

West Dunbartonshire Council

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Council: 24 February 2010

Subject: Statutory Consultation on the proposed closure of St Martin's Primary School

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The report explains why statutory consultation on the closure of St Martin's Primary School has not proceeded as instructed by Council at its meeting on 16 December 2009.
- 1.2** This report also asks members whether they would wish to suspend Standing Orders in order to agree that the statutory consultation should now not take place and that St Martin's Primary School should remain open.

2. Background

- 2.1** At the meeting of Council on 30 September 2009, the report entitled "Strategic Plan for the Regeneration of West Dunbartonshire Schools' Estate: "Phase 2" included a proposal to conduct statutory consultations immediately on the closure of St. Martin's Primary School in June 2010 with St Martin's pupils transferring to St Mary's Primary School, Alexandria.
- 2.2** The same report also recommended the amalgamation of Renton, Vale of Leven and Ferryfield Early Education & Childcare Centres (EECCs) into St Martin's school building.
- 2.3** At the meeting Members instructed that further consultation should take place on the proposals in respect of St. Martin's Primary School.
- 2.4** Following further consultation, another report was submitted to Council on 16 December 2009. On a casting vote, Council approved the officers' recommendations that Council should:
"instruct officers to conduct statutory consultations immediately on the closure of St. Martin's Primary School in June 2010 with St Martin's pupils transferring to St Mary's, Alexandria; and
in the event that Council ultimately closes St. Martin's Primary School, approve the merger of Renton and Vale of Leven EECCs into St. Martin's building at the earliest opportunity thereafter."
- 2.5** Officers immediately began to prepare the paperwork to allow statutory consultation to proceed. Following advice from senior civil servants at the Scottish Government, this consultation was constructed in accordance with the terms of new legislation which does not come into effect until 1 April 2010. This legislation requires a minimum of 6 weeks for such consultation and involves a more exhaustive process than was previously required.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Throughout the month of January 2010, in preparation for the budget-setting Council meeting on 28 January, a number of elected members began to indicate to officers some concerns regarding the proposal to close the school.
- 3.2** In particular, questions were raised about the savings option to move Renton EECC into the St Martin's building, combining it with Vale of Leven EECC, regardless of whether St Martin's Primary School were to close. Views were expressed by members that this move alone would make the running of the St Martin's building more cost effective.
- 3.3** Both during the Council meeting on 28 January and subsequently in the local press, the opinion was expressed by Elected Members from the Administration that the Budget which had been set for 2010/11 had effectively removed the need to consider the immediate closure of St Martin's.
- 3.4** Given the fact that the Labour Group has expressed its opposition to the closure of St Martin's, as have several Independent members, the views now being expressed by members of the Administration, indicate it may be that it would be unhelpful to subject the St Martin's school community to a lengthy statutory consultation process where there is no longer the intention to pursue the closure.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** The process of transferring staff from Renton to Vale of Leven Early Education Centre will proceed in line with agreed practice.
- 4.2** Should Council agree not to proceed to statutory consultation, staffing levels for both St Martin's and St Mary's Primary Schools for 2010/11 will be determined using established formulae.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The net part year savings which would have accrued from the closure of St Martin's of approximately £91,000 for 2010/11 (£158,000 for a full year thereafter) will now not be realised.
- 5.2** However, a saving of approximately £13,000 in 2010/11 will result from the closure of Renton Nursery and this has been accounted for in the budget.
- 5.3** Some capital funds will require to be directed towards adaptations to the St Martin's building to accommodate the additional children from Renton Nursery. As yet, the scale of the work involved has not been defined.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** All appropriate risk analyses will be carried out to ensure that adaptations which are carried out will make the building fit for purpose for the young

people who will be using the St Martin's building and for the staff who will be working there.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this measure.

8. Conclusions and Officers' Recommendations

- 8.1** Members are asked consider whether or not they wish the decision of the 16 December 2009 in respect of the consultation on the possible closure of St Martins Primary School in June 2010 to stand, and if not are requested to agree to suspend Standing Orders and rescind the decision of Council and furthermore to agree that this statutory consultation will not take place at this time.

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Appendices: None

Background papers Report to Council on 30 September 2009 entitled "Strategic Plan for the Regeneration of West Dunbartonshire Schools' Estate: "Phase 2"

Report to Council on 16 December 2009 entitled "The Results of the Formal Consultation on the Proposals in Respect of St Martin's Primary School"

Wards Affected: Ward 1