

ANGUS COUNCIL

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 29 JANUARY 2019
ANGUS COUNCIL – 7 FEBRUARY 2019**

CONSULTATION REPORT ON STRACATHRO PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks final endorsement of the decision not to close Stracathro Primary School and amend the catchment area of Edzell Primary School.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) Notes that Angus Council will formalise the decision taken on 10 May 2018 not to close Stracathro Primary School.

It is recommended that Angus Council:

- (i) notes the consideration of the Children and Learning Committee on 29 January 2019;
- (ii) formalise the decision taken by Angus Council on 10 May 2018 not to close Stracathro Primary School, and
- (iii) notify 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 in accordance with 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. 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.

3.3 On 10 May 2018 Angus Council agreed to stop the formal consultation on the proposed closure of Stracathro Primary School and its Early Learning and Child Care provision and noted that a consultation report would be produced and submitted to a future meeting of the Children and Learning Committee and full council. Paragraph 4 of the minute of Angus Council on 10 May 2018 refers.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Stracathro 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 30 children in 2008 to 16 in September 2018.

4.2 The consultation period was scheduled to run from 26 February 2018 until 11 May 2018, although on 10 May 2018 Angus Council agreed to stop the consultation and produce a consultation report in accordance with section 9 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

4.3 The feedback obtained during the consultation period helped to inform the Council's decision not to proceed with the proposed closure of Stracathro Primary School. Section 2A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 allows for such a decision to be made following the publication of a consultation report. Accordingly, the [Stracathro Primary School Consultation Report](#) which is included **at Appendix 1** has been prepared to enable the council to formalise the decision not to close Stracathro (sections 9 and 11 of the said Act).

4.4 Education Scotland undertook a review of the consultation to provide independent and impartial consideration of Angus Council's proposal to close Stracathro Primary School and to amend the Edzell Primary School catchment area. Their report forms part of the [Stracathro Primary School Consultation Report](#) which is included **at Appendix 1**.

4.5 The following is an extract from the Education Scotland report,

“Stracathro Primary School is valued highly by the local community. There may be potential educational benefits for learners from a modern, purpose designed learning environment with appropriate facilities, including improved accessibility. However, based on the information available, the council fails to make a compelling case as to the educational benefits of closing Stracathro Primary School and moving children to Edzell Primary School. The financial case is insufficiently clear to provide assurance to the public that closure would make a significant contribution to Best Value. HM Inspectors note that Angus Council made a decision at their

council meeting on 10 May 2018 to stop the current consultation on the closure of Stracathro. In these circumstances, having been notified during the consultation period of omissions and within the context of significant local opposition to the proposal, Angus Council should consider carefully its options in how it frames its final report to elected members and the community in light of its obligations under the 2010 Act.”

4.6 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Stracathro Primary School Consultation report was issued on 26 October 2018 and comments were invited from consultees by 19 November 2018.

4.7 During the period to 19 November 2018 no submissions were received.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 It is proposed to formalise the decision originally taken in May 2018, not to close Stracathro Primary School including its Early Learning provision at this time.

5.2 It is also proposed to notify Scottish Ministers in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

5.3 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (section 2A (3) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010) introduced a 5 year moratorium on consulting on a closure proposal after a decision is made not to implement a closure proposal. This means that the Education Authority may not publish a proposal paper concerning a further closure proposal in relation to the school during the period of 5 years beginning with the day on which the decision is made unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances. The moratorium would begin on Thursday 07 February 2019.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The consultation for the proposed closure of Stracathro 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 On 10 May 2018, however, Angus Council decided to cease the consultation on the closure of Stracathro Primary School and its Early Years provision.

7.3 Details of the consultation process and all responses received are included in the [Stracathro 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 [Stracathro Primary School Consultation Report](#)