

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Council: 28 May 2008

Subject: Member/Officer Working Group: Regeneration of the Schools' Estate – Phase 2 : Progress Report

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is:

- to update Council on progress made by the Member/Officer Working Group on Phase 2 of the Regeneration of the Schools' Estate.

2. Background

2.1 At its meeting on 30 January 2008, Council approved a motion which, inter alia, agreed:

“that a short term member/officer and community working group be formed comprising 4 Administration, 3 Opposition (Labour), and 1 Opposition (Other), all relevant officers, 1 union rep, 1 school board rep and other school representation when applicable and as agreed by the working group.

The working group will start with a blank sheet looking at all options to include size, sites and services to be provided.

The working group will also consult with parents, teachers and pupils and will report back to Council before any decisions are taken.”

2.2 The working group was duly established and has met on two occasions:

- Monday 7 April 2008; and
- Tuesday 20 May 2008.

2.3 Some members of the Working Group also undertook a tour of all school sites in West Dunbartonshire on Thursday 10 April to see at first hand the geographical and social locations and the physical conditions of the school buildings.

2.4 At its meeting on 20 May, the Working Group agreed that a progress report on its work should be submitted for information to the Council meeting in May 2008.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Membership

3.1.1 Membership of the working group was established as follows:

Councillor May Smillie (Chair)
Councillor Ronnie McColl
Councillor Jim Brown
Councillor Jim McElhill
Councillor George Black
Councillor Martin Rooney
Councillor Patrick McGlinchey
Councillor Geoff Calvert
Iain Ellis, Chair of Dumbarton Academy Parent Council
Stewart Paterson, Teachers' Convener and EIS Secretary
Angela Nicoll, Joint Branch Secretary, Unison
Terry Lanagan, Executive Director of Educational Services
Dave Clarke, Head of Service (Resources)

3.1.2 It was agreed by the working group that the 6 Parent Council Representatives from Clydebank schools who had offered to serve on the working group should decide among themselves which of them would represent parents from Clydebank; it was also agreed that they should be asked to choose a substitute member.

3.1.3 In the absence of volunteers following a previous letter, the Executive Director of Educational Services was instructed to write again to Parent Council representatives from schools in the Vale of Leven area to ask them to nominate a parent to represent them on the working group.

3.1.4 The group also agreed to approach the Department of Housing, Environment and Economic Development with a request that a Council architect be invited to join the working group.

3.1.5 At the start of the meeting on 20 May, Councillor McGlinchey intimated the Labour Group's disapproval of the notes recording the tour of school sites on 10 April. These notes had been appended to the Director's report to the working group and reflected informally the discussions which had taken place during the tour. They had been compiled at the request of the parent member of the working group and were intended as an aide memoire for those members who had attended the tour and as information for those who had not. Councillor McGlinchey expressed the view that these notes were an indication that the working group was no longer working from a "blank sheet of paper" and that that the working group had therefore exceeded its remit. He then announced the resignation with immediate effect from the working group of the three Labour Members (Councillors McGlinchey, Rooney and Calvert) and left the meeting.

3.2 Dumbarton Academy

- 3.2.1** The working group has discussed a range of possible sites for the new Dumbarton Academy, including the existing Crosslet Road site, Postie's Park and Garshake Road (if proposals to move the Council Offices to a redeveloped town centre become reality).
- 3.2.2** Further investigations of the viability of various sites have been scheduled. Estates officers will be included in these discussions. Thereafter, officers will meet with the Dumbarton Academy Parent Council to discuss options.
- 3.2.3** When a suitable site has been identified and costs calculated, an approach will be made to the Scottish Government to try to secure a funding package.

3.3 Primary Schools

- 3.3.1** It was agreed by the working group that it was important to establish a consultation strategy in relation to the primary school estate.
- 3.3.2** It was agreed that the following considerations would be taken into account in establishing initial priorities for informal school consultations:
- property condition;
 - property suitability;
 - 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;
 - revenue costs of each property, again reported as a total cost and cost per pupil;
 - geographic location of each school in relation to other schools;
 - retention of schools within local communities, especially socially disadvantaged communities;
 - opportunity for colocation of other services within school buildings.
- 3.3.3** Bearing in mind the considerations listed in 3.3.2 above, information provided to the working group by officers, and information gleaned from the tour of school campuses, it was agreed that the first consultation should be with the following school communities:
- St Joseph's Primary School and Edinbarnet Primary School;
 - Aitkenbar Primary School and St Peter's Primary School;
 - St Kessog's Primary School, Jamestown Primary School and Haldane Primary School.
- 3.3.4** For all of the above communities, initial consultation would be on the concept of colocated denominational and non-denominational schools with separate identities but with some shared facilities and located within single campuses in Faifley, Bellsmyre and Haldane/Jamestown.
- 3.3.5** It was agreed that a meeting would be held in the Council Chambers in Garshake Road at 7.00 pm on Thursday 28 August 2008 and that the following representatives would be invited to attend:

