

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Council: 30 September 2009

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**Subject: Strategic Plan for the Regeneration of West Dunbartonshire Schools' Estate: "Phase 2"**

### **1. Purpose**

1.1 The purposes of this report are:

- a) to report the outcomes of the informal consultations of the Member Officer Working Group to Council;
- b) to present to Council the options for "Phase 2" of the regeneration of the schools' estate;
- c) to seek Council's approval for the adoption of a strategic approach to "Phase 2" of the regeneration of the schools' estate;
- d) to seek Council's approval for the development of an action plan which will allow officers to progress the regeneration strategy; and
- e) to seek Council's approval for officers to embark on a process of statutory consultation on the school closures, amalgamations, colocations and relocations which will be required to deliver the regeneration strategy.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 For many years, it has been acknowledged that West Dunbartonshire Council's schools' estate suffers from the twin problems of dilapidation and overcapacity. This was emphasised in the "INEA" report published in 2003 following the inspection of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) into the education functions of West Dunbartonshire Council. The first recommendation of this report was that Elected Members should take steps to address these issues as a matter of urgency.
- 2.2 The schools' Public Private Partnership (PPP) project has to date delivered three new schools through June and July 2009, namely Vale of Leven Academy, Clydebank High School and St Peter the Apostle High School. Work has already commenced on building the new St Eunan's Primary School and Early Education and Childcare Centre (EECC), together with the remainder of the external sports facilities for the three secondaries.
- 2.3 In October 2007, the Council's Planning Committee unanimously rejected BAM PPP's proposals for a new Dumbarton Academy and a new primary school to be formed by the amalgamation of Aitkenbar, Braehead and Dalreoch primary

schools together with an EECC on the current Dumbarton Academy site. Subsequently, Council took the decision to drop this campus from the PPP project. However, Council also gave a commitment to find a way of funding the construction of a new Dumbarton Academy as part of "Phase 2" of the regeneration of the schools' estate.

**2.4** Council of 6 August 2009 instructed officers to:-

- a) "prepare a report for the Strategic Finance Working Group examining financial packages in relation to finding appropriate funding for a new Dumbarton Academy and a new co-located primary school" (separate locations)
- b) "prepare a bid [to the Scottish Government]... with a view to obtaining 66.66% funding towards a new Dumbarton Academy with the remaining 33.33% being funded through the final agreed financial package".
- c) "prepare a further bid ...with a view to obtaining 50% funding towards a new co-located primary school, with the remaining 50% being funded through the final agreed financial package, all subject to any Council decision in September 2009 and consideration of recommendations from the Phase II Schools Working Group".

**2.5** Outwith the PPP project, Scottish Government School Fund grants and the Council's own Capital budget have been used to upgrade other school buildings and to fund the construction of two new primary schools to replace the existing Bonhill and Goldenhill primary schools. Work has commenced on the two new build primaries and both schools are scheduled for completion in summer 2010.

**2.6** Council instructed that a Member/Officer Working Group be set up to consult with the public on the strategy for phase 2 of the schools regeneration and informal public consultations have been carried out since June 2008. The appendices to this Report provide background information used in the consultation process and details of the outcomes of these consultations, together with the Member/Officer working group's recommendations based upon the consultations. Estimated costs including professional services, ICT and furniture and equipment at current prices are included. Early Education and Childcare Centres have been included in the options appraisals.

**2.7** The consultations took into account the priorities reported to Council on 28 May 2008, namely:-

- a) property condition;
- b) property suitability;

- c) estimated repair cost to bring the property up to a safe, accessible and wind and watertight condition, to be reported as a total cost and cost per pupil;
- d) revenue costs of each property, again reported as a total cost and cost per pupil;
- e) geographic location of each school in relation to other schools, identifying any isolation factors, e.g. Gartocharn Primary;
- f) retention of schools within local communities, especially socially disadvantaged communities;
- g) opportunity for co-location of other services within school buildings.

These priorities were used as a tool to begin the consultation process but were not necessarily seen to be the final priority ratings on completion of the consultations.

