

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	6 October 2016
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Future Primary Education Provision in Tillydrone and Old Aberdeen
REPORT NUMBER	ECS\16\060
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to engage in a formal public consultation on the following proposals:

- The creation of a new two stream primary school to replace the existing St Peter's School;
- The creation of a new one stream primary school to add additional non-denominational primary capacity in Tillydrone;
- The creation of a new 200 place early education and childcare facility to meet existing and future demand; and
- To consult on options to co-locate these educational establishments on ground at the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site, or to relocate St Peter's School to the existing Riverbank School building and create a new three stream non-denominational school on ground at the former St Machar School/former Tillydrone School.

1.2 At its meeting of 8 September 2016, the Education and Children's Services Committee agreed to the following:

- (i) to review future literature regarding Catholic school provision so that it can be communicated more explicitly that Catholic schools are open to all;
- (ii) to note the engagement that has taken place between April and June 2016 with the community and the analysis of the feedback and comments received from the community;

- (iii) to instruct officers to evaluate the ground conditions at the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site and to confirm whether the St Machar Park site or the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site represents the best value option on which to locate a new two or three stream school with early learning and childcare facilities;
- (iv) to delegate the Head of Policy, Performance and Resources to review the educational facilities currently present in Tillydrone along with any proposed (new builds) for both St Peter's school and non-denominational primary provision;
- (v) to note there is presently no early learning provision within the St Peter's Primary School; and
- (vi) To otherwise note the content of the report.

1.3 This report therefore fulfils the request made by Education and Children's Services Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended that the Council agree:

- (i) To instruct the Head of Policy, Performance and Resources to prepare a Proposal Document on the Primary Education Provision at Riverbank School and St Peter's School;
- (ii) That this Proposal Document sets out the options for public consultation, these being:
 - (a) the creation of a new shared campus which includes a new St Peter's School, a new non-denominational school and early education and childcare facility on the site of the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site; or
 - (b) the relocation of St Peter's School into the existing Riverbank School building and the creation of a new three stream non-denominational school with early education and childcare provision on the site of the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site;
- (iii) That the formal consultation commences on 24 October 2016 and lasts until 9 December 2016;
- (iv) To instruct the Head of Policy, Performance and Resources to consult on the proposals with Education Scotland and with Scottish Government as and when required;
- (v) That a Consultation Report is prepared for a future special meeting of the Education and Children's Service's Committee in February 2017; and

(vi) Otherwise note the contents of this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 At its budget setting meeting of 25 February 2016, the Council allocated £17 million towards a new school which would address the capacity issues at Riverbank School and the condition and capacity issues at St Peter's School.
- 3.2 Following consultation, should Council agree a shared campus as their preferred option for formal public consultation, the capital cost of a 3 stream school with early education and childcare facilities is estimated to be £19 million.
- 3.3 If two separate new sites are required for St Peter's School and a new non-denominational primary school, the capital cost is expected to be in the region of £25 million, plus site specific costs to remedy ground conditions.
- 3.4 After the conclusion of consultation, should Council agree to the relocation of St Peter's School into the existing Riverbank School additional capital funding may be required to ensure the building fully meets the requirements of St Peter's School. During the consultation process work will be undertaken to ascertain this sum and it will be reported to the Educational and Children's Services Committee prior to it making a final decision on how to proceed.
- 3.5 A key element of creating additional capacity in both St Peter's School and Riverbank School is the need to meet the national objectives for early education and childcare such as 1,140 hours and the extension of provision to all 2 year olds which are to be delivered by 2020. Discussions are on-going with the Scottish Futures Trust to assess the capital required for the Council to be able to provide this additional capacity. For Tillydrone it is estimated that an additional 200 places are required for early education and childcare.
- 3.6 If the St Machar Park site is chosen further ground investigation work will be conducted to determine the most suitable location for the school building.
- 3.7 At the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site, further ground investigation work will also be conducted to determine the most suitable location for the school building.
- 3.8 The former St Machar School site is currently held on the Housing Revenue Account and would require to be transferred to Education and

Children's Services in order for the site to be used for a new school build. Officers are currently working to ascertain the market value of the site in order to determine the cost of transferring it to Education and Children's Services.

