

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education & Children's Services
DATE	September 8 th , 2016
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Tillydrone/Old Aberdeen – Primary School Provision
REPORT NUMBER	ECS\16\046
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

Following instructions to Officers at the Full Council Meeting dated 25 February 2016, this report provides an update on the review of primary school provision in the Tillydrone / Old Aberdeen area with a view to providing increased educational capacity in Tillydrone and also providing a replacement school for St. Peter's School.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees to approve the following proposals:

- To note the engagement that has taken place with the community to date and the analysis of the feedback and comments received from the Community;
- To note the option appraisal work and outcome of identifying the St Machar Park site as the preferred site for future school and early learning provision in the area;
- To instruct officers to commence a programme of formal consultation regarding taking forward the development of a shared campus with nursery provision which includes a replacement building for St Peter's School and a non-denominational school; and
- Otherwise note the contents of this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 A capital budget of £17m was allocated for this project. An indicative cost plan is being prepared and will be presented to this Committee prior to it making a final determination on how to proceed following a formal public consultation.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal

- 4.1 Any future public consultations will require compliance with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. As these proposals do not refer to the proposed closure of any school in either consultation exercise, any decision to implement them by this Committee cannot be called in by Scottish Ministers.

Health and Safety

- 4.2 Any new build proposals will require health and safety plans in accordance with Construction, Design and Management legislation.

Risk Management

- 4.3 Management of risk will be identified monitored and mitigated in accordance with the ability to meet risk policy and programmed objectives. As with all Council capital projects, this project will form part of the overall reporting and progress updates reports via the Strategic, Asset and Capital Group.

Resources

- 4.4 A fully resourced, multi-disciplinary design team is key to the successful delivery of this project. A range of in house (from E&CS and CH&I) and external resources have been identified to deliver this project, should Committee agree to proceed following a formal public consultation.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 At its meeting on 25 February 2016, the Council instructed officers to review the education provision in the Tillydrone community, recognising the rising school aged population resulting from new housing developments and increased birth rates in the area, and to report back to committee in the September 2016 cycle of meetings with detailed options appraisals, including details of suitable sites, project timelines and costs.

5.1.2 Officers have explored the options to increase the educational capacity both at Riverbank School and St Peter’s School. Currently, there is a growing over capacity issue both at Riverbank and St. Peters Schools. There has been a number of initiatives progressed over the last few years to help alleviate some of the pressures, yet capacity constraints still remain an issue for the future.

5.1.3 Further to this, three sites in Tillydrone have been earmarked for affordable housing through the Strategic Infrastructure Programme affordable housing project, which is likely to add increasing pressure to the current capacity issues in this area of the city.

Riverbank School

5.1.4 Riverbank School was created from the merger of St Machar School with Donbank School, with the new school being located in the former Donbank School building. The most recently published school roll forecasts show that Riverbank Primary School currently has a 92% occupancy level, which is forecast to rise to 152% by 2022. The Riverbank school catchment zone has seen a 40.3% increase in the number of under five years olds in the last five years.

5.1.5 At the then Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee and Full Council meetings of 29 and 30 April 2008 respectively, the School Estate Strategy Report – Statutory Consultation Report identified that the closure of St Machar School and Donbank School to create Riverbank School in the former Donbank School building would result in the following estimated capital costs and savings:

Capital Implications of Merging Donbank School and St Machar School

Item	Cost (£)
Relocation of the English as an Additional Language service	200,000
Building Alterations at Donbank School	
1. Essential	269,000
2. Desirable	275,000
Disability Discrimination Act compliance work	61,000
Fire Risk Assessment work	105,000
Condition and Suitability Requirements (over 6 year period)	2,100,000
Gross Capital Cost	3,010,000
Condition and Suitability Savings from Building Closure	(1,800,000)
Disability Discrimination Act compliance work	(80,000)
Fire Risk Assessment work	(66,000)
Savings from Building Closure	(1,946,000)
Net Capital Cost of Merger	1,064,000

5.1.6 In addition to this net capital cost of merging St Machar School and Donbank School and locating the children at the former Donbank School building, the Council has invested £2.99 million in extending Riverbank School.

