

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services**

**Educational Services Committee: 8 January 2014**

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**Subject: Results of the statutory consultation on the proposal to construct a new schools and early education campus in Bellsmyre**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform the Educational Services Committee of the outcome of the statutory consultation process relating to the construction of a new campus in Bellsmyre, comprising co-located primary schools to replace Aitkenbar and St Peter's Primary Schools and a new Early Education and Childcare Centre (EECC) to replace St Peter's and Andrew B Cameron EECCs.

### **2. Recommendations**

**2.1** It is recommended that Committee:

- a) note that this report constitutes the consultation report required in terms of Section 9 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- b) note the responses to the statutory consultation by the Executive Director of Educational Services under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the proposal to construct a new campus in Bellsmyre, comprising co-located primary schools to replace Aitkenbar and St Peter's Primary Schools and a new Early Education and Childcare Centre (EECC) to replace St Peter's and Andrew B Cameron EECCs.;
- c) agree that the Council should proceed with the design, procurement and construction of a new campus in Bellsmyre, as detailed in paragraph 2.1.a above;
- d) agree that Council should proceed with plans to decant staff and pupils temporarily from St Peter's Primary School into spare accommodation in Aitkenbar Primary School and from St Peter's EECC into temporary accommodation within the Aitkenbar campus during the period of construction of the new campus;
- e) agree that, following completion of the new campus, education should cease at Aitkenbar Primary School with new provision for the young people from all four affected establishments commencing on the new campus early in 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter; and

- f) agree that the Executive Director of Educational Services should inform the relevant Scottish Government Ministers of the decision to progress the project

### **3. Background**

**3.1** On 6 February 2013, Council approved a ten year capital plan which included an allocation of £8.711 million for the Bellsmyre schools/EECC project. With an additional £0.600 million awarded from the Scottish Government's enabling funds, this gave an overall budget of £9.311 million for the project.

**3.2** On 11 September 2013, the Educational Services Committee agreed:

- (1) to approve the launch of statutory consultation by the Executive Director of Educational Services under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the proposal to construct co-located replacements for St Peter's Primary School and Aitkenbar Primary School, together with a new EECC to replace Andrew B Cameron and St Peter's EECCs, the new campus to be located on the site of the current St Peter's Primary School;
- (2) to approve a recommendation that the consultation period should run from Monday 16 September 2013 to Wednesday 13 November 2013, a total of 32 days when the schools are open to pupils;
- (3) that a report outlining the results of the consultation and making appropriate recommendations be presented to a future meeting of the Educational Services Committee; and
- (4) to thank all those who had been involved in progressing the project to its present stage.

**3.3** The consultation was duly conducted in accordance with the decision of Committee.

### **4. Main Issues**

#### Consultation Responses

**4.1** A summary of responses received is as follows.

Total responses: 14

#### Method of response

Email: 13

Letter: 1

#### Respondents

Group/organisation: 5

Parent: 3

Teacher: 3

Unidentified: 3

**4.1.1** The groups or organisations which responded were as follows:

<u>Group/organisation</u>	<u>For/Against Proposal</u>
Archdiocese of Glasgow of the Roman Catholic Church (submission signed by Archbishop Tartaglia)	For
Joint submission from Head Teachers of both schools	For
West Dunbartonshire Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)	For
Parent Council of Aitkenbar Primary School	For
Parent Council of St Peter's Primary School	Neither for nor against (a number of issues raised)

**4.1.2** The staff of Aitkenbar Primary School also submitted a list of practical issues and concerns relating specifically to the temporary decant arrangements.

**4.2** As part of the consultation, the Executive Director of Educational Services conducted a public meeting in the Assembly Hall of St Peter's Primary School on the evening of 2 October 2013 with 41 people in attendance. The overwhelming majority of those present were in favour of the proposal for the co-located campus, although a number of specific concerns were raised.