### **3. Main Issues**

#### **3.1 The Existing Schools' Estate**

##### **3.1.1 The West Dunbartonshire schools' estate currently comprises:**

- a) 5 secondary schools;
- b) 34 primary schools (3 of which – St Eunan's, Goldenhill and Bonhill – are currently under new construction);
- c) 3 Special Schools;
- d) 22 EECCs (10 of which are currently located within primary school buildings and one of which – St Eunan's EECC - is scheduled for a new building under PPP);
- e) 11 Out of School Care services ("OOSC"), 7 of which are voluntary (including 1 voluntary at St Eunan's EECC)

##### **3.1.2 Our Lady and St Patrick's High School has benefited from significant levels of funding over recent years to improve the fabric of the building, although some refurbishment is still required to bring some areas of the school up to modern standards.**

##### **3.1.3 In the primary sector, there is an unusual preponderance of small schools for a Local Authority located in the central belt. The smaller the school, the more expensive it is to run calculated on a per capita basis. Of our 34 existing primary schools, only 11 had rolls of over 250 pupils in June 2009; 18 had rolls of under 175 pupils and 5 had rolls of less than 100 pupils. All but 2 of the smaller schools are located less than a mile from other schools. Despite the Property Condition Surveys showing that our schools are generally in "Satisfactory" condition it should be noted that most of these schools are still in need of substantial investment in order to renew heating and electrical installations, reroof and**

replace windows. With the exception of those schools built since 1996, most schools are also generally unsuitable for modern teaching and accessibility.

**3.1.4** The Council's three Special Schools require to be refurbished and upgraded.

**3.1.5** The Council's Early Education and Childcare Centres vary greatly in condition and suitability.

## **3.2** Options Appraisal

**3.2.1** In examining the options for further rationalising of the schools' estate the following factors, as well as those factors listed in 2.6 above, were considered for each school:

- a) the need to provide a modern fit for purpose environment for pupils in West Dunbartonshire;
- b) improvement of the visual impact of school campus' within the community;
- c) community impact of change to school's status;
- d) school roll trends and projected roll in 5 years time;
- e) occupancy rate (roll as % of capacity);

**3.2.2** Having considered the factors listed in 3.2.1, the following options were considered for each school:

- a) refurbishment;
- b) adaptation;
- c) extension;
- d) merger/amalgamation;
- e) colocation of denominational and non-denominational schools;
- f) closure.

These options may in some cases be considered in combination.

**3.2.3** The preferred options with provisional costs (excluding any potential capital receipts or revenue savings but including professional fees, consultancies, I.C.T. infrastructure and furniture and fittings) are listed in Appendix 3, with the top 10 priorities noted.

**3.2.4** The top 10 priorities were established by taking into consideration the factors listed below and in the order noted:

- (a) school condition and suitability;
- (b) running costs of each school, per pupil;
- (c) position relating to positive public consultation/agreement on proposal;
- (d) need to ensure schools are retained within local communities wherever possible

(e) projects which would have the greatest impact on the improvement of the schools estate, taking into consideration those factors listed in 2.6 and 3.2.1.

### **3.3 The New Schools' Estate**

**3.3.1** Most of the proposals listed in Appendix 3 are in line with the results of the informal consultations.

**3.3.2** However, the opportunity was taken to explore co-located schools and services taking into account the following:

- (a) small schools should remain close to their existing locale;
- (b) value for money

**3.3.3** Two of the most unsuitable school buildings which are also in the worst condition within the Authority are Aitkenbar PS and St Peter's PS, both in Bellsmyre and less than half a mile from each other. At the school, parent and public consultation meetings the opinion almost unanimously reflected agreement to build a new co-located Aitkenbar/St Peter's PS on the St Peter's site. Given the fact that both school rolls are 137 each, the group considers that a new build co-located school should be the preferred number one priority for the phase 2 primary schools and EECC regeneration project. Andrew B Cameron Early Education & Childcare Centre (EECC), which is around half a mile from St Peter's Primary, could amalgamate with the St Peter's EECC on the co-located school campus.

