

Agenda Item	16.
Report No	CLH 53/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing

Date: 21 August 2019

Report Title: Review of the Statutory Consultation Exercise to establish a 3-18 campus in Tain

Report By: Chief Executive

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following the conclusion of a statutory consultation process, this report seeks Members' agreement to a recommendation to establish a new 3-18 campus for Tain, replacing the present Tain Royal Academy, Craighill Primary School, Knockbreck Primary School, and St. Duthus Special School. It is recommended that the new school be located on the site of the present Craighill Primary School.
- 1.2 Funding implications associated with implementing the recommendation will be considered by future Council meetings as part of the wider refresh of the capital programme and the actions being progressed by the Council in relation to identifying funding opportunities and progressing actions on Tain and other priorities in relation to 'bid ready' status for Scottish Government Learning Estate investment.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the proposal set out within Appendices A and B (pp1-56 of Booklet A) and, having given consideration to any further representations received:-
 - i. agree to recommend to the Council that education provision be discontinued at the following campuses – Tain Royal Academy, Craighill Primary School, Knockbreck Primary School and St. Duthus Special School and relocated to a new 3 to 18 campus to be established on the site of the existing Craighill Primary School;
 - ii. note the position relating to capital funding for implementation, and the actions being progressed to explore funding opportunities and achieve 'bid

ready' status in relation to Scottish Government Learning Estate investment.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resources – There will be revenue and capital implications arising from a new school and these are set out on **Appendix 6** (pp 60-61 of Booklet B) to the Proposal Paper. As highlighted above, actions are being progressed in relation to securing funding for the Tain Campus project, as well as other unfunded school investment priorities.
- 3.2 Legal - The statutory consultation will be taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - The Equalities impact is assessed at Paragraph 11 of **Appendix B** (pp 54-55 of Booklet A). The Proposal has the potential for positive effects on disability issues. No negative effects are anticipated.
- 3.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever - The new buildings will meet the requirements of Scottish Building Standards for energy and sustainability.
- 3.5 Risk – If suitable capital funding is not identified, the Council would not be able to progress with construction of the 3-18 campus. This risk is mitigated through the actions being progressed by the Council in relation to capital funding and being 'bid ready' for making the case for Scottish Government Learning Estate investment, and in turn by the potential to consider a phased approach to the new Campus, providing more flexibility in terms of funding and profiling. The costs assumed within the report are estimates, and reflect the prevailing price base at the time of the report, with no provision for inflation. Costs and funding for the project will ultimately be considered as part of the wider capital programme considerations of the Council, as described within this report
- 3.6 Gaelic – The proposal affects Craighill Primary School, which offers Gaelic Medium education. In their report, Education Scotland noted that almost all stakeholders of GME felt that the proposed 3-18 campus could facilitate the sharing of staffing and resources for Gaelic to enhance the delivery of the GME curriculum.

4. Background

- 4.1 On 30 May 2018 this Committee agreed to commence a statutory consultation, per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, to discontinue the provision of education at Tain Royal Academy, Craighill Primary School, Knockbreck Primary School, and St. Duthus Special School, replacing the provision at these four schools with a new 3-18 campus in Tain. The consultation invited views on the best site for the new campus, with a choice of two sites being presented.
- 4.2 A statutory consultation exercise was previously carried out on the Tain 3-18 campus during 2014 and 2015. On that occasion the Proposal Paper issued for consultation also specified that the new campus should be built on the site of the existing Tain Royal Academy. The proposal was approved by Highland Council on 12 March 2015 and by Scottish Ministers on 1 May 2015.
- 4.3 Following the conclusion of the 2014-15 consultation, the local community raised significant concerns about the suitability of the existing Academy site for the Campus. In June 2017 this Committee agreed to pause the Campus project and review site options. After extensive informal consultation, the revised Proposal Paper was issued for consultation on 5 June 2018. Two potential sites were identified for the new campus, the Tain Royal Academy site, or a site adjacent to Craighill Primary School.

5. Review of the Consultation Exercise

- 5.1 The proposal for decision, the original proposal issued for consultation, and relevant appendices for consideration by the Committee are circulated separately in the associated booklets. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council's response to comments arising from the consultation.
- 5.2 The size of the report and associated booklets is reflective of the scale of responses reviewed during informal consultation and the statutory consultation process, and of the significant level of interest within the local community in this subject. The time taken by local stakeholders to engage in this consultation, at both the informal and statutory phases, is greatly appreciated and provided valuable input in developing recommendations for this Committee.
- 5.3 The Statutory Consultation process provides for a number of mechanisms through which views are gathered, including feedback provided informally prior to the Statutory Consultation process (included within the original proposal report), the public meeting and note taken, written responses submitted, pupil views, further feedback captured during the July 2019 Tain Gala day, and finally any final representations submitted in the 3 week period prior to consideration at this Committee.
- 5.4 A total of 41 named individuals submitted written responses during the initial public consultation period. One of these expressed the author's personal view plus a summary of comments submitted via a drop-in session organised by the author of the response. There were, in addition, a further 15 written responses submitted anonymously, and feedback forms received from the

Parent Councils of Tain Royal Academy and Knockbreck Primary School. The Council also attended Tain Gala day on Saturday 6th July to capture further views prior to finalising recommendations for this Committee. Over 200 feedback forms were completed on the day with 69% of those completing indicating Craighill Primary as preferred site. It is recognised that some of these are likely to have been responses from individuals who had provided earlier consultation responses. Views were also gathered from school pupils, the results of which were more evenly split between the two site options. The results of these various exercises are summarised at paragraphs 3.3 - 3.14 of **Appendix A** (pp 4-7 of Booklet A). Given the level of public interest, and the circumstances leading to the site review and second Statutory Consultation, it is perhaps no surprise that there was such a volume of feedback received, and a range of views expressed. The majority of stakeholders who submitted responses were supportive of the 3-18 campus with a clear preference expressed for the Craighill site.

- 5.5 The public meeting was attended by around 45 members of the public, and discussion lasted for over 2 hours (see **Appendix D** – pp 60-78 of Booklet C).
- 5.6 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. The Consultation Report was published on 25 July 2019. Any further representations that are received will be tabled at the meeting for the attention of Members.
- 5.7 In their report (see **Appendix E** - pp 79-82 of Booklet C), Education Scotland concluded that the Council's proposal is of clear educational benefit. The majority of stakeholders who submitted responses were supportive of the 3-18 campus with a clear preference expressed for the Craighill site. The Council's proposal would see children and young people benefit from a well-located, well-resourced single site which retains capacity to meet any future needs as they arise. The single site offers more effective use of resources, and reduces duplication and travel costs.
- 5.8 Following consideration by the Committee, if the recommendation is agreed, the following timeline will be followed as required by the legislation.
 - The recommendation of the Committee will be considered by the full Highland Council.
 - If ratified by full Council, the Council must, within 6 working days of the Committee decision, 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 or not they will issue a call-in notice.

6. Implementation and Funding

- 6.1 Members will be aware that a new Tain 3-18 Campus was one of 11 priorities agreed by the Council in March 2018, which were to be the subject of bids to Scottish Government for funding.
- 6.2 The reports to June Council updated members on the capital programme, and the actions being taken in relation to achieving 'bid ready' status for those priorities, with the conclusion of this Statutory Consultation process a key milestone in relation to 'bid ready' status for the Tain Campus.
- 6.3 Implementation of the new campus accommodation is clearly predicated on the actions being taken forward as part of the wider refresh of the capital programme, and in preparedness for bidding to Scottish Government for Learning Estate investment. Given the affordability challenge facing the Tain Campus, and other currently unfunded priorities, the consultation report for Tain does refer to the potential for a phased approach to construction of a new campus building, recognising this may need consideration, subject to affordability being clarified.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 12 August 2019

Author: Ian Jackson, Education Officer

Background Papers: Review of Consultation Report and appendices; original Proposal Paper and appendices