**4.3** The director conducted a meeting of the staff of St Peter's EECC and Andrew B Cameron EECC on 28 October 2013. Staff from St Peter's were broadly in favour of the proposal but raised a number of practical questions, particularly in relation to the arrangements for the temporary decant of St Peter's EECC into temporary accommodation at Aitkenbar Primary School. Staff from Andrew B Cameron EECC were more concerned about the proposal. While expressing understanding of the reasons for the proposal, they were concerned that the much larger EECC might make it more difficult for staff to provide individualised care for children, especially vulnerable children. They also expressed concern that parents of children from outwith Bellsmyre might choose not to send their children to an EECC which would be situated deeper into Bellsmyre and much further from their homes than the Andrew B Cameron site.

**4.4** The director also conducted a meeting with the staff of Aitkenbar and St Peter's Primary Schools on 7 November 2013. At his meeting, overwhelming support for the proposal was expressed, although a number of practical issues were also raised.

- 4.5** Notes of the three meetings mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs are available for scrutiny.
- 4.6** Education Scotland conducted its own investigation into the educational benefits of the proposal. A report of their findings was produced. It is available on both the Education Scotland and West Dunbartonshire websites and is provided as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.7** A number of themes emerged from the consultation responses, from the contributions at the public meeting and the meetings with the school and EECC staff and from the Education Scotland report. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the points raised.
- 4.8** Arguments in favour of the proposal
- 4.8.1** Most respondents favoured the co-location of the two primary schools, with several expressing the view that the arrangement would secure the future of denominational and non-denominational primary education within Bellsmyre for decades to come.
- 4.8.2** The view was also expressed that the new campus, together with a number of other council and community initiatives, would help to regenerate the local area.
- 4.8.3** It was noted that there have been several incidents of vandalism outwith school hours affecting the two schools. The view was expressed that improved security in a modern campus should reduce the prevalence of vandalism.
- 4.8.4** It was noted that the fact that the EECC would be located on the same campus as the two schools would be beneficial to parents with children of both pre-school and primary school ages.
- 4.8.5** The opinion was expressed that the co-location of the two primary schools would enhance joint working between the schools and would send a positive message to the community of Bellsmyre and to other communities across West Dunbartonshire.
- 4.8.6** The proposed location of the new campus was welcomed by the Archdiocese of Glasgow as it would retain the close links between St Peter's Primary School and St Peter's Church which is located next door.
- 4.9** Arguments against the proposal
- 4.9.1** One respondent argued that there should not be separate denominational schools in contemporary Scotland and that separate religious schools foster prejudice and schism.
- 4.9.3** Another individual respondent argued against the proposal on the grounds that there were insufficient architectural details available to judge the proposal

at this stage, that the proposal could lead to St Peter's Primary School losing its distinctive Catholic ethos and that the temporary decant proposals could lead to health and safety issues for children.

- 4.9.4** Some staff at the two EECCs were concerned that the proposal might create a new EECC which was too large and in which it would be difficult to deliver a truly personalised service, especially to vulnerable children.
- 4.9.5** Some staff in Andrew B Cameron EECC believed that they might lose some families who live outwith Bellsmyre and for whom the new campus would be less convenient than Andrew B Cameron, which is located at the edge of the estate.
- 4.9.6** One respondent supported the concept of the co-location but suggested that the new campus would be better located on the site of the Bellsmyre high flats, which are scheduled for demolition. This would remove the need for a temporary decant and would, in his view, provide a better location for the campus.