5.1.6 In terms of revenue savings the report identified that £82,000 would be saved per annum in property running costs, with staffing savings of 8.5 FTE in support staff. Taking an average cost of £15,000 this would result in annual staff revenue savings of £127,500.

5.1.7 The total revenue saving which arose from merging the two schools was therefore in the region of £209,500

St Peter’s School

5.1.8 St Peters School is currently operating at approximately 150% capacity, and is forecasting further incremental increases over the next seven years. The current condition of the St Peter’s school building is rated as “C” (Poor).

5.1.9 The current and forecast pupil rolls for both schools are illustrated below:

Riverbank School Pupil Roll Forecast (capacity 420 places)

2016 (current)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
386	440	500	553	593	629	639

St Peters School Pupil Roll Forecast (capacity 198 places)

2016 (current)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
296	314	310	318	322	315	313

5.2 Potential Solutions

Having reviewed the current primary education provision in Old Aberdeen and Tillydrone, officers identified the following potential solutions which would help to address the issues outlined above:

5.3 Option 1: A replacement building for St Peters School

5.3.1 There is a strong case for the replacement of St. Peter’s School and to provide a bigger, improved and modern state of the art primary school for Catholic education in the north of the city.

5.3.2 Due to its condition, along with the fact that it is oversubscribed, the existing St. Peter’s School building presents challenges in successfully delivering the modern curriculum.

5.3.3 A new building would help to ensure that sufficient space is provided for the numbers of pupils expected to be attending the school in the medium to long term, and modern design principles would ensure the delivery of a school which is fit for purpose in developing a 21st century curriculum.

5.3.4 A new two-stream school (434 places plus Nursery) is therefore proposed to replace the existing St Peters School building.

5.4 **Option 2: Additional non-denominational primary school provision for Tillydrone**

5.4.1 To address the forecasted shortfall in places at Riverbank School, additional capacity is required. The number of additional places likely to be needed would be 217 primary pupil spaces plus early learning and childcare provision. This could be delivered through the creation of a new standalone single stream school in Tillydrone.

5.5 **Option3: Shared Campus model**

5.5.1 Officers were aware from the outset that there is a limited number of available sites within the Old Aberdeen and Tillydrone area on which to build two new schools. Therefore to maximise the available space and resources, a Shared Campus model was considered, where the replacement for St Peter's School and the new non-denominational provision for Tillydrone would be built on the same site, and where some communal facilities could be shared.

5.5.2 This model would also include early learning and childcare provision which is needed for the Tillydrone area. Further commentary on the need to increase early learning and childcare facilities are set out in section 5.6 below.

5.6 **Early Years Provision**

5.6.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to secure 600 hours per year of flexible provision for every 3 and 4 year old, and 15% of Scotland's most vulnerable 2 year olds, with a subsequent extension to 27% of the most vulnerable 2 year olds. The specific focus on eligible two year olds is to enhance the offer for children and families living in disadvantaged circumstances to ensure that they have enhanced support before they move into pre-school provision.

5.6.2 The government programme is to expand this offer to 1,140 hours for vulnerable 2 year olds, 3 and 4 year olds, and an expansion of childcare services for school age children by 2020. The policy intention is to ensure we deliver high quality Early Learning and Childcare services to improve outcomes for children and to remove barriers for working parents to support economic growth in Scotland.

5.6.3 It is estimated that to meet the above new targets, approximately 200 additional nursery and early years places would need to be provided for the Tillydrone community. The existing St Peters School building does not include any nursery provision, and Riverbank School would not have sufficient space to provide the required additional number of places. The proposed new provision for Tillydrone would therefore need to include significant capacity for the creation of the additional early years places likely to be required.

