

ANGUS COUNCIL

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2018
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**CLOSURE OF TARFSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND AMENDMENT OF THE CATCHMENT AREA
OF EDZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval to close Tarfside Primary School, and amend the catchment of Edzell Primary School to take in the current catchment of Tarfside Primary School.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) approve the closure of Tarfside Primary School, Tarfside, Glenesk, Brechin DD9 7YU; and amend the catchment area of the current Edzell Primary School, to include the catchment area of Tarfside Primary School;
- (ii) refer this decision to Scottish Ministers in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

It is recommended that Angus Council:

- (i) notes the consideration of the Children and Learning Committee on 18 September 2018;
- (ii) approve the closure of Tarfside Primary School, Tarfside, Glenesk, Brechin DD9 7YU; and amend the catchment area of the current Edzell Primary School, to include the catchment area of Tarfside Primary School;
- (iii) refer this decision to Scottish Ministers in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plans:

PEOPLE

- 4. The best start in life for children
- 5. More opportunities for people to achieve success
- 6. Improved physical, mental and emotional health and well-being

PLACE

- 7. Safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable communities
- 8. A reduced carbon footprint

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In June 2017 Angus Council set out the vision to develop and maintain a learning estate that provides the best quality learning environments for all of our children and young people, and makes the best use of the resources available, reference is made to Paragraph 11 of the minute of meeting of the Children and Learning Committee of 13 June 2017. This is underpinned by our statement of ambition and our guiding principles of:
- equity of access, nurture and inclusion - all children and young people have opportunities to experience different types of learning and teaching in an environment that feels safe and welcoming
 - sustainability and value for money - we have a learning estate that we can afford and which makes the most effective use of natural resources
 - community - where possible, and as relevant, schools are an integral part of the community they serve. This will depend upon the needs and circumstances of the individual community and the school
 - well-maintained, flexible spaces - we will make the best of the buildings we have, including natural light, green spaces, flexible and responsive
 - transparency and fairness in decision-making - our decisions will be made taking a long-term strategic view and supported by good quality information.
- 3.2 The Children and Learning Committee and Angus Council approved the approach taken to ranking and prioritising the School Investment Strategy; the consultation programme for 2018; and requested that consultation proposals for Lethnot, Tarfside, Edzell and Stracathro primary schools were presented for consideration on 20 February 2018. Reference is made to paragraph 4 of the minute of the meeting of the Children and Learning Committee on 30 January 2018 and paragraph 3 of the minute of the special meeting of Angus Council on 30 January 2018.
- 3.3 Reference is also made to paragraph 6 of the minute of the Children and Learning Committee on 20 February 2018 which approved the consultation proposal for the closure of Tarfside Primary School and adjustment to catchment area for Edzell Primary School.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Tarfside is a remote rural school as defined by the Scottish Government under section 14 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The school roll has fallen steadily from a peak of 14 children in 2009 to zero in August 2017. There have been no children attending the school or nursery since June 2017.
- 4.2 Forecasting school rolls is not an exact science, and people with children could move in to or out of catchment. Based on data from NHS Tayside, projected birth rates across Scotland and average net primary one placing requests over the last three academic years, the roll could increase to three by 2023. This does not include the impact of any new families moving into or out of catchment and could therefore be subject to variance. The projected roll is as follows:-

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School Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Possible Primary 1 Pupils	0	0	1	0	1	1
Estimated Pupils from new Housing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Placing requests	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estimated School Roll	BLANK	BLANK	BLANK	BLANK	BLANK	BLANK
Primary 1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Primary 2	0	0	0	1	0	1
Primary 3	0	0	0	0	1	0
Primary 4	0	0	0	0	0	1
Primary 5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Primary 6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Primary 7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Projected School Roll	0	0	1	1	2	3

- 4.3 The consultation period ran from 26 February 2018 until 11 May 2018. Education Scotland undertook a review of the consultation to provide independent and impartial consideration of Angus Council's proposal to close Tarfside Primary School and to amend the Edzell Primary School catchment area. Their report forms part of the [Tarfside Primary School Consultation Report](#) which is included at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.4 The following is an extract from the Education Scotland Report,
- “Angus Council’s proposal to close Tarfside Primary School and to amend the Edzell Primary School catchment area has clear educational benefits. Tarfside children will have access to greater learning opportunities, wider experiences and increased socialisation through being part of the larger school at Edzell. Tarfside Primary School has not been in use since 2017. As a result of placing requests, children from the Tarfside catchment area are already attending Edzell Primary School and Stracathro Primary School. The number of children within the catchment who are currently under three years of age is insufficient to make the school viable. The proposal will assist the council to deliver ‘Best Value’ through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. In taking forward the proposal, the council should work with parents to clarify the proposed savings in relation to staffing and transport costs and how the vacant school might best be used to the benefit of the local Tarfside community. The council should also clearly set out its travel plans for affected children.”*
- 4.5 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Tarfside Primary School Consultation report was issued on 1 August 2018 and comments were invited from consultees by 22 August 2018.
- 4.6 During the period to 22 August 2018 eight submissions were received. The submissions have been reproduced at Appendix 2. Names and contact addresses have been redacted.
- 4.7 The main themes arising are: -
- The prospect of more children being born or moving into the area;
 - Diminished community spirit and community facilities
 - Possible impact on attracting new residents to the glen.
- 4.8 The following alternatives have been proposed: -
- Mothball the school rather than closing it in case there are more children;
 - Offer places at Tarfside to parents of children attending Edzell Primary or other schools
 - Open the school for a parent/toddler group until the children are old enough to attend school.

