

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE - 1 JUNE 2023

ANGUS LEARNING ESTATE UPDATE

REPORT BY KELLY MCINTOSH, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This report provides the Children and Learning Committee with an update on the Angus Council Schools for the Future Programme.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) Approves the delegation of authority to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to make minor updates to the School Investment Strategy document;
- (ii) Approves the proposed framework for management of the Angus learning estate, including the Mothballing Policy available at Appendix 2.
- (iii) Approves the removal of the Arbroath Secondary Schools and Reimagining Montrose projects from the Angus Schools for the Future Programme.
- (iv) Approves the proposal paper at Appendix 3 and agrees that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning undertakes a statutory consultation in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 in relation to changes in Early Learning and Childcare provision at the Abbey View Campus.
- (v) Agrees that the outcome of the statutory consultation outlined in recommendation (iv) will be reverted to Children and Learning Committee for their consideration and decision.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

Council Plan 2023-28

- People – support children, young people and adults to access appropriate opportunities which allow them to progress in their learning;
- Place – take action to mitigate against climate change by delivering our Transition to Net Zero Action Plan: 2022 to 2030 and leading on the delivery of a Sustainable Energy Climate Action Plan (SECAP) for Angus to reduce area wide emissions

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In June 2017 Children and Learning Committee approved [Report 189/17](#), formally establishing a School Investment Strategy for Angus Council. The Strategy described the context for development and identified five high-level principles for management of the learning estate.
- 3.2 In January 2018 Angus Council approved [Report 36/18](#) – The School Investment Strategy 2017-2047, which set out proposals for addressing the needs of Angus schools over a 30 year period. Projects were identified for delivery across several phases, with the approach to prioritisation approved by elected members. Report 36/18 also committed to a full review of the Schools for the Future Programme in 2020. Due to the pandemic this was not progressed, although it is noted that there have been specific updates in relation to Phase 2 projects.

In December 2020 Angus Council noted the conclusion of Phase 1, the Brechin Rural Schools Project ([Report 329/20](#) refers). The same report also approved the identification of a replacement Monifieth High School as the Council's Phase 2 priority project for the Angus Learning Estate. Work is progressing in relation to this project, with the new Monifieth Learning Campus scheduled to open in August 2025.

- 3.3 As recommended in Report 329/20, elected members also approved changes to the scope and timing of the other major proposed projects in Phase 2, relating to Arbroath's secondary schools and the wider Montrose learning estate.
- 3.4 As outlined in [Report 152/22](#) the proposed construction of a replacement high school in Monifieth sits within the context of significant financial risk and uncertainty for Angus Council. The costs associated with the project have increased due to a combination of factors including inflation, the effect of Brexit on material importing costs, the impacts of the war in Ukraine and continuing post-Covid effects on material availability. A funding package arising from the £10.5m increase to costs was approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 02 May 2023 ([Report 116/23](#) refers). The funding package includes the transfer of all remaining uncommitted capital funding associated with the Angus Schools for the Future Programme.
- 3.5 This report presents elected members with a full update on the Angus Schools for the Future Programme (ASfF), taking account of the latest available data and with reference to pressures arising from external factors out with our control.

4. CURRENT POSITION

School Investment Strategy

- 4.1 The overarching strategy document was agreed in June 2017. Its content has been reviewed by officers in relevant services to verify its content. The purpose of the document is to set out guiding principles for the learning estate, rather than a detailed plan for investment. The content of the strategy largely remains relevant, with some minor updates required to data and terminology. A proposal to address this is set out in Section 5, below.

Review of Angus Schools for the Future Priority Criteria

- 4.2 Report 36/18, Appendix 1 sets out the criteria used to rank schools and, in turn, prioritise them for review and potential investment. The complex criteria agreed at the time reflects the challenges present across the learning estate at that time including:
- Two mothballed / empty schools (Lethnot and Tarfside)
 - Seven schools with rolls projected to exceed 100% of planning capacity by 2023
 - Schools with a very urgent need for capital investment to support the delivery of 1140hrs of early learning and childcare.
 - The on-going programme to replace some schools in Arbroath.
- 4.3 The data used to inform the ranking process was collated in 2017 and can no longer be relied upon to inform decisions about the learning estate. In addition, the financial position of Angus Council has changed significantly since 2017, necessitating an update to the criteria used to assess the need for, and type of, interventions required for the Angus learning estate in the short term. Paragraphs 4.4 – 4.8 below set out the main criteria previously used and the current position based on data available to the Council.

