

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	14 June 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	School Estate Plan Update
REPORT NUMBER	RES/22/092
DIRECTOR	Steve Whyte
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Andrew Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1, 1.1.5, 1.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the development of the School Estate Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes that there is unprecedented uncertainty and market fluctuation in relation to construction costs and energy costs, and uncertainties relating to school roll forecasting following changes in patterns of school enrolment, have led to challenges in providing an accurate and robust set of recommended actions within the School Estate Plan.
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to report back to the next meeting of the Education Operational Delivery Committee with a further detailed update.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 At its meeting of 3 March 2021, Council agreed to “note the process and timeline required to be followed in delivering the School Estate Plan, and to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to present the finalised School Estate Plan to the Education Operational Delivery Committee in Summer 2022, in line with this timetable.” Officers have continued to develop the School Estate Plan with a view to fulfilling that instruction.
- 3.2 The draft Plan will be organised into three key themes: The Quality Of Our Learning Environments, The Sufficiency and Efficiency Of Our Estate, and Working With And For Local Communities. Through these themes, the draft Plan will set out the priorities and actions which are required to be taken in the

short, medium and long term, in order to maintain and develop our school estate.

- 3.3 A review of the existing school estate has been carried out, to provide a detailed picture of the current position, and this has been used to inform the development of the priorities which will be set out within the School Estate Plan. Full details of the findings from the review will be provided, along with a commentary on the priorities for each school or group of schools, which have been identified based on the most recently available data.
- 3.4 The identified priorities for the individual properties and for the estate as a whole, will then be organised into an action plan, detailing the specific individual actions which are required to be taken for each site, and these actions will be presented within the School Estate Plan as recommendations for consideration by Committee.
- 3.5 Whilst officers have been working towards the presentation of a final School Estate Plan in Summer 2022, a number of external factors have led for the need to further review the draft Plan, to ensure that the recommendations within it are accurate and robust, and to minimise any financial or reputational risk to the Council. More time is therefore required to carry out this work, and the reasons for this are summarised below.

School Roll Forecasts

- 3.6 Within the draft School Estate Plan there is a focus on identifying priorities to ensure that the estate has an appropriate number of pupil places, to meet changing demographics across the city. In some parts of the city, schools are already oversubscribed, or forecasts indicate they will be oversubscribed in the near future, and additional capacity will be needed to meet growing demand for places in these areas. In other parts of the city where pupil numbers are falling, we have schools which are currently, or are predicted to be, significantly under capacity, leading to inefficiencies within the estate, and decisions will be required to be made on rationalising schools and spaces in schools where places are no longer expected to be required.
- 3.7 The identification of future needs for space within schools across the city requires our school roll forecast to be as accurate as possible, and reflective of the current situation with pupil numbers in our schools. The most recently available school roll forecast is based on birth rate data for the past five years and actual school roll figures collected in 2020. The forecast also relies on historical trends to predict likely patterns of school enrolment in the future. Factors included within these predictions include:
 - historical trends in inward and outward migration to and from Aberdeen;
 - trends in pupils' staying on rates in S5 and S6;
 - historical patterns of movement of pupils to schools outwith their catchment zones, including to independent schools.
- 3.8 There is growing evidence of significant changes to patterns of school enrolment within our schools over the past two years, which are not in line with

the above historical trends which were used to calculate our latest school roll forecast. For example there is evidence of marked increases in the number of families settling in, or returning to, Aberdeen from elsewhere the UK or from overseas, leading to higher than expected enrolments for pupil places in our schools. There has also been a reduction in the number of pupils leaving primary school and then moving to an independent school, which is thought to be due to a change in families' financial circumstances, and these pupils are being enrolled in local authority secondary schools instead, leading to higher than expected numbers of pupils in these schools.

- 3.9 As a result of these unexpected changes in patterns of enrolment, within the school roll forecast for some schools, there are some significant differences between the predictions for the number of pupils which were expected to be attending school from August 2021, compared with the actual pupil numbers who enrolled at school this year. For example, at Cults Academy, the forecast pupil roll for 2021/22 was 1018, whilst the actual number of pupils attending in August 2021 was 1150.
- 3.10 Making recommendations within the School Estate Plan based on the latest forecasts, particularly where these recommendations are for significant changes to the school estate, including for example building new schools where there is an indication that more capacity will be required, or rationalising schools where it appears the demand for places will fall, therefore becomes more difficult, as there is a risk that the recent changes to patterns of enrolment may continue, and that this will result in changes to future demand for places in different parts of the city.
- 3.11 Officers are currently working on the next update to the school roll forecast, which will be based on actual pupil numbers in 2021/22, and will take greater account of the above recent changes to patterns of enrolment. This will provide a higher degree of certainty in the predictions for future school occupancy levels, allowing the recommendations within the School Estate Plan to be updated accordingly.

