

The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adult Services Committee 20 May 2015

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	ECAS 35/15

Inverness Primary Schools Update

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report advises of progress in analysing the effect of the roll pressures facing primary schools in Inverness. It also updates on the outcome of the recent review of the Council's capital programme and the most immediate priorities for future capital investment.

1. Background

1.1 This Committee agreed in November 2014 that the pressures affecting primary schools in Inverness should be analysed as part of the wider Sustainable School Estate Review (SSER) in order to allow the outcomes to be taken into account in any future review of the Council's capital programme. Since then, a report has been taken to the City of Inverness Area Committee and officers have attended Ward Business Meetings to brief Members and get feedback on issues and options.

2. Current Position

2.1 The revised capital programme agreed by the Council in March 2015 includes a funding line of £48 million over the next 10 years for Inverness Schools SSER, giving resources to progress projects to address capacity, condition and suitability issues in both primary and secondary Schools.

2.2 The rolls at Cradlehall, Inshes and Lochardil Primary Schools have been capped for 2015/16. The impact of these measures and the implications for neighbouring schools will be assessed over the coming months to ensure that any decisions to cap school rolls next year is taken at a much earlier stage in the school session.

3. Future Investment Priorities

3.1 Smithton Primary School

3.1.1 A feasibility study relating to a future extension is well advanced and it is recommended that design work commences once the study is complete. The one remaining issue to be resolved is the amount of accommodation that will be required in the long term to address capacity issues at this and the other schools in the Culloden Academy Associated School Group (ASG). The implications of capping the roll at Cradlehall will also have to be taken into account. Some internal alterations will be undertaken during the coming summer holiday period to increase the size of some of the classrooms.

3.2 Merkinch Primary School

- 3.2.1 As previously reported, there are issues with the building condition and the suitability of the accommodation, and the roll is projected to rise for the foreseeable future. Two modular classrooms were installed during the last summer holiday period to help relieve the pressure at the start of the current session and improvement works were carried out to some classrooms. A further two classrooms will be installed during the coming summer break. A feasibility study is underway to establish the level of investment that would be required to bring this school up to an appropriate standard and again it is recommended that design work commences once the study is complete.

3.3 Cauldeen Primary School

- 3.3.1 A feasibility study into the provision of an annexe at the school providing accommodation for pupils with Additional Support Needs, to provide additional capacity within Inverness area, has been commissioned. It is considered that this accommodation is required as a priority and that design work should commence at an early juncture.

3.4 Kinmylies and Muirtown Primary Schools

- 3.4.1 The combined roll of these two schools is projected to rise in the coming years and additional classroom provision will be required in the Charleston Academy ASG to meet the demand for places. Further analysis is required to determine the potential for extending either or both schools and on the required timescale. Some improvements at Kinmylies will be undertaken this summer and more extensive alterations could be undertaken next summer.

3.5 Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis

- 3.5.1 As previously reported, there is a particular issue at this school as it is anticipated that future demand is likely to exceed the number of available places. Also, the building was designed to support a single stream school, and the ancillary accommodation is not sufficient to support a larger amount of pupils.
- 3.5.2 It is now recommended that a feasibility study is undertaken that will look in more detail into the implications of either remaining on the current site or building a new school on a different site that could in time expand into a two stream school. This will involve further engagement with the Head Teacher, Parent Council and Ward Members.

3.6 Other Pressures

- 3.6.1 The review will continue to take into account the current facilities and future demand in respect of provision for Early Learning and Childcare and also for pupils with Additional Support Needs at individual schools and also across the Inverness area. The rate of development at Ness Castle and Ness-Side will have an impact on schools in the Inverness Royal Academy ASG and some further investment or temporary accommodation may be required until such time that a new school at Ness Castle may become operational.

4. Implications

- 4.1 **Resources:** the proposed capital investment, together with a range of short to medium term measures, would create additional capacity and start to relieve the pressures facing some schools.
- 4.2 **Legal:** A consistent approach to school capacity modelling will enable the Council to identify measures required to meet its statutory obligations.
- 4.3 **Equalities:** The review will take account of the need for appropriate accommodation to be provided for pupils with additional support needs.
- 4.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** Any outcomes will be taken into account when planning major capital investment projects.
- 4.5 **Risk:** A consistent approach will allow the Council to identify any relevant risks as part of the future capital investment decision making process and for alternative measures to be put in place in the event that capital funding is not available.
- 4.6 **Gaelic:** The review process in Inverness has clear implications for enhanced Gaelic-medium provision and for provision at Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis.
- 4.7 **Rural:** One of the aims of the revised methodology is to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the School Estate.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to note and comment on the priorities for future capital investment and the other measures outlined in this report.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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