**3.3.4** Despite the negative opinions publicly expressed at the meetings with regard to a merger of Haldane and Jamestown primaries together with co-location with St Kessog's primary, the questionnaires which were issued and returned on the same evenings gave a slightly different perspective. The preferences were skewed more in favour of a merger and co-location (see Appendix 2). Taking all factors into consideration the Member/Officer working group is in agreement that the preferred option for Council should be a newly built non-denominational primary (merger of Jamestown and Haldane primaries) co-located with St Kessog's Primary, together with an Early Education and Childcare Centre on the St Kessog's site. In recommending this, the working group took cognisance of the facts that the three schools are located within a few hundred yards of each other, have relatively small rolls and are either in poor condition or have poor accessibility.

**3.3.5** Similarly, the public opinions aired at the Faifley consultation meeting with regard to Edinbarnet and St Joseph's primaries suggested that there was no desire to co-locate. The questionnaires returned on the same evening produced a 60/40 split against co-location. Taking all factors into consideration, the Member/Officer working group is in agreement that the preferred option for Council should be a newly built co-located Edinbarnet Primary and St Joseph's

Primary with an Integrated Early Years and Family Support Centre. While there has been some investment in both Edinbarnet and St Joseph's primary schools, significant issues remain in terms of both condition and suitability and co-location represents the best solution in terms of value for money. Further consultation would be required to establish the most suitable site for the school.

- 3.3.6** The pupil roll at St. Martin's Primary continues to reduce year on year and currently stands at 45. The result is that there are only two composite and one multi-composite classes being run at significantly high costs (in 2007/2008 costs were £7,310 per pupil as against the Authority average of £3,582 and the national average of £3,634 per pupil). Taking into consideration that St Mary's is only one mile from St Martin's and has the capacity to take in all 45 pupils together with the high cost to run such a small school, the group's opinion is that St Martin's has now become unsustainable and therefore recommends the closure of St Martin's PS in June 2010. A public consultation would be required on the proposal to close the school.
- 3.3.7** Appendix 3 details Priority 2 as being the closure of St Martin's PS with pupils moving to St Mary's PS, Alexandria ("Phase 1"). A future project to renew St Mary's is listed as priority 5.
- 3.3.8** Following closure of St Martin's Primary it is proposed to merge the three local EECCs, namely Renton, Ferryfield and St Martin's into the St Martin's building to create an integrated Early Years and Family Support Unit. This would provide a centralised thriving and exciting early years service in Renton.
- 3.3.9** The group recognised the need to reconsider how best to provide an appropriate educational establishment for Dalreoch PS and Brucehill EECC. The suggestion given at the consultation meetings was to merge Brucehill EECC and Dalreoch PS at a site close to St Michael's PS. Having further investigated the situation, it transpires that there is no apparent vacant ground on which to build a new primary/EECC adjacent to St Michael's PS. One option considered by the group but not raised at consultation meetings would be to relocate the services currently being provided at Leven Valley Enterprise Centre (LVEC) into Dalreoch PS in order to allow demolition of the LVEC and provide sufficient land to build a new Dalreoch PS and West Dumbarton EECC. It is suggested that further investigation and informal consultation be carried out to consider this fully together with any other options listed in Appendix 3 relating to Dalreoch.
- 3.3.10** Proposals for schooling in New Bonhill created particular challenges because of the condition of the various schools in that area. Consideration was given to retaining St Ronan's PS on its existing campus with Ladyton EECC relocating into the same building. Ladyton PS pupils would merge with Highdykes PS in the existing Highdykes building, thereby freeing the land at Ladyton PS and EECC for Social Housing development. However on balance the working group believed that the preferred option would be to retain the two most attractive and

suitable schools in the area by temporarily moving Ladyton pupils to Highdykes PS, carrying out appropriate refurbishment of Ladyton to provide a modern, safe and secure environment in order to form a new St Ronan's PS and refurbishing the existing St Ronan's building to accommodate a merged Highdykes and Ladyton PS. The relocated St Ronan's PS and the relocated merged Highdykes / Ladyton PS would retain sustainable schools in the centre of the community whilst occupying the two best school buildings in the area. Furthermore, whilst this was not the prime driver, this strategy would also create a capital receipt from the sale of the Highdykes site which could potentially make the project cost neutral.

