

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 24 FEBRUARY 2015

PRIMARY SCHOOL CAPACITIES

REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR, PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report highlights the need to review Angus Council's approach to determining primary school capacities in line with recently published guidance from the Scottish Government. In addition, the report seeks elected member agreement to the principles of roll capping and determining reserved places in primary schools.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Agree for work to be conducted on refreshing Angus Council's approach to determining school capacity in line with recently published Scottish Government Guidance
- (ii) Request a future report on the application of this methodology across all Angus primary schools
- (iii) Approve the principle of reserved places within schools which have classrooms with a limited number of spaces at specific stages for Session 2015/16.
- (iv) Request the Head of Schools and Learning to present these numbers annually to reflect historical/anticipated changes such as patterns of migration, residential development and movement of families in/out of areas and any changes to school zones.
- (v) Agree in principle to roll capping specific schools with reports on individual proposals being brought to Committee as appropriate

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

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

Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens

3. BACKGROUND

The Scottish Government published guidance entitled "Determining Primary School Capacity" in October 2014 (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0046/00461513.pdf>). The purpose of the guidance is to provide advice to Local Authorities on the determination of "School Capacity" with the aim to provide a more consistent approach to calculating the capacity of schools across the country. Whilst this guidance is intended to be flexible to allow local authorities to respond to their differing contexts, it sets out a recommended method of calculating primary school capacity which Local Authorities should endeavour to follow as far as possible. It remains a Local Authority responsibility to choose how they calculate school capacity in their areas.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Council's policy is to encourage parents to enrol their children in their local school but otherwise to agree to all Placing Requests wherever possible.
- 4.2 Owing to a range of factors, certain primary schools in Angus are nearing or exceeding their capacities based on the current method of calculating school capacity. Increasing demand for places in certain primary schools has resulted in a small number of instances where roll capping may now be required to ensure that sufficient classroom space remains available. Roll capping would define the maximum number of classes and therefore roll that a particular school could have. Current practice in relation to calculating primary school capacities has been in place for some time and requires updating.
- 4.3 Reserved places refer to the number of places, in the opinion of the People Directorate, which are reasonably required to accommodate pupils likely to become resident in the catchment area of a school during the period of considering placing requests and during the school year. This allows the People Directorate to calculate and retain a certain number of places for children from families likely to move into the catchment area of schools which have classrooms with a limited number of places in some or all stages. The legislation permits the education authority the right to refuse some or all placing requests made for a particular school on the grounds that places have to be kept for children who may become resident in the catchment area during the year. Places are reserved to try to accommodate these children, where possible in their catchment school, allowing the People Directorate to take positive steps to protect places in schools for catchment pupils.
- 4.4 The introduction of reserved places initially applied only to situations where no equivalent school was available within walking distance in terms of the amendments made to the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 by the Education (Scotland) Act 1996. Section 44 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 amended the legislation further, and an education authority now has discretion to determine reserved places whether or not there is an equivalent school nearby.
- 4.5 At present, primary school classes in Angus have the maximum number of pupils per class:
- P1 25 pupils
 - P2 30 pupils
 - P3 30 pupils
 - P4 33 pupils
 - P5 33 pupils
 - P6 33 pupils
 - P7 33 pupils
- The maximum number of pupils for a composite class is 25 pupils.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 School Capacities

Instead of the "blanket" approach to calculating primary school capacity currently in place in Angus, it is proposed that each primary school's capacity is assessed on its own merits, dependent upon its designs, core facilities and the effective delivery of the 21st Century Curriculum. The proposed capacity profile for each primary school will show the maximum number of pupils which can be accommodated in each defined classroom area, the number of rooms and a capacity based on core facilities. Factors impacting on capacity will be identified. These will be shown on the individual profile for each school as either limiting or meeting requirements.

5.2 Roll Capping

It is proposed that all classes in schools where school rolls are reaching or over capacity are limited so that the optimum number of classes within these schools is not exceeded. This will ensure that, as far as possible, places remain at these schools for pupils zoned for these establishments. This may mean however that in-zone pupils cannot attend their zoned school and may, therefore, have to be transported to another establishment. Capping schools will be

done on an individual basis with reports outlining the reasons for this being presented to Committee for comment. Capping at these schools will be reviewed on an annual basis.

5.3 **Reserved Places**

It is proposed that two spaces per primary stage are kept as reserved places for pupils moving into a school zone. It is proposed that the reserved places for each stage within each school required for Session 2015/16 will be presented at a future Committee. These will be published on the Angus Council Website to allow parents/carers to see clearly how reserved places are being held at each/any stage in the school each session. It is proposed to use the following criteria to determine the number of reserved places within Angus primary schools:

1. Identify schools which have classes with a limited number of spaces at specific stages.
2. That the process for reaching the decision on the number of reserved places per class/stage/school is open, transparent and fair particularly as parents/carers can appeal to a Placing Request Appeals Committee and thereafter to the Sheriff Court.

Council Officers and Head Teachers will be consulted as part of the buildings assessment process. It is anticipated that the proposed revisiting and clarification of reserved places in primary schools will require a period of adjustment and careful monitoring by Head Teachers and officers.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Potential financial implications for the above proposals are unknown at this stage and will be fully explored as part of the review.

7. **HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Human Rights implications arising from the consideration of this report.

8. **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The issues contained in this report do not fall within an approved category that has been confirmed as exempt from an equalities perspective.

The following background paper was relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report:
Determining Primary School Capacity, Guidance 24 October, 2014.
(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0046/00461513.pdf>)

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