillors Jaffrey and Yuill.

**The Council resolved:-**

to adopt the terms of the motion.



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**In terms of Standing Order 15(6), Councillors Adam, Allan, Collie, Cooney, Crockett, Donnelly, Graham, Hunter, Ironside, Laing and Young requested that their dissent to the decision be recorded.**

- **PETER STEPHEN, Lord Provost.**