- 4.9 In response to the proposed alternatives, it has been identified in the comments received that the number of children in the glen who are under 3 years of age has risen to 5. This is not information that the Council currently has access to. The ages range from new-borns to 3 year olds. Based on information supplied in the comments there would be no children of school age until 2020. There is no guarantee that parents will stay in the glen or choose to send their children to Tarfside Primary School if it was open.
- 4.10 A school with 5 children would not bring the benefits identified by Education Scotland in 4.4 above.
- 4.11 Parents can request to send their children to a school that is not their designated school as a placing request. There have been no placing requests for Tarfside in the past 10 years. This would indicate that it is unlikely that parents from Edzell would wish to send their children to Tarfside.
- 4.12 Angus Council would be happy to work with Dalhousie Estate and the local community to help them establish a parent toddler group in the building if the school is closed.
- 4.13 As well as the comments received which are included in Appendix 2 one included a paper in relation to the original proposal document. Consultation on the proposal took place from 26 February 2018 to 11 May 2018. In line with Scottish Government Guidance (the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010) we reviewed the proposal in light of the written and oral representations received and HM Inspector's report. We then prepared and published the consultation report. The paper received was out with the period for making this kind of representation. We have included the paper and a response at Appendix 3 for information.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Our proposal, which has been subject to the statutory consultation process, is to close Tarfside Primary School, Tarfside, Glenesk, Brechin DD9 7YU; and amend the catchment area of the current Edzell Primary School, to include the catchment area of Tarfside Primary school.
- 5.2 We have been in contact with parents to clarify the savings identified in staff and transport costs and also the travel plan for affected children. If this proposal is approved, the Council will enter into discussions with Dalhousie Estate and the local community regarding future use of the school building.
- 5.3 Angus Council must refer the decision to close the school to the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of making the decision, and at the same time publish the fact that the decision has been taken and referred to the Scottish Ministers and advising interested parties of the opportunity to make representations to the Scottish Ministers during the three week period from the date that the decision is taken. The Scottish Ministers can call in the decision to close the school within a period of 8 weeks from the date of the decision. The proposal cannot be implemented in full or in part until the call in period has expired or the Scottish Ministers have confirmed that they do not intend to call in the proposal. If the proposal is called in by Ministers, consent must be granted by the School Closure Review Panels.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As the school has had no children since June 2017, the last time the budget was prepared was in 2017/18. This budget remains within the overall schools and learning budget and is made up as follows: -

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Budget Heading	£
Staff Costs	107,157
Property Costs	11,899
Supplies & Services	7,886
Transport Costs	20,790
Gross Budget	147,732
Less Income for sale of meals	(797)

Net Budget	146,935
Less Pupil Transport costs required for children attending Edzell Primary School	(20,704)
Total recurring saving	126,231

- 6.2 The annual recurring revenue savings are estimated to be £126,231.
- 6.3 The government grant provision to Angus Council is determined by a number of Grant Aided Expenditure assessments and two of these are relevant to school closures:-
- Primary School Teaching assessment: includes a secondary indicator based upon the number of pupils in small schools on an average of the last 2 census. Tarfside is a small school for the purposes of this secondary indicator. As the school had zero pupils for the purposes of the 2017 census onwards, the grant benefit was already making its way out of the assessment mechanism. The impact for 2019/20 will be a further loss of government grant of £5k. However, this grant loss will take place whether the school closes or not due to there currently being zero pupils.
 - School Security assessment: is based upon the total number of establishments in Angus. The closure of Tarfside will result in a loss of government grant for 2019/20 of £2,000.
- 6.4 Note that any grant reduction arising from the school closure will be addressed through the Council's overall 2019/20 budget setting arrangements and will not have any specific impact onto the Schools and Learning budget.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The consultation for the proposed closure of Tarfside Primary School was carried out in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, including the special provisions which apply to rural schools. The formal consultation initially ran from 26 February 2018 until 20 April 2018. Due to severe weather conditions in March the consultation period was extended to 27 April 2018. On 13 April 2018 an omission from the consultation document was identified. The omission related to narrative explaining our financial information. As a result the consultation period was further extended until 11 May 2018.
- 7.2 During the consultation period responses in relation to the proposal to close Tarfside Primary School were received as follows:
- 1 parent of a child of primary school age
 - 2 other responses were received
 - 2 on-line surveys were completed
- 7.3 Children at Edzell Primary School, including those from the Tarfside catchment area who met with HM Inspectors recognised the reduction in numbers made Tarfside Primary School unviable. As a result they supported the proposed closure of Tarfside Primary School. They felt Edzell Primary School better met their needs.
- 7.4 Staff from Edzell Primary School who met with HM Inspectors, whilst sad about the potential loss of the school to the Tarfside community as a whole, were positive about the prospect of formalising the current arrangement whereby Tarfside children attend Edzell Primary School. They were able to clearly articulate the benefits of Tarfside children attending Edzell Primary School. Benefits included: improved interaction, better socialisation and increased opportunities to participate in peer group activities at the appropriate level. Staff saw no negative impact on Edzell Primary School arising from the proposal.
- 7.5 Both on-line surveys completed were against the proposal to close Tarfside Primary School.
- 7.6 Details of the consultation process and all responses received are included in the [Tarfside Primary School Consultation Report](#) which is included **at Appendix 1**.

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:

- Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- Statutory Guidance for the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- Committee Report No.189/17, School Investment Strategy
- Committee Report No. 36/18, School Investment strategy 2017 – 2047
- Committee Report No. 68/18, Angus Schools for the Future: Consultation Proposals for Rural Schools in Brechin Cluster

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 [Tarside Primary School Consultation Report](#) (please follow this link for Appendix 1)
Appendix 2 Comments Received
Appendix 3 Tarside Consultation Paper Comments and Response