**3.3.11** It should be noted that formal consultation is only required for school closures, mergers, co-locations and relocations and these would only be carried out on a proposal by proposal basis as and when funding was identified and became available to develop any such project.

**3.3.12** If all preferred options were achieved, West Dunbartonshire's new schools' estate would comprise:

- a) 5 secondary schools;
- b) 31 primary schools, 6 of which would be co-located (previously 34 schools in separate locations);
- c) 3 special schools (unchanged);
- d) 18 EECCs (previously 22);
- e) 7 OOSCs (previously 11)

**3.3.13** Specifically, the 3 geographical areas would contain the following educational establishments:

**Alexandria:**

Vale of Leven Academy;

Bonhill PS;

Christie Park PS;

Gartocharn PS and EECC;

Highdykes/Ladyton PS amalgamation to vacant St Ronan's school;

Ladyton EECC;

Levenvale PS on new or existing site;

Renton PS and Language Unit;

St Kessog's PS and Haldane/Jamestown PS co-location on St Kessog's site;

St Mary's PS, including pupils from the closed St Martin's PS, on St Mary's site;

St Ronan's PS to relocate to vacant Ladyton school;

Renton EECC/Vale of Leven EECC/Ferryfield EECC amalgamation to form integrated early years and family support centre in St Martin's;

Dalmonach EECC.

**Clydebank:**

Clydebank High School;  
St Peter the Apostle High School;

Clydemuir PS;  
Gavinburn PS and EECC;  
Goldenhill PS;  
Carleith PS, St Mary's EECC, Psychological Services on Carleith site;  
Kilbowie PS;  
Linnvale PS and EECC;  
Our Holy Redeemer PS and Clydebank Family Centre on OHR site;  
Our Lady of Loretto PS;  
St Eunan's PS and EECC adjacent to the St Peter the Apostle site;  
St Joseph's PS and Edinbarnet PS co-location and Edinbarnet/Auchnacraig  
EECC on site still to be determined (the EECC amalgamation will form an  
integrated early years and family support centre);  
St Mary's PS;  
St Stephen's PS;  
Whitecrook PS;

Choices Project (at Skypoint);  
Cunard School (at Whitecrook PS);  
Kilpatrick School;

Dalmuir EECC;  
Kilbowie EECC;  
Whitecrook EECC.

**Dumbarton:**

Dumbarton Academy;  
Our Lady & St Patrick's HS;

Aitkenbar PS / St Peter's PS co-location, Andrew B Cameron EECC and St  
Peter's EECC on St Peter's site;  
Braehead PS and Meadowview Sensory Impairment Unit, Learning Support  
Unit and EECC;  
Dalreoch PS and Brucehill EECC relocation onto one site;  
Knoxland PS;  
St Michael's PS;  
St Patrick's PS;

Garshake Nursery.

**3.3.14** The total capital cost of achieving this solution would be approximately £115.55 million. Closures and amalgamations would generate capital receipts; these have not been included in the overall costings but are listed separately in the adjacent column. Due to the present economic climate receipts for the sale of

land have been reported as those which would have applied at the base date of August 2007. The revenue savings which would also be generated have not been factored into the costings at this stage. Life cycle replacement/maintenance would be calculated for each project prior to embarking on statutory consultations and approvals.

**3.3.15** In the event that funding becomes available in future years which is insufficient for the next prioritised project or following statutory consultation there appear to be good grounds not to pursue a project, it would be appropriate to bring forward a lower priority project or to amend any proposal.

**3.3.16** It could be that many of the projects not prioritised in Appendix 3 would be funded by other available Capital funding as and when it becomes available, meaning that some of these projects could be completed prior to those which have been prioritised 1-11.

**3.3.17** Some of the costs to carry out the smaller value projects listed and not prioritised could be met through the department's annual capital Programme, dependent upon the level of funding granted corporately.

#### **3.4** Schools Estate Management Plan (SEMP)

**3.4.1** The Scottish Government has instructed that all Scottish Local Authorities lodge updated SEMP's with them before the end of January 2010.