- 3.9 In summary, the two potential sites for building a new school have similar ground conditions, so the underground build costs for a new school are estimated to be similar for both sites. The key difference in overall costs between the two sites, therefore would be the cost of transferring the former St Machar School site from the Housing Revenue Account to Education and Children's Services. However as detailed in the report below, it should be noted that the St Machar Park site is listed as green space for recreational purposes, and Planning colleagues have indicated that in order to gain planning approval for building a school on this site, alternative provision would be required to be delivered elsewhere, to compensate for the loss of the amenity. Planning colleagues have also advised that Education and Children's Services would need to demonstrate that the St Machar Park site was the only suitable site on which to locate a school, in order for planning approval to be given for this site.
- 3.10 Feedback on early community engagement on the choice of sites for a new school can be found in the attached Education and Children's Services Committee report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal

- 4.1 Should Council approve the recommendations set out in section 2 of this report, the formal consultation process will comply fully with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended, and section 22D of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended.

Asset Management

- 4.2 The delivery of a new school with early learning and childcare facilities will ensure that children, young people and staff can experience their learning and teaching in a modern environment which will incorporate modern energy efficient and sustainable features to reduce on-going revenue costs.
- 4.3 Should Council, at the appropriate time, decide to create a new establishment it will ensure that the Council can meet the requirements to meet the national target of delivering 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare for 2,3 and 4 year old children. If a decision is taken to re-locate St Peter's School there will be the possibility of either re-using the existing school buildings for alternative purposes or marketing them to generate a capital receipt.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

FUTURE EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

- 5.1 It was noted at the Education and Children's Services Committee of 8 September that the information contained on page 25 of "A Guide to Education and Children's Services 2016-17" did not comment on the fact that all children, regardless of their religious beliefs, were able to attend primary education at one of the three Catholic Primary Schools in Aberdeen.
- 5.2 It will be made clear in all future editions that all children have the right to attend a Catholic school, however while there is such high demand for the available places, priority will be given to those families who are able to produce a Baptism Certificate. A key driver for the proposal to re-locate and increase the capacity at St Peter's School is to meet the additional demand for places at the school.

SITE SELECTION

- 5.3 The Education and Children's Service Committee heard at their meeting of 8 September that a significant volume of peat had been identified at the St Machar Park site. This had led to a further review of sites within the Tillydrone / Old Aberdeen area and in particular the availability and condition of ground at the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site. Further commentary on the ground conditions is set out in the following paragraphs.

St Machar Park Site

- 5.4 The Education and Children's Services Committee heard on 8 September, that there was significant peat found during the ground investigation surveys at St Machar Park. Further commentary has now been received from the Council's appointed ground / structural engineering consultants which have identified that:

"Removal of made ground and peat, and infill with imported material, across the site is not envisaged."

- 5.5 Furthermore, the consultant's report concludes:

"Conclusion: The preliminary ground investigation results indicate that the following mitigation measures will be required for the development of the site:

- *Piled foundations for buildings on site*
- *Gas protection (gas membrane and underfloor venting) for all buildings".*

- 5.6 Full ground conditions and the associated costs will be reported following consultation with the appropriate services.

Former St Machar School / Former Tillydrone School Site

- 5.7 As requested by the Education and Children's Services Committee, officers have been liaising with colleagues in housing to review the potential for locating a school on the site of the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site.
- 5.8 The total area of land available on these sites is 8.73 acres (3.52 hectares). Ground investigations which have been conducted for the housing development have confirmed that there are no issues of contamination or peat but that the area does contain made up ground at depths of up to 2.6 to 2.8 metres which would have to be addressed, through the provision of piling, should a decision be taken to locate a 3 stream school and early education facility on the site.

Planning Commentary on the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School Site

- 5.9 Planning colleagues have confirmed that there are no immediate planning issues related to developing a school on these sites. Further comments confirm that although the sites are identified for residential use in the Local Development Plan, as they were both previously primary school sites, an educational use should be acceptable in principle.
- 5.10 As brownfield sites, their redevelopment would bring the vacant land back into an effective use and complement the surrounding residential area. Both are within the Riverbank School and St Peter's School catchment and alongside the surrounding residential use it should help to encourage and reduce the need for car based travel. Both sites are cleared, generally flat and appropriate for development.

Impact on the Council's Housing Programme

- 5.11 The limited liability partnership, Shaping Aberdeen Housing LLP, which has been established to develop housing on the sites has identified the potential for 270 units. Should land be required to accommodate the new school development, this would require a reduction in the number of units by approximately 200. Communities, Housing and Infrastructure colleagues have advised that it is unlikely that the LLP would consider developing the remaining 70 units on the Aberdon site because of its size, so it has been assumed that building a new school on this site would require the removal of all of 270 units.
- 5.12 The identified sites for affordable housing within Tillydrone are all interlinked within the current design in areas such as roads, drainage and open space. Any loss of land would require a full re-design of the

complete project. All sites are also all due to be submitted for planning together as one project.

