

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	17 September 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	School Estate Plan Annual Update 2024
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/24/265
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Andrew Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the 2024 annual update to the School Estate Plan, providing updates on progress with implementation of the Plan, and highlighting new priorities which have emerged since the School Estate Plan was first approved in September 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the updates to the School Estate Plan which are provided at Appendix A of this report; and:
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to implement the School Estate Plan in accordance with the updated timeline, presented within Appendix A of this report;
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out a review of spaces currently available within schools for supporting pupils with additional support needs, and in consultation with the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning, to report back to the Committee with recommendations for improving such spaces where this is required;
- 2.4 Agrees 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 this review and to commence engagement with all partners working in the wider Northfield area

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 At its meeting on 8 September 2022, the former Education Operational Delivery Committee approved the Council's School Estate Plan, and instructed officers to *“present an annual update to the School Estate Plan to the Education and*

Children's Services Committee, commencing from September 2023, to report on progress with the agreed actions and to update these as appropriate". This report seeks to fulfil that instruction, and provides the annual update for 2024.

- 3.2 The update to the School Estate Plan, included at Appendix A of this report, provides information on progress to date with the actions and instructions which have been agreed within the School Estate Plan, and highlights further priorities for action which have been identified during the course of the last year. These new priorities are summarised below.

Review of Northfield Academy and Northfield Primary Schools

- 3.3 At its meeting in February 2024, after considering a report which provided details on the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within parts of the Northfield Academy building, the Committee agreed to instruct the Chief Officer, Corporate Landlord, to:

"carry out a detailed options appraisal for the long term future of Northfield Academy, with a view to providing a solution to address the presence of RAAC within the building, and to include an update on progress within the next annual update to the School Estate Plan in September 2024"

- 3.4 At the same meeting in February 2024, after considering a report on the findings of the feasibility study on the future of the primary schools in Northfield, the Committee instructed the Chief Officer, Corporate Landlord to:

"carry out further work to identify potential future options for improving and consolidating primary school provision in the Northfield ASG, alongside the planned review of the long term future of Northfield Academy, and to include an update on progress within the annual update to the School Estate Plan in September 2024."

- 3.5 In response to the above instructions, officers carried out initial scoping work to determine the best approach to reviewing the requirements for future primary and secondary school provision for the Northfield area, and concluded that there would be benefit in carrying out a wider review of all of the Council's public building assets in Northfield, and not only the schools. This would allow a more complete picture to be developed of the public services currently being delivered within this community, and how these will require to be delivered in future, to meet the needs of the community within the context of limited additional resources.
- 3.6 Officers therefore recommend that a full area-wide review of public buildings is carried out for the wider Northfield area (which would include the communities of Middlefield, Mastrick, Cummings Park, Northfield and Heathryfold).
- 3.7 A review of other Council owned assets in the area, alongside the schools, will allow for a wider range of potential options to be considered, including opportunities to deliver future services in a far more integrated way. This would be in keeping with the Future Libraries Report presented to the Communities,

Housing and Public Protection Committee (F&C/24/240) on 5th September 2024. Taking a place-based approach to service delivery provides opportunities for more holistic support to families and communities, for example by delivering a range of services from the same building, and ensuring that the right services are available at the right time and in the right place, to bring about more positive outcomes.

- 3.8 A Strategic Outline Case has been drafted to set out the intended scope of the proposed asset review, and the approach to be taken, and it is recommended that the Committee instructs officers to proceed with this review over the coming months. A copy of the Strategic Outline Case is included at Appendix B. The anticipated timescale for carrying out the review and reporting back to the Committee on its findings, is included within the updated implementation timeline at Appendix A of this report.

Review of spaces in schools for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN)

- 3.9 At its meeting in April 2024, after considering a report on behaviour in schools, the Committee agreed to instruct the Chief Officer, Corporate Landlord, to:

“include in the annual School Estate Plan update a workstream to evaluate the physical ASN provision in individual settings and include a timescale within the plan on when recommendations on potential space for future ASN purposes could be brought forward.”

- 3.10 In response to this instruction, a new priority has been added to the School Estate Plan, to consider the options for improving the provision and suitability of spaces in schools for supporting pupils with additional support needs. This is reflected in the updated plan at Appendix A below.
- 3.11 Officers within the Corporate Landlord cluster will work collaboratively with colleagues in Education and Lifelong Learning to progress this new priority, which will be closely linked to the outcomes of the behaviour action plan report, which is due to be presented to the Committee at its meeting in November 2024.
- 3.12 Any recommendations on changes to spaces in schools for ASN purposes will need to align with and be guided by the recommendations presented within the behaviour action plan, to ensure that physical ASN spaces in schools in the future are fully fit for purpose and able to support the intended model of service delivery. The proposed timescale for reporting back on this priority, as outlined in the updated implementation plan at Appendix A, is therefore intended to follow on from the behaviour action plan report, and any subsequent decisions to be taken at the November committee meeting.