5.7 Identification of sites

5.7.1 Working with colleagues in Land and Property Assets, officers identified a number of potential sites within the Tillydrone and Old Aberdeen Area, which could be considered as possible locations for the new school buildings, based on either the Shared Campus model, or on building the schools on two separate sites. Commentary on these is provided in the following sections.

5.7.2 Kings Links 6 Hole Golf Course / Aulton Playing Fields

This 4.4 hectare site comprises of existing playing fields and a 6 hole Golf Course, with a mix of low and high-rise residential properties to the southwest of the site. The site sits within the existing Seaton Primary catchment area which would not allow for consideration of a joint campus.

The site is identified as Urban Green Space and Green Space network meaning there is a presumption against development which is not related to recreation or sport.

5.7.3 St. Machar Park

The overall area of the site is approximately 1.43 hectares which is large enough to accommodate a 3 stream school with nursery places but may require any playing-fields to be located elsewhere, depending on the design of the new building.

Historical maps show that the site was previously open farmland and prior to that the site of a loch. There is an existing sewer crossing the north east corner of the site which will limit how any new buildings are laid out or will involve additional costs in diverting them.

Ground survey work recently undertaken has identified a significant amount of peat which would require a technical solution to resolve and which may add significant capital cost to the project. Should this ground be the preferred site for Committee, the cost of any potential remediation works will be available for the Committee meeting where a decision is taken on how to proceed following the formal consultation.

5.7.4 St. Machar Playing Fields

The site comprises of the existing playing fields for St. Machar Academy with an overall area of the site is 3.53 hectares. The site is large enough to accommodate a 3 stream school with playing fields and a 200 place nursery.

Due to loss of playing fields for St. Machar Academy and displacement costs, this site would not be a viable option going forward.

5.7.5 Danestone Country Park Playing Fields

The site comprises of the existing Danestone Country Park Playing Fields and associated open space. The overall area of the site is 6.72 hectares. The site is large enough to accommodate a 3 stream school with playing fields and a 200 place nursery.

The site has very poor roads infrastructure with the only vehicular access via Granholm Drive which ends as a dead-end on the east side of the site. Granholm Drive is relatively narrow and is unsuitable for a high volume of traffic. Granholm Drive on the east boundary of the site is also an un-adopted private carriageway.

The site is zoned as Greenbelt land and is part of the greenspace network and as such may encounter planning issues if it is chosen as the preferred site. It also lies out-with the zone of Riverbank School and would therefore be unsuitable for a shared campus project.

This location not favoured by the community during the engagement process.

5.7.6 Site of Former Dunbar Halls of Residence

The 1.23 hectares site comprises of the former site of the University of Aberdeen's Dunbar Halls of Residences. The existing buildings that previously occupied the site were demolished a number of years ago.

The roads infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of the site is poor. Don Street is a cul-de-sac with the site entry at the south end of the north section of Don Street. Don Street is a narrow residential road. In places it reduces in width to almost one carriageway.

The site is within the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area and is bounded on two sides by Listed Properties. The erection of a new building will affect the setting of these properties which is likely to require Listed Building Consent. The site was previously used for residential purposes so would require to be re-zoned for the proposed use. The proposed use which would generate additional traffic on the surrounding streets may not be compatible with the predominantly residential

neighbourhood. The site sits within Opportunity site 101 and is zoned as residential land.

Site restrictions/size would only be suitable for a two stream school i.e. replacement St. Peter's school. Location favoured by parents/carers of St. Peter's for a replacement school however could not accommodate extra provision for Tillydrone.

5.7.6 Summary

In summary, the site appraisal has highlighted that the St Machar Park site was the preferred location for new school provision in Tillydrone. However, the preliminary outcomes of the physical site investigation at St Machar Park indicate that the nature of the ground conditions at this site would lead to additional costs in preparing the ground to make it suitable for building. A design solution is currently being prepared and it is hoped that the detail of this will be included in the Proposal Document.