#### **4.10** Practical issues raised about the proposal

- 4.10.1** A number of practical issues were raised in written responses and at the public and staff meetings. These are summarised below.
- 4.10.2** Some staff and parents expressed the following concerns about the practical arrangements for the temporary decant of St Peter's Primary school to the Aitkenbar building and St Peter's EECC to temporary accommodation in the Aitkenbar campus during the construction period:
- the timing of the decant;
  - the need to minimise disruption to education at Aitkenbar while adaptations to the building are carried out;
  - the need to ensure there is adequate storage space for equipment belonging to both schools;
  - staff concern about inadequate staff toilet provision during decant phase;
  - concern about car parking arrangements during the decant phase;
  - concern about where temporary huts for St Peter's EECC will be located on the Aitkenbar campus;
  - parental concerns from St Peter's Primary School about arrangements during the decant phase in relation to the nature of the adaptations required, the arrangements for religious observance and the importance of the two schools retaining their individual identities while sharing a building not designed for co-location.
- 4.10.3** The following practical issues were also raised about the design of the new school:
- concern that there were no detailed architectural drawings available to allow consultees to make informed responses based on actual proposals;

- similarly, no details were available about ICT provision, sports provision, arrangements for office space or outdoor learning resources;
- concern that the dining hall would not be large enough to accommodate both schools;
- concerns were repeatedly expressed that the games hall would be of insufficient size to allow 2 hours of quality PE provision for pupils of both schools and to allow appropriate access for children from the EECC;
- requirement for ongoing discussions between the Council and the Archdiocese of Glasgow about the arrangements for the co-location of the two primary schools;
- concern that the design of the building should allow both schools to retain their individual identities, with particular concern that St Peter's should retain outward manifestations of its Catholic ethos, such as Catholic iconography;
- the opinions were expressed both that the two schools should have separate entrances and that they should have a single common entrance;
- a number of submissions and comments at staff meetings expressed the view that there should be a single staffroom for the two schools, an arrangement which would allow the staff in two small schools to share experience and practice, although one submission suggested that there should be a partition in the staffroom to allow separate activities when appropriate;
- a desire was expressed that the two schools should retain their own distinctive school uniforms;
- concern that, while good working relationships are currently enjoyed between the two schools and specifically the two head teachers, this may not always be the case and the sharing of a building may prove problematic if relationships are strained at some point in the future;
- Education Scotland has stressed the importance of ongoing dialogue between the Council and stakeholders to ensure that staff, parents, pupils and others are happy with the design of the new campus, the standard of accommodation provided, arrangements for care within a much larger EECC, traffic management arrangements within the new campus, the continued provision of faith-based education in St Peter's Primary School and health and safety arrangements during the temporary decant phase.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

**4.11.1** It is perhaps surprising that there should only be 14 written responses to a consultation on what could be considered a radical proposal for the first co-located denominational and non-denominational school campus in West Dunbartonshire and that only 41 people should attend the public meeting to discuss the proposal. However, it should be noted that the initial idea for such a co-location came from the residents of Bellsmyre themselves when it was proposed in 2005 that Aitkenbar Primary School be closed and the pupils moved to a new school to be constructed on the Dumbarton Academy campus, a proposal which was later rejected by Council. Since then, the idea

of a co-location, together with a large new EECC, has been unanimously supported by elected members of all political persuasions and has been a high priority capital project for the Council for several years. The low response rate to the consultation can probably therefore be explained by the fact that there is a general consensus that this project has already been seen to have public and political support.