4.4 Current Learning Estate Capacity

At present Mattocks Primary School is the only setting projected to exceed its capacity in August 2023. As agreed in [Report 127/23](#) (green paper) a temporary modular classroom is being used to address the immediate concerns at Mattocks.

Monifieth High School has historically experienced high demand for places. A cap on the number of S1 students enrolled each year has been in place since 2020 to manage the roll down to an acceptable level. As noted in Section 3, a replacement high school project is underway which will increase capacity to 1200.

A small number of other schools are projected to be operating at over 90% of their capacity from August 2023. For these settings and all other schools capacity concerns are addressed through the careful management of the roll and placing requests within the parameters set out by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Section 28A.

4.5 **Future Learning Estate Capacity**

Long range school roll projections are prepared annually, incorporating trend data relating to local birth rates, nursery enrolments, placing requests and proposed housing developments. Our latest projections cover the period from 2023-29 and a summary is attached at Appendix 1. The summary includes the projected occupancy levels for August 2023 and 2029. It also includes the 'peak' occupancy predicted during the whole period.

The overall trend for the primary-aged population is for rolls to fall by circa 10 percentage points by the end of the projection period. Data available at this time shows that this equates to 547 fewer children. In secondary schools the rolls are projected to increase slightly before decreasing by in the region of circa 4 percentage points by the end of the period. This equates to 250 fewer young people by 2029. It should be noted that roll projections are indicative and subject to change. There will also be variation in the pressures affecting different localities. In Angus, housing development is likely to be the main variable in future years.

The school roll projections indicate that Glamis Primary School, Liff Primary School, Mattocks Primary School, Monifieth High School (until the opening of the new building) and Strathmartine Primary School may experience capacity issues in future years. Further housing development in the Forfar locality could result in increased pressure on primary schools. At present there are no other significant concerns regarding the capacity of our schools to the period to 2029. The Education and Lifelong Learning (ELL) Directorate will continue to review these projections annually and make them available via the council website.

4.6 **Early Learning and Childcare**

Report 36/18 was prepared alongside wider plans for the delivery of up to 1140hrs of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). Schools identified as requiring capital investment to deliver 1140hrs were prioritised. All capital works relating to the original plans for the ELC estate are now complete and no further projects are planned to increase ELC capacity. The new build Monifieth High School will include space for ELC provision to be delivered, in order to meet demand in that locality. Any further works in relation to ELC settings will be programmed alongside any requirements for the overall learning estate.

4.7 **Condition and Suitability**

The Scottish Government has set standard definitions for the 'Condition' and 'Suitability' of school buildings. All education facilities are graded as follows:

- A – Good
- B – Satisfactory
- C – Poor
- D - Bad

Report 36/18 referred to a number of Angus schools graded C for either 'Condition' or 'Suitability.' Data is reported annually to Scottish Government in relation to this. As a result of previously agreed investments in the school estate, the 2022 data return indicated that only two primary schools (Arbirlot Primary School and Liff Primary School) and one secondary school (Monifieth High School) are now graded C for Suitability. In terms of Condition, the only remaining concerns relate to Monifieth High School which, as noted, are being addressed through the replacement of the existing building.

4.8 **Maintenance**

Report 36/18 provided details of outstanding maintenance requirements for each school. Each year Angus Council invests circa £900,000 in a rolling programme of planned and unplanned maintenance to the school estate. Works are prioritised based on the outcome of annual Condition Surveys carried out by the council.

Review of Previously Agreed Projects for Phase 2019-2023

4.9 **Arbroath Secondary Schools**

Report 36/18 proposed an examination of secondary school provision in Arbroath, linked to the national concept of One Public Estate. The scope of this model was refined in Report 329/20

to focus on a town-wide campus model involving the two secondary schools and Dundee & Angus (D&A) College. Since December 2020 the focus of this project has evolved, informed by national policy direction and an evaluation of how learning models have changed in response to the pandemic. More recently officers from the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate have been working closely with partners across all secondary schools, D&A College and the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC) to deliver a revised approach to the secondary curriculum for the whole of Angus. This approach is identified as a priority within the Angus Education Plan 2022-27 ([Report 325/22](#) refers) and is aligned to the national Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress, and the Angus Council Plan 2023-28. Incorporating elements of the earlier concepts for Arbroath, D&A College are a key partner in how we develop our curriculum in a more equitable way for all young people in Angus. Our focus is on providing opportunities to enable young people to achieve the best outcomes they can and ensuring all our communities have equal access to them.