5.8 Community Engagement

5.8.1 Officers planned and coordinated a joint approach for a series of informal engagement sessions in Tillydrone and Old Aberdeen over May and June 2016.

5.8.2 An information letter was provided for schools to circulate to parents and carers. The events were further advertised via the Station House Media Unit and Groupcall alerts were sent to parents by the schools in advance of the meeting dates. The engagement consisted of two main strands: The provision of key information to stakeholders, and the opportunity for stakeholders to submit their views

5.8.3 A comments card was devised to capture people's views and comments on the proposals and whether they supported the idea of a Shared Campus or not. Details of the identified potential sites for the new schools were presented as part of the presentation boards, and the participants were asked to comment on which site(s) they would prefer to see developed. The sites which were listed were caveated by the fact that site investigations, planning consent etc. would need to be carried out before we could determine if the sites would be suitable for development.

5.8.4 Comments cards were available at each engagement session for all stakeholders to complete. An electronic survey was also used to ensure and capture a broader circulation. The comments form was translated into Polish which encouraged a wider participation and feedback. Officers will continue to attend local community council / group meetings and provide feedback to the residents as this project develops.

5.9 Summary of Community Engagement submissions:

5.9.1 A total 131 responses were received as a result of the engagement exercise. These predominately consisted of either current or future parents of St. Peter's RC school. It should be noted that the summary of views from the engagement exercise therefore largely represent the views of St. Peter's school. The feedback received can be broken down as follows:

- 35 Comments Cards were received from Riverbank/Tillydrone Gala
- 95 Comments Cards were received from St. Peter's RC school
- 1 submission received via online survey
- St. Peter's Council submitted a letter outlining feedback that they received independently of the organised engagement sessions.

5.9.2 Submissions from some stakeholders were made in more than one format.

5.9.3 A summary of the feedback indicated that 80.47% of respondents did not support the proposal to create a new shared campus school in the Tillydrone area, with 19.53% supported the idea of the proposed shared campus. Respondents were asked to give their reasons for not supporting the proposal; these views ranged from not wanting Catholic and non-Catholic schools to be mixed, suggestions that there would be a loss of values, ethos and potential struggles with faith, concerns that the proposed shared campus being too large, and concerns around bullying/harassment and religious tensions.

5.9.4 In terms of the location of the new schools, stakeholders were presented with a choice of six sites and an "other" option (which gave the opportunity for residents to put forward ideas/sites that were not listed). 60.48% stated the former Dunbar Halls of Residence as the preferred site. 8.06% indicated a preference for the St. Machar Park site, and 17.74% indicated "other". The other suggestions provided included a request to extend the existing Riverbank School, rather than building a new school, and also to extend the current St. Peter's site.

5.10 Options Appraisal

5.10.1 Following the outcomes of the site appraisal and in considering the views of the community put forward during the engagement sessions, the following options for improving the education provision in the Old Aberdeen and Tillydrone areas have been identified.

5.10.2 Option 1 – Do Nothing

If the current arrangements for nursery and primary education in Tillydrone and Old Aberdeen were to be maintained, with no additional

intervention or development of additional facilities, the following implications are likely:

- Limited opportunities to address the significant capacity pressures at St Peters School and Riverbank School, which are set to increase over the coming years;
- Limited opportunities to improve the condition of the building and therefore the learning and teaching experience at the existing St Peters School building
- An anticipated shortfall of approximately 200 nursery places, following the introduction of an increased entitlement of 1140 hours.

5.10.3 Option 2 – Provide a replacement building for St Peters School, and a new non-denominational school for Tillydrone on a shared campus at a St Machar Park.

This option would include the development of a replacement two-stream building for St Peters school, with capacity for approximately 434 children, along with a one stream non-denominational school (217 places), to be located on the same site. Nursery provision (200 places) would also be included on the site.