- 4.11.1** In any case, most of the written submissions, and most of the contributions at public and staff meetings, expressed support for the proposal, although some important practical issues have been raised about both the temporary decant process and the design of the new campus.
- 4.11.2** The argument that there should not be separate denominational schools cannot be considered as part of this consultation process. It is a fact that both the 1918 and 1980 Education Acts enshrine the right of Catholic parents in Scotland to have their children educated in Catholic schools. It is clear that the parents of pupils in St Peter's Primary School wish to avail themselves of that right.
- 4.11.3** Concerns expressed by one parent in a written submission and by one parent at the public consultation meeting that the proposal would endanger the Catholic ethos of St Peter's Primary School are noted. However, the Catholic ethos of co-located schools in other parts of Scotland has been successfully retained and it is noteworthy that the Archdiocese of Glasgow supports this proposal and is confident that the Catholicity of the school can be retained.
- 4.11.4** Arguments that there are insufficient architectural details available at this time are noted. However, it is common to consult on such proposals before the development of detailed designs. West Dunbartonshire Council has a proven track record over the last five years of constructing high quality, well designed schools which have been widely acknowledged as first class learning environments. This development would be no different.
- 4.11.5** The suggestion from one respondent that the new campus would be better located where the Bellsmyre high flats are currently located is superficially attractive, since it would remove the need for a temporary decant. However, the timing of the proposed demolition of the flats would mean a significant delay to the school/EECC project, while the requirement for further statutory consultation, site investigations and new design work would involve costs probably in excess of the costs of the decant. For these reasons, it is not recommended that a new location for the proposed campus be explored.
- 4.11.6** The concerns of the EECC staff that the proposed new EECC would be too big are noted. However, it would be a matter for the Council and the management team of the new EECC to ensure that structures and procedures are in place to ensure that standards of care and education are not compromised. There are many examples of large nurseries in other parts of Scotland which operate very successfully and with high standards of education and care. The improved facilities and resources in the new establishment should also assist in this regard. West Dunbartonshire Council

is rightly proud of the quality of pre-school education provided in its EECCs. This new centre would be no different.

**4.11.7** The concerns that some parents and grandparents of pre-school children may have to travel extra distance to access the proposed new campus are noted. However, it is a Council priority to rationalise its physical assets. All four of the current buildings affected by this proposal are in poor physical condition and a like-for-like replacement is simply not affordable. The improved facilities at the new establishment will go some way to compensate families for any additional inconvenience caused by the location of the campus.

**4.11.8** It is only natural that staff and parents should express concerns about the temporary decant arrangements for children and staff of St Peter's Primary School and St Peter's EECC. However, both primary head teachers have expressed confidence that the temporary arrangements can work successfully provided there is sufficient planning and provided all necessary adaptations are carried out in good time and with adequate consultation with staff. It will be the responsibility of officers of the council to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to ensure that the quality of education does not suffer as a result of the decant process. With regard to the temporary accommodation for St Peter's EECC, council officers will be involved in ongoing discussions with the Care Inspectorate to ensure that the temporary accommodation complies fully with the standards required to deliver high quality education and care for the children concerned.

**4.11.9** The various points made about the design of the new campus are noted. Council officers will continue to engage in dialogue with staff, parents and others, including the Archdiocese of Glasgow and other local authorities which have successfully delivered co-located schools, to ensure that the two schools and the EECC retain their individual ethos and identity and to ensure that there is no dilution to the Catholicity of St Peter's Primary School as a result of the design of the building. The successful recent experience of West Dunbartonshire Council in building high quality educational establishments on time and on budget will help to ensure that this project, should it go ahead, will be equally successful.

**4.11.10** The specific concern about the games hall and assembly hall provision is noted. However, there are many schools in West Dunbartonshire with a larger roll than the combined roll of St Peter's and Aitkenbar Primary Schools which operate successfully and deliver 2 hours of high quality physical activity per week with a single, standard size gymnasium. The new campus will also have a high quality all-weather Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) which will be used in the delivery of PE. It should also be noted that physical activity can be provided in a variety of other locations, including the classroom, the playground and locations beyond the school campus. Careful joint timetabling should allow both schools and the EECC to have adequate access to the various sports facilities available on the campus and access to the hall for assemblies and other activities. Submissions which suggest that there should be two gymnasiums on the campus are not justified; nor would such a provision be affordable within the project's budget.

**4.11.11** This project has been under consideration by the council for many years. It has the support of the Bellsmyle community, the Archdiocese of Glasgow, the two school communities, the E.I.S. and a majority of respondents to the statutory consultation. The project has also previously been supported by elected members from across the political spectrum. The project would replace four sub-standard buildings, two of which (the two primary schools) have significant over-capacity with a new, attractive, modern and fit for purpose campus, specifically designed to deliver Curriculum for Excellence. The project would add to the significant regeneration activity already taking place in one of the Council's most deprived areas. As the council's first co-location of denominational and non-denominational schools, the project could provide a blueprint for further regeneration of the schools' estate in other parts of West Dunbartonshire. For all of these reasons, it is recommended that the Educational Services Committee gives its approval to the proposal and instructs officers to proceed with the procurement, design and construction of a new Bellsmyle schools/EECC campus.