- 5.13 Part of the regeneration strategy in Tillydrone is to change the mono-tenure nature of the housing provision and as such introduce tenants with more disposable income in support of local shops and businesses. With the loss of up to 270 units there is a possibility that this benefit will not be maximised or lost completely.
- 5.14 The contractual position between the LLP and the Council is such that no development agreement has been concluded for the options sites ergo there is no issue contractually for the Tillydrone site(s) being utilised for a new school. There may, however, be a material impact on the existing business plan of the LLP and its sustainability in the short-term as a business venture regarding critical mass. This could be mitigated by providing a subsequent replacement site of similar size and development capacity. The impact of a replacement site being introduced at this stage would create a delay in the production of housing. It is estimated that this delay could be in the region of nine to twelve months.

Existing Education Provision in Tillydrone

- 5.15 Currently within the Tillydrone area the only education establishment is Riverbank School.
- 5.16 Riverbank School is a two stream primary school, with a primary capacity of 420 pupils in 14 classrooms. In 2013/14 the school was extended to incorporate 4 additional classrooms and 2 nursery classes at a cost of £2.99 million.
- 5.17 The rising birth rate in the Tillydrone area, along with an increase in the general population has resulted in capacity pressures at Riverbank School despite the addition of the new extension. A recent review of the pupil roll projection has predicted the following rise in pupil numbers based on the following two scenarios:

With 270 housing units	up to 263 pupils over capacity
With no housing units	up to 223 pupils over capacity

OPTIONS

A New Shared Campus on the St Machar Park Site

- 5.18 This option would comprise a shared campus made up of a 2 stream St Peter's School and a 10 class non-denominational school. Early education and childcare facilities would also be incorporated into the build.

- 5.19 This option would result in schools which are co-located and share facilities, therefore maximising the use of space. In addition, the modern educational environment will be tailored for the delivery of the current and future curriculum, enhancing the learning and teaching experience of all young people and staff. The site at St Machar Park also retains a presence close to Old Aberdeen and Tillydrone without impacting on the Council's housing development in Tillydrone.
- 5.20 Any move to a shared campus will need to be handled with great sensitivity, following the relevant legislative processes in relation to Catholic education and will also require the support of the wider public in Tillydrone for a shared campus. The creation of a new non-denominational school will result in the children of Tillydrone going to 2 schools, thereby reversing the previous decision taken in 2009 to educate them in one establishment following the merger of Donbank School and St Machar School. This site is currently listed as green space for recreational purposes and as such Planning colleagues have commented that alternative provision would be required to be delivered elsewhere to compensate for the loss of this amenity. Planning has also advised that Education and Children's Services would need to demonstrate that the St Machar Park site was the only suitable site on which to locate a school.

A New Shared Campus on the former St Machar School / Former Tillydrone School Site

- 5.21 As with the previous option, this option would include a shared campus with a replacement for St Peter's School which is co-located with a 10 class non-denominational school. Early education and childcare facilities would also be incorporated into the build.
- 5.22 Comments in paragraph 5.19 on maximising the use of space and the creation of a modern environment remain valid for this option as do the comments in paragraph 5.20. A shared campus on this site may also provide opportunities for working closely with Riverbank School and for greater liaison with the proposed Community Hub.

Relocate St Peter's to the Existing Riverbank School and Create a New 3 Stream School for Non-denominational Education on St Machar Park

- 5.23 This option would result in St Peter's School being relocated to the accommodation at Riverbank School, with the non-denominational population being educated in a new 3 stream school based at St Machar Park.
- 5.24 This option would ensure that St Peter's School remains as a distinct educational establishment in a suitably sized building with early education experience. All non-denominational pupils in the Tillydrone

community would be able to experience the same learning and teaching processes in a new school.

- 5.25 The proposal to relocate St Peter's School into the existing Riverbank School would not be able to take place until the new non-denominational school is completed and ready for occupation. It would also remove St Peter's School from its Old Aberdeen presence and its close association with the University of Aberdeen. A review of educational facilities at the existing Riverbank School building would be undertaken: any work arising from this review would need to be scoped and additional capital found.
- 5.26 The location at St Machar Park is at the very edge of Tillydrone and takes the non-denominational school out with the centre of the community.

