

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	16 September 2025
EXEMPT	No, but Appendix C is exempt under Paragraph 8: <i>Estimated expenditure on Contracts</i> . The appendix refers to the potential acquisition or supply of goods/services where disclosure to the public of the amount to be spent would be likely to give an advantage to a person or organisation seeking to enter a contract with the Council.
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	School Estate Plan Annual Update 2025
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/213
EXECUTIVE 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 2025 annual update to the School Estate Plan, providing information on progress with implementation of the Plan, and highlighting new priorities which have emerged over the last year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the updates to the Action Plan which are provided at Appendix A of this report;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to implement the School Estate Action Plan in accordance with the updated Long Term Programme, presented within Appendix B of this report;
- 2.3 Refers the capital and revenue cost implications of the updated Action Plan and Programme, as shown at Appendix C of this report, to the budget setting process for 2026/27;
- 2.4 Instructs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to carry out an options appraisal to determine any required interim arrangements for establishing the proposed new school at Bucksburn/Newhills, and to include the cost implications of any such arrangements in the budget setting process for 2026/27, with a view to the arrangements being included within the proposals for the forthcoming statutory public consultation on the new school.

- 2.5 Instructs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to undertake a feasibility study to investigate options for the establishment of a new primary school to serve Grandhome, including any required interim arrangements, and to report the findings of the feasibility study in an Outline Business Case, in line with the timescales outlined in the Long Term Programme at Appendix B of this report; and
- 2.6 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to further develop proposals and timescales for future ASG based asset reviews, and to build these in to future updates of the School Estate Plan.

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 provides the annual update to the School Estate Plan for 2025.
- 3.2 The 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. The full School Estate Plan, approved in September 2022, can be accessed [here](#).
- 3.3 The School Estate Plan consists of the following two key elements:
- **The Action Plan** which sets out the proposed practical actions and decisions which need to be taken to address the identified priorities for individual assets and areas of the city; and:
 - **The Long Term Programme** (formerly referred to as the Implementation Plan) which provides detail on the anticipated timescales for carrying out the actions identified within the Action Plan.
- 3.4 The updated Action Plan, at Appendix A of this report, includes a summary of the projects previously identified and approved within the School Estate Plan, and provides information on the current status of any previous Committee instructions which are associated with these. It also includes any revised or new recommendations on further priorities, and actions which need to be taken to continue developing the school estate. The significant new additions to the plan, and new recommendations requiring Committee approval, are highlighted below.

Victorian Schools Programme (Priority CA1)

- 3.5 At its meeting on 29 April 2025, after considering an Outline Business Case on the proposed Victorian Schools Programme, the Committee instructed officers to incorporate the preferred option for the programme, along with programming and cost implications, into this year's School Estate Plan update report. The

updated Long Term Programme, at Appendix B of this report, therefore includes all of the projects within the Victorian Schools Programme, along with indicative timescales for delivery.

- 3.6 Appendix C provides a high level analysis of the likely cost implications for the School Estate Plan as a whole, including the estimated costs for the Victorian Schools programme. It is recommended that the capital and revenue cost implications of the updated School Estate programme as a whole are referred to the budget setting process for 2026/27.

Proposed new school at Bucksburn / Newhills: Interim arrangements (Priority B2)

- 3.7 The updated Action Plan at Appendix A includes proposals to proceed in 2026/27 with the previously instructed statutory public consultation on the establishment of a new primary school at Bucksburn/Newhills (Priority B2).
- 3.8 Given that this will be a proposal to establish an entirely new school, which would serve new housing developments in the Newhills Development area, there would be a need to ensure there is a viable number of pupils eligible to attend the school, prior to it opening for the first time, to ensure that the new school can be operated efficiently from the outset, and that there are sufficient numbers of populated classes to support effective curriculum delivery.
- 3.9 To achieve this, officers propose to carry out an options appraisal in Autumn 2025, to assess the options for providing suitable classroom facilities, on an existing school site, which could be used to establish the new separate school community on a temporary basis. This would allow children living within the catchment area for the proposed new school to enrol at and become part of that new community, prior to them moving to the new school building once this has been constructed.
- 3.10 This approach would be in line with that taken when the new Countesswells School was established, where the school was accommodated at the former Hazlewood School site for a number of years, so that the school community could grow and develop, prior to the new school building being completed at Countesswells, and which allowed the new building to open with a viable and sufficient number of pupils and classes from the outset.
- 3.11 It is recommended that the outcomes of the options appraisal and any cost implications of the preferred option are referred to the budget setting process for 2026/27, so that a budget to support the interim arrangements can be identified. Subject to budget availability, the preferred option for the interim arrangements would then be included within the proposals for public consultation on the new school in 2026/27. The outcomes of the consultation, including feedback on the proposed interim arrangements, would be reported to the Committee following its conclusion, so that a decision can be taken on whether to proceed with the proposals.