**3.4.2** If Council approves this report, it is intended to include the attached Options Appraisals (Appendix 3) within the SEMP for Scottish Government's considerations.

#### **3.5** Proposal from Cordale Housing Association

**3.5.1** The Council has engaged in preliminary discussions with Cordale Housing Association to consider the feasibility of the construction of a Community Primary School in Renton. The proposal from Cordale is that the school would be paid for, built and owned by the Housing Association but run by the Council. This matter requires further consideration on contractual, legal, financial and educational grounds. However any new build Renton Primary is not considered to be a high priority within the overall scheme for the phase 2 of the schools' regeneration plans.

#### **4. Personnel Issues**

**4.1** Staffing in schools is based upon a formula which takes into account, amongst other things, pupil rolls and the formula would be similarly applied to take account any such changes due to mergers or co-locations.

- 4.2 Staffing levels and management structures would need to be reconsidered where there is any change to an EECC due to a merger. Such levels in part reflect ratios required by legislation and the Care Commission.
- 4.3 Should Council elect to approve all or some of the preferred options (or any other option involving closure or amalgamation of schools) then the established departmental policy on the deployment of staff in closing or amalgamating schools would apply.
- 4.4 In order to procure contracts the Schools' Estate Team would require additional resources.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 As indicated in 3.3.2, the total capital cost of implementing all the preferred options would be approximately £115.55 million, although all costings are necessarily indicative at this time. Life cycle replacement/ maintenance has not been included at this stage of the process although this would be calculated during the drafting of each project business plan. Prices are based on today's figures, and inflation has not been factored in. Predicting inflation in constructing and non-construction elements is difficult, and this again would be calculated during the drafting of each project business plan.
- 5.2 Revenue savings would be generated through co-located schools due to the introduction of shared janitorial, cleaning and catering services. However the extent of these would be dependent upon agreement of protocols with the Catholic Church. A saving in rates would also be achieved through the reduction in number of school campuses.
- 5.3 If the co-located primaries in Bellsmyre including the EECC were to be approved, the total cost, once potential receipts have been factored in, is estimated to be £11.90m. It should be noted that the cost for a co-located primary school reported to Council on 6 August was £10.30m. This in effect means that an additional £1.60m would be needed to finance the project, 50% of which would need to be funded by the Council. In Prudential Borrowing terms, borrowing £0.80m equates to an additional annual burden of approximately £0.060m for 40 years. If funding for both Dumbarton Academy and the new Bellsmyre co-located school and EECC were to be secured, the total revenue commitment for the Council would be an estimated £1.175m, a figure which is still below the maximum of £1.2m approved by Council on 6 August 2009.
- 5.4 At the present time, it is not clear how a project that would tackle the entire estate proposals might be funded. It is clear, however, that sources such as the Council's Capital Programme and funds generated through Prudential Borrowing would be insufficient to deliver a project of the scale envisaged, even if only the High priority schools were to be included. Additional funding will undoubtedly be

required from the Scottish Government or other sources if the Council's vision is to be realised.

- 5.5** The Scottish Government has recently launched the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) although it is still unclear how this vehicle will interact with Local Authorities in the progression of the Schools' Estate.
- 5.6** While the details of the SFT are being developed, the Scottish Government has made it clear that it will continue to support the Non Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) model of funding for public sector building projects. The NPDO model is a form of public/private financing which has been successfully implemented by 3 Scottish Local Authorities: Argyll and Bute, Falkirk and Aberdeen City Councils. Under the NPDO model, excess profits are diverted into an arms length organisation which will pursue agreed aims, generally of an educational nature.
- 5.7** If the Council were to decide to opt for an NPDO model with funding being granted by Scottish Government it would be necessary to seek their approval for such a course of action and to establish the level of funding likely to be made available for such a project. An Outline Business Case would then require to be developed in a similar format to that which was prepared for the "Phase 1" PPP project. Timescales for the NPDO model would be similar to those which have applied under conventional PPP.
- 5.8** The Cabinet Secretary announced that there will be a release of capital funding on or around December 2009 that will contribute 50% towards primary school regeneration. Bids will be submitted to the Scottish Government / SFT in order to access the funding. Details are still to be released.
- 5.9** Timescales and the full financial implications cannot be estimated and reported until the details of the new model become known.
- 5.10** Closure of St Martin's PS would effect revenue savings in 2010/2011 of an estimated £ 89,000 and annual savings of £ £135,000 in subsequent years.
- 5.11** Revenue savings would accrue from the amalgamation of Renton, Vale of Leven and Ferryfield EECCs into St Martin's school building. However given the fact that this would be much larger than any of our existing pre-5 establishments, staffing and management arrangements for the new establishment would require to be considered and discussed with the relevant trade unions. It is not therefore possible to quantify the revenue savings at this stage.