Relocate St Peter's to the Existing Riverbank School and Create a New 3 Stream School for Non-denominational Education on the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School Site

- 5.27 As with the previous option, this would result in St Peter's School being relocated to the accommodation at Riverbank School, with the non-denominational population being educated in a new 3 stream school based on ground at the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone School site.
- 5.28 The benefits for St Peter's School under this option would remain as in paragraph 5.24 and 5.25 (above).
- 5.29 The proposal to locate a new non-denominational school on this site would ensure that a close presence to the heart of Tillydrone is maintained. It would also ensure a close location to St Peter's School and facilitate the opportunities for joint working, where appropriate. On this site there may also be possibilities for a far closer link to the proposed Community Hub in Tillydrone.

Conclusions

- 5.30 From the work undertaken it is clear that either site could be suitable for a new school, although it is noted that both have some made up ground which will require to be removed and infilled with imported material. However, the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone site does not have the added complexity of peat on site. Comments from Planning have indicated that, in principle, there does not seem to be the same level of difficulty in gaining planning approval for a school on this site. It is therefore recommended that the former St Machar School / former Tillydrone site is chosen to locate the new educational provision.
- 5.31 It is noted, however that there would be a cost attached to transferring the former St Machar School site back from the Housing Revenue

Account, and that there would be detrimental impact on the proposed housing development which is detailed in paragraphs 5.12 to 5.14 (above). Although there is no formal legal agreement in place for the partnership on this site, the loss of ground for a school development will need to be discussed and resolved at the partnership.

- 5.32 In terms of what should be constructed on the site, consideration is given to the need for the educational environment at St Peter's School to be improved. In addition, the need to generate additional capacity for a minimum of non-denominational 223 pupils means that a non-denominational school is also required. It is therefore concluded that both the shared campus proposal and the relocation of St Peter's School into the existing Riverbank School with a new three stream non-denominational establishment are viable options to issue for public consultation.
- 5.33 There are two key factors to be taken into account. These are the lack of suitable ground within the Tillydrone / Old Aberdeen area and the need to maximise what the Council can deliver for the capital investment.

6. IMPACT

Corporate

Improving Customer Satisfaction / improving Staff Satisfaction Improving the Use of Resources

- 6.1 Should Council agree to the recommendations set out in Section 2 (above), and ultimately agree to the creation and delivery of new educational facilities it will enhance the learning and teaching environment for all young people and staff concerned. New school buildings will be fully compliant with the disability provisions contained within the Equality Act 2010 and meet the needs of most learners, regardless of their physical and mental needs. The building will be as green as possible, using sustainable materials which will reduce operating costs and assist the Council in reducing its carbon footprint.
- 6.2 The re-location of St Peter's School will allow those buildings to be used for alternative purposes or sold to generate a capital receipt.

Educational

- 6.3 St Peter's School is the Council's only "C" rated school building in terms of physical condition, which does not have, as yet, a redevelopment plan. In addition, the increasing pupil roll at the school has led to capacity pressure within the existing buildings and modular accommodation has been located which reduces the external space available for play as the site is constrained.

- 6.4 Staff deliver an exceptional curriculum, expertly led by the Head Teacher and her management team but it is right that plans are made to improve and extend the educational environment. This will be achieved by taking forward the recommendations in this report.
- 6.5 Despite being extended recently, the growth in the general population through inward migration and an increase in the birth rate locally has seen significant increase in the pupil roll at Riverbank. As set out in paragraph 5.17 (above,) this will lead to the school being over capacity by 223 pupils. The recommendations in this report will address this issue.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

- 7.1 Should Council agree to the recommendations of this report a formal, statutory consultation will commence. This will follow all of the relevant legislation and close liaison will take place with colleagues in Legal Services to ensure that due process is followed.
- 7.2 It is also necessary to submit the proposal to Scottish Ministers for their consent in accordance with section 22D of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as the proposal involves the change of site of a denominational school.
- 7.3 Following the conclusion of the consultation process, a Consultation report will be prepared for the Education and Children's Services Committee. At that stage a final decision on the preferred route will be determined, having taking consideration of all of the views raised during the consultation.
- 7.4 A project team has been assembled to prepare the relevant consultation material and conduct the public consultation. When a final determination is taken by the Education and Children's Services Committee, a project board and team, comprising relevant officers on both, will be created to deliver Committee's wishes. This will include the creation of project risk registers and progress reports to the Strategic Asset and Capital Board and the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Education and Children's Committee – 8 September 2016 (Agenda Item 7.6: Tillydrone / Old Aberdeen – Primary School Provision ECS\16\046)

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Euan Couperwhite
Head of Policy, Performance and Resources
ecouperwhite@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel: 01224 522073