The implications of accepting this option would include:

- The identified need for denominational and non-denominational primary school places in Tillydrone and Old Aberdeen would be met;
- Provision of fit for purpose learning establishments that meet current and future roll capacities, and which are designed for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence.
- The identified need for 200 additional nursery places in Tillydrone would be met
- Given that the majority of respondents to the public engagement did not support a shared campus model, there is potential for the community to feel that their views have not been fully listened to and their needs are not being fully met by the Council.

5.10.4 Option 3 - Provide a replacement building for St Peters School at a suitable site to be identified, and extend the existing Riverbank School.

This option would include work to extend the existing Riverbank School on its existing site, in order to create additional non-denominational primary school places to serve the Tillydrone community (up to 217 additional places). A replacement building for St Peters School (434 places) would then be built on a separate site, along with nursery provision for up to 200 nursery places. Whilst sharing the same site as

St Peters School, any nursery provision would be non-denominational and therefore able to serve the whole community.

Accepting this option would include the following implications:

- The identified need for denominational and non-denominational primary school places in Tillydrone and Old Aberdeen would be met;
- Provision of fit for purpose learning establishments that meet current and future roll capacities, and which are designed for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence.
- The identified need for 200 additional nursery places in Tillydrone would be met
- Opportunities to make best use of existing land within the Council's portfolio.

5.10.5 Officers are mindful that other suggestions or options for consideration may appear during the formal public consultation process and these will be reported to Committee in the Consultation Report, at which point a final determination will be made as how best to proceed.

5.10.6 Recognising the lack of available ground which is within the school zone of Riverbank School and also in close proximity to the existing site of St Peter's School, it is therefore recommended that Committee instructs officers to commence a programme of formal consultation regarding taking forward the development of a shared campus including a new St Peter's School and a non-denominational school on the site of St Machar Park, subject to finalising the ground condition surveys and the design solution for foundations.

5.11 **Next Steps:**

Officers will need to develop a comprehensive programme of formal consultation regarding the proposal. Future public consultations will require compliance with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

6. **IMPACT**

6.1 **Corporate**

Aberdeen the Smarter City

- (1) We will enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self-esteem.
- (2) Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop

knowledge, skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21st Century.

(3) Again, working with partners, we will create a City of Learning which will empower individuals to fulfil their potential and contribute to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our communities.

(4) We will aim to have a workforce across the city which has the skills and knowledge to sustain, grow and diversify the city economy.

6.2 Equality and Human Rights implications

6.2.1 A Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been submitted for this report but will be revisited once the statutory consultation has been complete.

6.3 Management of the School Estate

Improving Customer Experience

6.3.1 Should Committee approve this report, it will lead to a formal consultation on the creation of new education provision to include a shared campus sited at St Machar Park. Following the consultation process Committee will then take a decision on whether to create this establishment and its location. This will deliver much needed service provision in the community which is set out in section 5.8 of this report.

6.3.2 The creation of a new shared campus on the St Machar Park site will also ease the capacity pressures currently faced at both Riverbank School and at St Peter's School and provide spaces for the development of curriculum delivery and pre-school provision at both establishments.

6.4 Improving Staff Experience

6.4.1 Staff based at the new primary school will benefit from working in a modern environment and having fit for purpose learning establishments which are designed for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence.

6.5 Improving our use of Resources –

6.5.1 Through the co-location of the new school, the Council will be able to rationalise its estate, thereby saving financial resources. The building will be designed in such a way as to promote flexible use of the building and to ensure that the building is operational 7 days per week.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

7.1 Should Committee agree the recommendations set out in section 2 of this report, a formal consultation process will follow. The main risk

involved at this stage would be the public reaction to the proposal and the chosen site.

- 7.2 Officers have conducted a thorough engagement exercise since April and the conclusions of this work are included in the recommendations set out in this report. During the formal consultation process further engagement will take place with all stakeholders to ensure that Members can make a decision which takes account of all feedback.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Full Council – 25 February 2016 (Agenda Item 2: General Fund Revenue Budget 2016/17 and Non Housing Capital Programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 – CG/16/018)

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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