

ANGUS COUNCIL

ANGUS COUNCIL-10 MAY 2018

**ANGUS SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE
PROPOSALS FOR RURAL SCHOOLS IN BRECHIN CLUSTER**

REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

The report provides an update on the current consultation on the proposed closures of Lethnot, Tarfside and Stracathro Primary Schools and the adjustment to the catchment area for Edzell Primary School highlighting the council's work to actively engage with stakeholders, listen to and respond to their views. In response to the feedback received the report recommends that the consultation to close Stracathro Primary School is stopped.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) Note the contents of this report and the comprehensive consultation process that has been undertaken as detailed in section 4.
- (ii) Agree to stop the current formal consultation on the proposed closure of Stracathro Primary School and its early learning and childcare provision.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

This Angus Schools for the Future programme contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017-2022:

- The best start in life for children
- More opportunities for people to achieve success
- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and well-being
- A reduced carbon footprint
- An enhanced, protected and enjoyed natural and built environment

And the following Council Plan priorities:

- We want to maximise inclusion and reduce inequalities;
- We want our communities to be strong, resilient and led by citizens.
- We want Angus Council to be efficient and effective

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 13 June 2017 Children and Learning Committee approved the School Investment Strategy (report 189/17) which set out the long term vision for our learning estate to ensure that the educational needs of all our children are met in the best learning environments possible whilst making the best use of the resources available.
- 3.2 The committee approved Angus Council's vision to develop and maintain a learning estate that provides the best quality learning environments for all of our children and young people. This is underpinned by our statement of ambition and our guiding principles of: equity of access, nurture and inclusion; sustainability and value for money; community; well-maintained, flexible spaces; transparency and fairness in decision-making.

- 3.3 On 30 January 2018, Angus Council approved report 36/18 "School Investment Strategy 2017-2047" setting out proposals for addressing the needs in Angus schools over a 30-year period and detailing the consultation programme for 2018.
- 3.4 The strategic rationale for the Schools for the Future programme is summarised by the following ten reasons for change:-
1. We need to give all of our children and young people the same access to opportunities.
 2. Some of our schools can't provide the best learning environment.
 3. Some are too full and some are too empty.
 4. Overall we have too many places for the number of children and young people in the county.
 5. Some schools don't offer opportunities to learn with children of similar age or stage.
 6. Some can't access good quality digital learning.
 7. Some buildings aren't environmentally sustainable.
 8. Overall our current school estate does not provide best value.
 9. We need the right spaces in the right places to deliver learning for all of our 2-18 year olds.
 10. Angus Council is taking significant steps to be a better, more sustainable and smaller organisation and that applies to our school estate just as it does to all of our services.
- 3.5 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 details the requirements when considering proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools. The consultation process should be robust, open, transparent and fair. The Act makes special provision in relation to rural schools. As a result there are more requirements when considering the future of rural schools.
- 3.6 A comprehensive pre-consultation exercise was undertaken across Angus during November 2017. The feedback and findings of this pre-consultation exercise were reported to Council on 30 January 2018 within report 36/18.
- 3.7 On 20 February 2018, Angus Council approved report 68/18 and authorised formal consultations relating to the closures of Lethnot, Tarfside and Stracathro Primary Schools and adjustment to the catchment area for Edzell Primary School. All three schools proposed for closure are classified as rural schools.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 These three formal consultations commenced on 26 February 2018 and are scheduled to conclude on 11 May 2018.
- 4.2 The consultation process has engaged the local communities and there has been particular interest and engagement from the Stracathro community and the parents and carers of children currently attending this school.
- 4.3 A number of engagement events have been held. This has included; engagement with staff and children at both Edzell and Stracathro Primary Schools, an event in each of the four school communities, and an additional public meeting following a formal request from our communities. This additional meeting took place on 17 April 2018 and was chaired by Cllr. Salmond, Convenor of Children and Learning Committee.
- 4.4 In addition to the consultations on closure, engagement has been progressed with the Edzell Primary School community for the expansion and redevelopment of the current school building to: improve that school in accordance with the aspirations of Angus Schools for the Future; accommodate the planned expansion in early years; and address projected increases in the primary school roll.
- 4.5 As stated at council meetings and as set out in the consultation processes, council officers have aimed to conduct all such interactions with stakeholders in an open and transparent manner, listening to feedback, taking on board comments and responding to questions and requests for information.
- 4.6 Throughout the process, consultation comments that have been received have been made available to the public through the council's website.

- 4.6 Elected members have attended all public consultation events and have listened carefully to the points being made in response to the consultation proposals.
- 4.7 Over the course of the consultation, in response to feedback, amendments have been made to the consultation website and the consultation documents. Where appropriate, the consultation period has been extended to ensure consultees have sufficient time to consider changes and any additional information provided. These adjustments have all enhanced the consultation process.
- 4.8 Recommendation (ii) demonstrates that the council has been listening to the concerns of the communities and that it is serious in its aspirations to engage in clear and transparent processes and that, within the policy and financial constraints affecting it, will be responsive to the needs of our citizens and communities.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Having listened carefully to the feedback and comments received, particularly in relation to parents and carers of children presently attending the schools, it is proposed to stop the current formal consultation on the closure of Stracathro Primary School and its early learning and childcare provision.
- 5.2 Recommendations (ii), (iii) and (v) regarding the proposals for Lethnot, Tarfside and Edzell in report 68/18 will continue to be progressed.
- 5.3 Given the dynamic nature of our school population, as agreed in report 36/18, the 30 year programme will be reviewed, updated and presented to the Children and Learning Committee by September 2020.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations within this report.

7. CONSULTATION

In addition to the consultation activity described above, we have liaised with Education Scotland in preparing this report.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Report 189/17, School Investment Strategy
- Report 36/18, School Investment Strategy 2017 - 2047
- Report 68/18, Angus Schools for the Future, Consultation Proposals for Rural Schools in Brechin Cluster

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List of Appendices: