

Agenda Item	4
Report No	CC/13/23

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee: Caithness Committee**

**Date: 29 May 2023**

**Report Title: Thurso High School Update**

**Report By: Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property**

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is to provide Members with an update on the current position at Thurso High School following the discovery of structural defects in Block A in October 2022.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and **AGREE** Option 1 as the recommended and preferred option for Thurso High School.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** Capital funding for the recommended option will need to be considered as part of the review of the capital programme that is underway.
- 3.2 **Legal:** There are no implications to note.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** There are no implications to note.
- 3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** There are no implications to note at this stage, but this will be kept under consideration as the proposals are developed.
- 3.5 **Risk:** All risk issues have been identified but will need to be kept under regular review.
- 3.6 **Gaelic:** There are no implications to note.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1 Following the discovery of significant structural defects to Block A at Thurso High School in October 2022, the block has been taken out of use and remains closed to all staff and pupils. Temporary modular accommodation was installed in December 2022.
- 4.2 The Housing & Property Committee approved a recommendation in January to install 8 modular classrooms to replace the accommodation that cannot be accessed. The units are being fabricated and are programmed to be ready for occupation in October. The tender for the overall project has been received and the contract is in the process of being awarded.
- 4.3 Fairhurst were instructed by The Highland Council to undertake a high level investigation of the options for the block and outline the work involved, the structural implications and the approximate cost of each option for appraisal and comparison purposes.

## **5. Thurso High School Options**

### **5.1 Options Considered**

Option 1 - Demolition of the block and make good the site and adjoining blocks.

Option 2 - Structural remedial works and refurbishment so the block can be brought back into use.

Option 3 - 'Mothballing' the block in its current state to allow demolition or remedial works to be undertaken at a later date.

Option 4 - Demolish and rebuild the block.

### **5.2 Summary of Options**

Option 1 – Demolition: The modular classroom accommodation would have to be retained on site.

Option 2 – Structural Remedial Works and Refurbishment: This would be the riskiest option from a financial and Health & Safety perspective. There are many uncertainties associated with this option and firm costs would be difficult to establish before commencing work, with a high potential for additional works being added to the project once works are underway on site. This does have the advantage of reinstating the net educational area of Block A; however, the introduction of internal columns would reduce some of the useable internal areas.

Option 3 – Mothballing: The costs associated with this option are significantly less than any of the other options, but the block would continue to deteriorate in the meantime.

Option 4 – Demolish and Re-Build: This would be the highest cost option.

### **5.3 Indicative Costs of Options**

The following are the indicative costs provided for each option.

- Option 1 – Demolition: £1.2M

- Option 2 – Structural Remedial Works and Refurbishment: £6.2M
- Option 3 – Mothballing: £50K of initial costs and then ongoing revenue costs of £1K to £2K per annum.
- Option 4 – Demolish and Re-Build: £7.5M

#### 5.4 Summary

It is our view at this stage that the remedial works required to Block A to bring it back into use (Option 2) would not represent value for money, given the extent and cost of the work required and the limited remaining life of some of the other buildings on the campus.

Mothballing (Option 3) would be an interim measure, and the block would deteriorate further if left unoccupied for a significant period. There may also be an increased risk of sudden failure.

Option 4 – Given the relatively high cost of this option, and the condition and risk management challenges associated with the remaining buildings on the campus, this would not be the best value option if a completely new build to replace all the buildings was considered to be the preferred long-term solution. A masterplan to look at the longer term campus options will be developed.

As a result, Option 1 is recommended as the preferred option but further engagement with Members is proposed to discuss all the options identified.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property

Date: 26 May 2023

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