- the Head Teachers of all schools involved (as listed in 3.3.3 above);
- 3 representatives of each Parent Council (including one staff representative);
- the Head of each associated Early Education and Childcare Centre;
- all Elected Members for the areas affected;
- Church representatives;
- all members of the Member/Officer Working Group.

3.3.6 It was further agreed that consultation papers should be prepared by the Department of Educational Services and should be issued to consultees in advance of the meeting on 28 August in order that all interested parties are fully informed of the issues before the meeting takes place and have the opportunity to discuss these issues with the people whom they represent.

3.3.7 It is proposed that a progress report be presented to Council in September 2008 following the consultation process described above.

3.3.8 It is important to stress that the informal consultation process described above makes no assumptions about the future of the school communities affected. Should proposals emerge from the consultation process, and should Council subsequently make recommendations based upon those proposals, then those recommendations would be subject to further, formal consultations with all schools affected in accordance with statutory requirements. The results of any statutory consultations would then be reported to Council for further consideration.

3.4 Cordale Housing Association/Renton Primary School

3.4.1 The working group discussed meetings which had taken place between senior officers of the Council and Mr Stephen Gibson of Cordale Housing Association about Cordale's proposal for the construction of a new primary school in Renton under a "Public Community Partnership Model".

3.4.2 While officers had acknowledged that the model may represent an attractive option for future capital projects, it was noted that the following issues would prevent the Council from agreeing to the proposal at the present time:

- the Council's commitment to the construction of a new Dumbarton Academy as its top priority;
- the fact that Council had instructed the member/officer working group to consider the whole of the schools' estate, starting with a "blank sheet of paper" and to consult with stakeholders in all affected schools before returning to Council with proposals and priorities;
- the fact that, under any options appraisal using the criteria listed in 3.3.2 above, Renton Primary School would be unlikely to emerge as the Council's top priority within the primary school estate, since it is in reasonably good physical condition and has less spare capacity than many other schools, taking into account the fact that the Language Unit is located within the building;
- the current absence of a funding source for a project likely to have a capital value of over £5 million;

- potential procurement issues if the Council were to enter into a contract with Cordale Housing Association for a significant capital project when no competitive tendering process had taken place.

3.4.3 It was noted that Mr Gibson had been asked, on a without commitment basis, if Cordale might be interested in pursuing the Public Community Partnership Model with the Council with reference to the construction of either a new Dumbarton Academy or another primary school project, once priorities had been identified. However, Mr Gibson had expressed the view that this was unlikely to be a viable option at this stage, given Cordale's close association with the village of Renton and given the fact that, as the model was as yet untested, it might be imprudent to pilot it on a secondary school.

3.4.4 While the working group acknowledged the difficulties in pursuing Cordale's proposals at this stage, it also recognised the proposal as having exciting potential, particularly if, as Mr Gibson had suggested, the Scottish Government was keen to support it. Officers were therefore asked to keep the proposal under review.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues at this stage, although there will be a requirement for input by Departmental staff to the ongoing consultation process.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no significant financial implications at this stage, although there will be currently unquantifiable financial implications arising from the consultation exercise and any subsequent recommendations by Council.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 None is required at this stage, although it will be imperative for detailed risk analyses to be conducted on any options which may arise from the consultation process.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The working group has made significant progress in its work in the time available in relation to both Dumbarton Academy and the primary schools' estate, although much work remains to be done.

7.2 The working group is fulfilling its remit to consult widely with stakeholders.

7.3 Further progress reports relating to the working group will be provided to future meetings of Council.

8. Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that Council should:

- a) note the contents of this Report and the progress made thus far by the Working Group; and**
- b) request a further progress report at the Council meeting to be held on 24 September 2008.**

Terry Lanagan
Executive Director of Educational Services

Person to Contact: Terry Lanagan
Executive Director of Educational Services
01389 737301
E-mail: terry.lanagan@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 30 January 2008

Wards Affected: All wards