Re-Prioritisation of Resources

- 3.13 Given the need to progress the two new priorities outlined above over the course of the next year, officers have made some adjustments to the implementation dates for the following two existing projects in the school estate plan, which are not required to be progressed immediately. This will allow

staffing resources to be freed up and allocated to the Northfield asset review and review of ASN spaces:

- 3.14 The feasibility study to identify options for long term secondary school provision at Grandhome, Oldmachar and Bridge of Don (Priority NA1), which was scheduled to be under way from Summer/Autumn 2024, has not yet started. The progress with the development of new housing at Grandhome has been slower than originally anticipated, which means that any new secondary school places in this area of the city to serve the new development will not be required in the short to medium term. It is therefore recommended that the feasibility study is not taken forwards at this time. Officers will continue to engage with the developers and monitor forecast pupil numbers, and any required action will be reported through future updates to the School Estate Plan.
- 3.15 Secondly, a feasibility study on the long term secondary school provision for Bucksburn and Dyce (Priority NA2) was completed in Summer 2024, and an outline business case to present the findings of this is due to be presented to the Committee in November 2024. Considering that any options identified in the outline business case will focus on the longer term provision, and therefore any recommended actions are unlikely to be required to be implemented in the short term, it is recommended that reporting on this is postponed until Summer 2025. This will help to free up resources in the short term to focus on the Northfield asset review and the review of ASN spaces in schools.
- 3.16 In summary, it is recommended that the Committee instructs officers to continue to implement the updated School Estate Plan, in line with the revised timeline for implementation, as outlined in the update report at Appendix A below.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The School Estate Plan will continue to be implemented using funding which has been allocated for this purpose within the General Fund capital programme. There are no further direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

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.

- 5.3 The identified priorities for developing the school estate outlined in the updated School Estate Plan are in fulfilment of 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 has been given in the recommendations arising from the School Estate Plan.
- 5.5 The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 requires local authorities to prepare and keep under review an accessibility strategy for increasing the extent to which pupils with a disability can participate in the curriculum; improving the physical environment of schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which pupils with a disability are able to take advantage of education and improving communication with pupils with a disability. In taking account of the Accessibility Plan, the School Estate Plan assists the Education Authority to realise these statutory aims.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The School Estate Plan outlines the approaches which will be taken to bring about positive impacts on the environment in the future, through reducing carbon emissions from the existing school estate and from future new build schools to contribute to the Council's net zero carbon ambitions, and through ensuring improved resource efficiency by rationalising the school estate 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 schools 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 school 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	<p>(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</p> <p>(2) Failure to consult formally with stakeholders on changes to schools would be in breach of legislation</p>	<p>1) The School Estate Plan sets out updated priorities for the school estate and proposals for continually monitoring and updating plans to ensure adequate and efficient provision is maintained</p> <p>(2) Any proposed changes to schools arising from the School Estate Plan will incorporate full statutory consultation to ensure compliance with legislation</p>	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 emphasises an approach which places community engagement and consultation at the centre	L	Yes

	some stakeholders			
Financial	No significant risks identified			
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 emphasises an approach which places community engagement and consultation at the centre	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	Development of the school estate and the addition of new school capacity may lead to increased carbon emissions	Climate risks and the need for the school estate to contribute to the Council's net zero carbon emissions targets will be embedded into planning and decision making.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>The updated School Estate Plan supports the delivery of the following policy statements:</p> <p><u>A City of Opportunity</u></p> <p>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</p>

	<p>of the 21st century. The report seeks Committee's approval of the School Estate Plan.</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 all Capital Projects.</p>
<p>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</p>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The updated School Estate Plan supports 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 updated School Estate Plan supports 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	Previous Integrated Impact Assessment (Stage 1) relating to the School Estate Plan has been reviewed and no changes required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	No other assessments required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Education Operational Delivery Committee, 8 September 2022: [Agenda Item 14: School Estate Plan 2022](#).
- 10.2 Communities, Housing & Public Protection Committee, 5 September 2024: [Agenda Item 11.3: Aberdeen's Future Library and Information Service Model](#)

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A: School Estate Plan Annual Update September 2023
- 11.2 Appendix B: Strategic Outline Case – Northfield Area Asset Review

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