

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2015**

**PREPARATION OF A SCHOOL INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR ANGUS**

**REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR**

**ABSTRACT**

This report proposes the development of a school investment strategy for Angus which will set out a long-term framework for improving the school estate.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee approves the preparation of a long-term School Investment Strategy with regular updates being provided to Committee.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

Communities that are learning and supportive

Communities that are safe and strong

Communities that are sustainable

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Scottish Government, in the publication Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future, states "Our vision is for schools which signal the high value we place on learning; which people and communities can enjoy using and can be proud; which are well designed, maintained and managed and which encourage continuous engagement with learning; which are far more than just 'educational establishments' whose quality of environment supports an accessible range of services and opportunities and which enrich the communities they serve and the lives of learners and families." The document further develops this vision as follows: -

- All children and young people will be educated in, and community users able use, schools that are 'fit for purpose' in terms of condition, suitability and sufficiency;
- Schools are well-designed, accessible, inclusive learning environments that inspire and drive new thinking and change and which support the delivery of high quality educational experiences through Curriculum for Excellence;
- Schools are integral parts of the communities they serve, with pupils making use of community facilities and communities accessing school facilities;
- Schools accommodate and provide a range of services, activities and facilities that make a difference to people's health and wellbeing, to sustaining economic growth and to the strength and vibrancy of communities;
- A sustainable school estate whose design, construction and operation is environmentally and energy efficient; contributes directly to delivering the year-on-year reductions in greenhouse gas emissions introduced by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, which is resilient to the impact of climate change and which leads by example in matters of environmental performance;
- A school estate that is efficiently run and maximises value for money;
- A school estate which is flexible and responsive – both to changes in demand for school places and to learners' and teachers' requirements and wishes, and where the beneficial impact of change is maximised by thorough consultation and engagement with users and stakeholders.

- 3.2 In Scotland, local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure the adequate and efficient provision of school education in their area. In that context, they may undertake reorganisation of their school estate at any time. It is recognised that the need for school closures (sometimes referred to as rationalisation), amalgamations or altering catchment areas can be prompted by changing population patterns and the need to provide suitable school buildings for pupils and teachers.
- 3.3 If a local authority proposes to change any part of the existing education provision in their area, they must engage in a formal consultation process.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 There are currently 53 primary schools, of which 50 contain a pre-school provision, and 8 secondary schools in Angus. Schools are assessed for suitability and condition on an annual basis and this is submitted to the Scottish Government.
- 4.2 Based on the September 2014 census the overall occupancy rate across Angus schools was just under 74%. Closer examination however, shows that some of our schools are very under-occupied, whilst others are at or close to capacity. Reference is made to Committee Report 141/15 where 7 of our primary schools had to be capped due to the number of children.
- 4.3 There are a number of proposed housing developments which could also impact on the occupancy levels of our schools, for example at Monifieth, Strathmartine and Forfar.
- 4.4 National policy in relation to pre-school has and will continue to impact our schools, as we create additional facilities for pre-school children.
- 4.5 In recent years Angus Council has invested significantly in the school estate, including the replacements of Forfar Academy and Brechin High School the Arbroath schools project and Seaview Primary School.
- 4.6 In keeping with the philosophy of Transforming Angus it would seem appropriate at this time to develop a school investment strategy to provide a comprehensive, strategic framework for the future of the school estate ensuring that we meet the educational needs of all of our children and make best use of our resources.

#### **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 The initial stages of developing the school investment strategy will be largely technical in nature. As the preparation of the strategy progresses, we will consult with parents, communities and partners. A project team will oversee this piece of work, with regular updates being provided to the Transforming Angus Board, and Children and Learning Committee.
- 5.2 In carrying out the review the guiding principles will be that: -
- the child is at the centre of our strategy
  - our strategy will be predicated on educational gain, and
  - schools are fit to deliver the curriculum for excellence, or the prevailing educational drivers at the time.
- 5.3 The strategy will be developed to identify future demands on the school estate. It will take account of demographics, the impact of policy developments e.g. 600 hours pre-school education, and planned housing developments. We will also take account of the scarcity of resources available and how we best use them to maximise attainment and achievement, and the experience of children and young people in our schools.

- 5.4 We will develop standards for the Directorate including how we respond to curriculum needs, community campuses, possibility of 3 – 18 schools, ASN provision, vocational education, planned maintenance standards etc. In developing these standards we will take account of relevant legislation and government guidance, as well as seeking out areas of best practice.
- 5.5 We will develop a long term strategy of approximately 30 years duration which will be very high level but which will identify our key aspirations including school replacement strategy, whether schools should always be community resources, whether school design should always enable ready expansion etc.
- 5.6 We will also produce a medium term strategy of approximately 10 – 15 years duration. This will fall within the overarching principles outlined in our long term strategy, and will include the development of outline plans for each school which can be readily adapted should expansion be required and funding identified. This plan will include a prioritisation of the possible school developments.
- 5.7 The final element will be a short term plan which will include funded projects and will inform the capital plan.
- 5.8 It is proposed that the review will report in Autumn 2017, and will take account of Guidance issued by Scottish Government and relevant legislation including the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 5.9 When completed, the strategy will be refreshed every two years.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no additional financial implications of carrying out this work as it will be contained within existing resources. It is the intention, however, that one of the outputs from this work will be a school investment strategy which will identify both investment requirements over the medium term. It is not possible to quantify the level of resource likely to be required at this time.

**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:

- Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future
- Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Statutory Guidance Revised May 2015
- Committee Report 141/15 Primary School Capacities

**REPORT AUTHOR: Elaine Hughes, Service Manager Performance**  
**EMAIL DETAILS: PEOPLE@angus.gov.uk**