## **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1** The main risks if the Council does not decide to progress with a "Phase 2" plan are that:

- a) the quality of school buildings will continue to deteriorate;
- b) problems of overcapacity and inefficiency will become even greater;
- c) ongoing significant expenditure to meet the costs of upgrading existing properties to wind and watertight conditions will continue on an annual basis (total estimated expenditure required for the next 5 years is approximately £15 million);
- d) many pupils will continue to be educated in inadequate school buildings.

**6.2** If the Council decides to pursue any offer of funding, a full Business Case including risk analyses would be drafted for Council approval.

**6.3** There is a risk that the costs will increase over time since they are subject to inflation, dependent on when funding becomes available.

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

**7.1** Despite the progress already made through PPP and other funding methods to regenerate West Dunbartonshire's schools' estate, there remains a considerable amount of work to be done. Many of the Council's school buildings are in a poor and deteriorating physical condition and the problem of overcapacity, with all the concomitant inefficiencies, still exists.

**7.2** It is essential that the Council positions itself strategically to take advantage of any new funding streams which may become available.

**7.3** The options recommended in the appendices to this Report would allow the Council to take a strategic view of schools' regeneration. If the recommended categorisation of priorities is approved, then (subject to the required statutory consultations) the Council would be able to progress projects in order of priority as funding sources become available.

**7.4** In the event of any project becoming achievable a detailed cost analysis would be reported to Council for approval.

**7.5** If the recommended options are adopted, and if all options could be funded, the Council would be left with a schools' estate which is modern and sustainable and which would allow Head Teachers, Heads of Centre and school and EECC staff to deliver high quality education in attractive physical environments, locally situated for the benefit of all communities in West Dunbartonshire.

**7.6** If the proposals are adopted, it should be noted that unforeseen future changes in school rolls may require us to revisit the strategic plan. Any such proposed changes would be submitted to Council for approval.

- 7.7** In the absence of certainty about the nature and scale of any new funding streams to be made available by the Scottish Government, it is important that the Council continues to explore all other options for the generation of funds including Prudential Borrowing and the realisation of capital receipts.
- 7.8** Statutory consultations would not take place until such times as funding sources become available.
- 7.9** It is recommended that Council should:
- a) approve the recommended options and priorities as outlined in Appendix 3 to this report;
  - b) 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;
  - c) approach the Scottish Government with a bid for funds to support a new build co-located Aitkenbar Primary School and St Peter's Primary School and Early Education and Childcare Centre on the St Peter's site;
  - d) authorise the Executive Director of Educational Services to secure the services of appropriate external advisers to assist with the development of any resulting bid as required;
  - e) investigate any other methods by which funds might be raised (eg Prudential Borrowing and generation of capital receipts) which might allow some of the high priority options to be implemented;
  - f) approve the submission to the Scottish Government of Appendix 3 to this Report as part of the Council's Schools' Estate Management Plan (SEMP).

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1: Index to Summary of Consultation Meetings  
Appendix 2: Summaries of the various consultation

meetings

Appendix 3: Options for Existing Stock

Appendix 4: School Rolls, capacities and occupancies

Appendix 5: Maps showing school locations

**Background Papers:**

1. Council Report 6 August 2009 "Schools Regeneration – New Funding Stream"
2. Agreed motion to Council of 6 August 2009

**Wards Affected:**

All wards