ASG based asset reviews (Priority A8)

- 3.12 Following on from the Victorian Schools Programme, which seeks to bring about improvements to the suitability of our oldest school buildings, officers have recognised that whilst it was appropriate to focus on the Victorian schools initially, there will be a need to consider the other groupings of ageing school buildings in the city which, due to their age and design, may present challenges for effective curriculum delivery, and which may require significant levels of investment to maintain them in an acceptable condition.
- 3.13 For example, the school estate includes fourteen buildings which were built between 1939 and 1960, and a further twelve buildings which were constructed between 1970 and 1990, all of which require investment to bring them up to modern standards.
- 3.14 Officers recommend that a rolling programme of further asset reviews should be built into the School Estate Plan, to ensure that any investment requirements to upgrade and improve school buildings constructed later than the Victorian era are also fully considered and captured.
- 3.15 However, rather than focusing only on school buildings which were built in a particular time period, it is proposed that the approach taken in the recent Northfield Area asset review is used as the model for these future reviews, so that a more holistic assessment of all schools, regardless of their age, can be obtained, along with a review of all other public buildings within each Associated Schools Group (ASG) area. This would allow all Council operated buildings within each area to be reviewed, for their condition, suitability and levels of accessibility to public services, so that building improvements and opportunities for improved service delivery can be considered. Findings of the reviews would then be used to inform future priorities for the School Estate Plan.
- 3.16 Timescales for future ASG based asset reviews have therefore been built into the updated Long Term Programme shown at Appendix B, with initial work to be undertaken in 2026/27 to establish and agree a methodology for the reviews, and the first asset review to commence later in the same year.

Long Term Programme

- 3.17 Appendix B shows the updated implementation plan, now presented as a long term programme, incorporating all existing and proposed new projects within the School Estate Plan and estimated timescales for delivery of these, over the next fifteen years.
- 3.18 With the exception of the existing projects currently in progress, and some pipeline projects identified previously, funding required to implement the long term programme has not been identified. All proposed projects are subject to approval of the appropriate business cases which will be brought forward in due course, and if approved these would be included within future budget setting processes for the necessary funding to be identified.

- 3.19 Despite funding not having been identified at this stage, the existence of a programme which highlights potential future pipeline projects, which fit into a clear long term strategy, is likely to assist in any future applications for external funding, should such opportunities become available.
- 3.20 The Long Term Programme takes account of the capacity of key teams and services within the Council to successfully deliver individual projects, which have been prioritised to ensure the most essential works are carried out as early as possible.
- 3.21 The programme is intended to give an indication at this point in time of the likely timescales required to deliver the priorities listed within the action plan. It is acknowledged that, in subsequent annual updates to the action plan, new priorities are likely to emerge which may impact on these timescales. The long term programme will therefore need to be continually reviewed, and updated annually alongside the action plan, to reflect any required changes to the delivery timescales for individual projects.
- 3.22 As highlighted in the Victorian Schools Programme report which was presented to the Committee in April 2025, the delivery of the Victorian Schools projects would require additional staffing resource within the School Estate Team. The estimated implementation timescales shown within the Long Term Programme at Appendix B are therefore dependent on funding for an additional project manager being made available to help manage this work.
- 3.23 It is recommended that the cost of adding an additional full time project manager to the staffing establishment within the School Estate Team is included within the budget setting process for 2026/27.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Existing projects within the School Estate Plan will continue to be implemented using funding which has been allocated for this purpose within the General Fund capital programme.
- 4.2 Proposed new projects identified within this update to the School Estate Plan are subject to appropriate revenue and capital budgets being identified. Estimated costs for projects will be included within individual outline business cases which will be submitted to the budget setting process for approval prior to any projects proceeding. An estimate of the levels of capital funding likely to be required in future years, to deliver the updated Long Term Programme, are shown in the confidential Appendix C.
- 4.3 Revenue costs associated with the implementation of the Long Term Programme, which are also shown in detail at Appendix C, are summarised as follows:
- Annual running costs for Walker Road building (to be used for Victorian Schools Programme decants): **£280,000**

- Additional annual staffing costs for an additional project manager in the School Estate Team (salary costs at Point 4, Grade 15, including on-costs):
£74,000

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.

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	(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) 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 (2) Any proposed changes to schools arising from the School Estate Plan will incorporate full 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	The School Estate Plan emphasises an approach which places community engagement and consultation at the centre	L	Yes

	to a breakdown in relationships with community members. Some proposals about the future of the school estate may not be popular with 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
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<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 of the 21st century. The report seeks Committee's approval of the School Estate Plan.</p> <p><u>A Prosperous City</u></p> <p>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>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The updated School Estate Plan supports the delivery of Stretch Outcome 4 in the LOIP – children will feel listened to all of the time. 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.

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](#).

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A: Updated Action Plan
 11.2 Appendix B: Updated Implementation Plan / Long Term Programme
 11.3 Appendix C: Estimated Capital Investment Requirements (Exempt)

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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