#### **4.12** Consultation

**4.12.1** All consultation responses were read by the author of this report, as were the notes of the consultation meetings and the report by Education Scotland on the educational benefits of the proposal (Appendix 1). Consultation responses were also logged and categorised on a database. All of this information was assessed against the terms of the proposals paper before the author arrived at the recommendations listed in paragraph 2.1. Accordingly the process has been conducted in compliance with Section 9 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

### **5. People Implications**

**5.1** If the proposals are accepted, there will be some effect on staffing levels within the new campus, particularly within cleaning, catering and facilities management services; also, there would only be one head of centre in the EECC, as opposed to two heads at present. Any changes would be managed via the Council's policies for implementing such changes. The timescales involved mean that any reduction in staffing levels would be managed in a planned way.

**5.2** Some additional staffing capacity will be required during the planning and construction phases of the project. This has been budgeted for, using the contribution to the project from the Council's Capital Programme.

### **6. Financial Implications**

**6.1** The capital budget for this project is £9.311m, £0.600m from the Scottish Government's enabling fund via the Scottish Futures Trust and £8.711m from the Council's Capital Programme.

**6.2** The cost of construction and hire of temporary hatted accommodation to house St Peter's EECC for a period of 21 months during the construction

programme will be £0.150m. This cost will be covered within the overall budget for the project.

- 6.3** The Council's capital programme assumes a capital receipt of £0.950m from the sale of the Aitkenbar site.
- 6.4** The business case for this project identified that the project should generate a revenue saving of £0.190m per annum following the opening of the new campus. This sum has been utilised in the Council's capital plan to support prudential borrowing to help fund the capital programme to the value of £2.8m.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** Failure to continue to regenerate the schools estate would mean that the condition of the school buildings would continue to deteriorate, leading to increased inequalities for young people and reputational damage for the Council.
- 7.2** The risks of failing to complete the project on time and within budget will be controlled via robust project management based on the Council's substantial and successful recent experience in delivering schools projects.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** This project will improve the quality of educational experience for young people attending the educational establishments involved and there are therefore no negative impacts relating to equality issues. Indeed, the project will ensure that the young people of Bellsmyre will be educated in modern, fit for purpose facilities. This was confirmed by an Equalities Impact Assessment.

## **9. Consultation**

- 9.1** This project has been the subject of extensive discussion by the Strategic Asset Management Group and the Corporate Management Team as well as by Council and the Educational Services Committee.
- 9.2** The Chief Executive, Legal Services, the Section 95 Officer, the Executive Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure and the Corporate Asset Manager have been consulted on the content of this report.
- 9.3** Consultation with all statutory consultees has been conducted on the proposals in this report in accordance with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 9.4** There will also be full public consultation in line with planning regulations on this proposal if approved by committee.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** The Bellsmyre schools and EECC project will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities of Economic Regeneration and Improved Outcomes for Children and Young People.

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Date: 11 December 2013

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<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix1: Education Scotland report on the educational benefits of the proposal
<b>Background Papers:</b>	Council Report 6 February 2013: 10 Year Capital Programme  Educational Services Committee Report 15 May 2013: Regeneration of the Schools Estate: Bellsmyre Schools and EECC Co-location  Educational Services Committee Report 11 September 2013: Proposal Paper and launch of statutory consultation for the construction of a new schools and early education campus in Bellsmyre  Notes of public meeting on 2 October 2013, of meeting of EECC staff on 28 October and of meeting of Aitkenbar and St Peter's Primary School staff on 7 November 2013  Equalities Impact Assessment  Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Ward 3