Planning for net zero carbon emissions

- 3.12 The Council's Climate Change Plan 2021-2025 sets out Aberdeen City's ambitions in transitioning to net zero corporate carbon emissions through its own assets and operations by 2045 at the latest. This includes interim targets of a reduction in emissions of 48% by 2025, and of 75% by 2030.
- 3.13 To contribute to these ambitious targets, the Council has committed to work across our existing schools to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy demand. We need to establish cost effective solutions for the diverse range of building types within our school estate, and plan scalable solutions to phase out the use of fossil fuels where possible, and increase the overall energy efficiency of the buildings. Recent significant rises in global energy costs also highlight the vital importance of making our estate as energy efficient as possible.
- 3.14 Unprecedented rises in construction costs in recent months have created difficulties in accurately estimating the costs which are likely to be involved in

carrying out any necessary refurbishment or improvements to buildings, to improve their energy efficiency. This was evidenced by a recent feasibility study for the refurbishment of one of our existing primary school buildings, which appraised a comprehensive retrofit of the existing building, and taking a "fabric first" approach to achieve the highest possible levels of energy efficiency, versus an option for constructing an entirely new building. The study highlighted only a small cost differentiation between these two options.

- 3.15 More time is therefore required to fully understand the implications of recent cost rises in the construction industry, and to develop a more detailed picture of the costs involved in bringing our existing buildings to an appropriate standard of energy efficiency to meet our net zero targets. This will help ensure that the recommendations within the School Estate Plan on the future of existing school buildings, particularly where the options may be to refurbish or replace the building to improve its efficiency, are suitably robust and accurate.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2010 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 The School Estate Plan will be aimed at fulfilling the above duties incumbent upon the Education Authority.
- 5.4 A proposal to make changes to a school, including 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 these types of changes to schools, and consideration of this will be given in the recommendations arising from the School Estate Plan.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications associated with the recommendations in 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	(1) Failure to plan effectively for the school estate, leading to the Council being unable to fulfil its duty to make adequate and efficient provision (2) Failure to consult formally with stakeholders on changes to schools would be in breach of legislation	(1) Allowing further time to develop the School Estate Plan and to consider the implications of recent changes in costs and patterns of enrolment, will ensure that the plans for the future school estate are robust and effective. (2) Any proposed changes to schools arising from the School Estate Plan will incorporate plans for statutory consultation to ensure compliance with legislation	L	Yes
Operational	Failure to engage and consult with communities on the future of the school estate which serves them, could lead to a breakdown in relationships with community members. Some proposals about the future of the school estate may not be popular with	The School Estate Plan will emphasise a renewed approach which places community engagement and consultation at the centre	M	Yes

	some stakeholders			
Financial	Failure to take account of recent increased construction costs and recent changes to patterns of enrolment could lead to the wrong decisions being taken, leading to unnecessary costs for the Council.	Allowing further time to develop the School Estate Plan and to consider the implications of recent changes in costs and patterns of enrolment, will ensure that the plans for the future school estate are robust and effective and that any costs incurred are necessary and will bring about future benefits.		
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. Some proposals about the future of the school estate may not be popular with some stakeholders	The School Estate Plan will emphasise a renewed approach which places community engagement and consultation at the centre	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	<p>This report relates to the delivery of the following policy statements:</p> <p><u>People</u> Policy Statement 1 - Completion of the School Estate Review and development of estate strategy for the next 5-10 years. The report explains the current situation with the development of the Committee's approval of the School Estate Plan.</p>

<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The school estate plan will support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 8 in the LOIP – Child friendly city where all decisions which impact children and young people will be informed by them by 2026. The School Estate Plan sets out how all stakeholders including children and young people will be consulted on proposals to make changes to the school estate.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The school estate plan will support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 13 in the LOIP – Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen’s carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. The School Estate Plan sets out the approach which will be taken to reduce carbon emissions from the school estate.
Regional and City Strategies	The School Estate Plan will support the delivery of the Council’s Property and Estates Strategy (currently in draft).

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	No other assessments required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Council, 3 March 2021: [Printed Decisions](#), Page 9

11. APPENDICES

None

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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