

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
– 14 January 2015

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	ECAS 05/15

Sustainable School Estate Review – North Skye

Report by the Director of Care and Learning

Summary

Following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, this report and accompanying information sets out a recommendation to improve the accommodation provision in North Skye, through the establishment of a new amalgamated community Primary School on a new site in the village of Dunvegan, replacing the existing Dunvegan, Struan, Knockbreck and Edinbane Primary Schools.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 21 May 2014, the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee agreed to proceed to statutory consultation on proposals to improve school accommodation in North Skye.
- 1.2 The statutory consultation was taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 1.3 Attached to this report is the final proposal for decision, following conclusion of the statutory consultation process.
- 1.4 The legislation requires that any proposal for decision must be published at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting at which any decision may be made, to allow time for further representations. Recognising the festive holiday period, the proposal was published on Monday 8 December. Following identification of the omission of a response from Struan Community Council, an addendum to the proposal was published on Thursday 11 December.

2. The Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal document and appendices for consideration by the Committee are circulated separately as Booklets A, B and C. They provide details of all consultation comments received (approximately 180 in total), the report from Education Scotland, and the Council's response to comments arising from the consultation.
- 2.2 While the final proposal has considered and responded to the comments received during the consultation, the final recommendation remains unaltered from that which this Committee agreed to go to consultation on in May of this year.
- 2.3 The proposal within the booklets sets out the rationale for the recommendation, and relevant supporting information, which includes:
 - The educational benefits of the proposal;
 - The current school buildings condition and suitability scores;
 - The community impact of the proposal including assessment of population

impact;

- The environmental impact of the proposal;
- The school transport and travel time implications of the proposal;
- The financial implications (revenue and capital) of the proposal.

2.4 The booklets also contain details of any further representations received, since the proposal report was published on Monday 8 December. Any further representations received up to the date of this Committee, will be tabled on the day of the Committee.

3. Next Steps

3.1 Following consideration by the Committee, if the recommendation is agreed the following timeline will be followed as required by the legislation.

- Within 6 working days of the Committee decision, the Council must advise Scottish Ministers of the decision it has reached, provide them with the proposal paper and consultation report, and publish a notice stating that Ministers have been advised and the process through which representations may be made to Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal.
- From the date of the Council decision, there is a period of 3 weeks in which representations to Scottish Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal can be made by any interested party.
- Scottish Ministers then have a further up to 5 weeks in which to decide whether they will issue a call-in notice or not.

4. Implications

4.1 Resource implications – are as detailed within the proposal report (section 10 and appendices 7-7D).

4.2 Legal implications – as described earlier, the statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The schools affected by the proposal are rural schools per the Scottish Government rural schools list. The amendments to that Act, introduced in 2014, do not apply based on the commencement date of those amendments. Nonetheless, through the additional information provided within the proposal report, many of the additional disclosure requirements associated with the amended Act are addressed. Officers from Legal Services have been involved in review of the final proposal report, recognising the importance of ensuring the legislative requirements of the Act are met.

4.3 Equalities implications – an Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is included within the proposal report (section 11 and appendix 9).

4.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications – the proposal report addresses the environmental impact of the proposal, and highlights the estimated reductions in carbon emissions from the operation of the new school and transport arrangements (section 6, response 31).

4.5 Risk implications – the main risks associated with progressing the recommendation relate to the potential for call-in by Scottish Ministers. Officers have sought to mitigate the risk through review and evaluation to ensure that procedurally the requirements of the Act and statutory consultation process have been met.

- 4.6 Gaelic implications – the proposal will support the provision of Gaelic medium education in the new primary school.
- 4.7 Rural implications – the proposal will see the closure of 4 existing primary schools and amalgamation in a new community school in Dunvegan. The proposal will therefore have implications for those communities. The proposal report has set out information on the potential community impact (positive and negative) and in particular sets out information supporting the view that there is no clear evidence that school closure results in lower populations or an ageing population profile (section 5, response 13).

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are asked to consider the proposal set out within Booklets A, B and C and, having given consideration to further representations received, agree to recommend to the Council:
- To discontinue education provision at the existing Dunvegan, Struan, Knockbreck and Edinbane Primary Schools;
 - To establish a new amalgamated community Primary School for North West Skye, on a new site in the village of Dunvegan;
 - To combine the existing school catchments of Dunvegan, Struan, Knockbreck and Edinbane Schools to form the catchment of the new amalgamated Primary School.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 16 December 2014

Authors: Brian Porter, Head of Resources
Ian Jackson, Education Officer