4.10 **Reimagining Montrose**

Report 36/18 also made provision for the reimagining of the learning estate in Montrose. Early scoping work took place in 2019/20 but was curtailed as a result of the pandemic. No further work has taken place in relation to this project, although it should be noted that maintenance investments have been continuing on a localised basis. Works have also been carried out to enable delivery of 1140hrs.

Delivering Best Value

4.11 **Universal Free School Meals** – Where required, capital works have been progressed in support of the delivery of universal free school meals in primary schools. The establishment of the Tayside Contracts Central Production Unit (CPU) for school meals has limited the scope of the works required. Capital funding has been provided by Scottish Government in support of these works.

4.12 **Low Occupancy** – A small number of schools and ELC settings have very low levels of occupancy (8 or fewer children). With reference to the Guiding Principles of our School Investment Strategy, very low rolls may impact on our ability to ensure equity of access to opportunities for learners, and on our commitment to ensure our learning estate is sustainable.

4.13 **Efficiency** – The guiding principles of our School Investment Strategy are aligned to the priorities in the Angus Council Plan, most notably ensuring we are 'Efficient and Effective.' Alongside our consideration of the learning estate, the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate has also been exploring where other opportunities for efficiency may exist. An opportunity has been identified to rationalise the management framework for the ELC settings based at the Abbey View Campus in Arbroath.

4.14 **Developers' Contributions** – As noted in paragraph 4.5, housing development is the most likely variable which could affect school capacity across Angus. We will continue to seek Developers' Contributions for relevant housing developments in accordance with national policy and local guidelines. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the available data.

5. **PROPOSALS**

5.1 It is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee delegates authority to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to make minor amendments to the existing School Investment Strategy document. The rationale for this proposal is to enable administrative updates to be made to the document, without making any changes to the strategic principles. For example, this could include updating the information recorded on P44 in relation to wifi provision across our schools. Any proposals to amend the strategic principles of the Strategy would be reverted to Children and Learning Committee for consideration.

5.2 As noted in Section 3, Angus Council is facing significant financial challenges. Capital investment in the education estate for the period 2023-28 is largely focused on the new Monifieth Learning Campus and a small number of other previously agreed projects. With financial resources constrained, the management of our learning estate should therefore be refocused as follows:

Capacity

We will continue to monitor school roll projections on an annual basis and seek to identify any school where occupancy is projected to exceed 90%. For any identified school we will carry out further analysis to determine whether this is expected to be a sustained trend or a temporary pressure on capacity. Where required we will then complete an options appraisal to assess the feasibility of addressing these through the following interventions:

1. Careful management of enrolments and placing requests;
2. Investment in the hire or purchase of temporary modular accommodation;
3. Review of catchment areas in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010;
4. Investment in longer-term capital works to increase capacity.

Using this standard framework will allow a robust assessment to be made in each location, when the need arises, and to identify potential resource requirements. Interventions aligned to Option 1 are delegated to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to implement. Proposals for interventions aligned to Options 2-4 would be brought before Children and Learning Committee for consideration.

Condition and Suitability

We will work in partnership with colleagues from the Infrastructure Directorate to ensure any works planned across the school estate are targeted and based on robust assessments. Urgent works will be prioritised for investment using existing resources wherever possible. We will also work to ensure that planned works can be delivered that provide benefits to the maximum number of learners possible.

Best Value

We will continue to explore where opportunities exist for further efficiency across the learning estate. These include:

1. Seeking out opportunities for management and staffing efficiencies which can be delivered with no detriment to the educational experiences of our learners.
2. Considering the mothballing of settings with very low levels of occupancy. A formal Mothballing Policy is attached at Appendix 2 in support of this.
3. Exploring opportunities to revise catchment areas in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Where required, proposals in relation to any of these options would be brought before Children and Learning Committee for approval.

It is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee approves the above framework for management of the Angus learning estate, including the Mothballing Policy attached at Appendix 2.

- 5.3 In light of the updates provided in paragraphs 4.9 and 4.10, it is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee approve the removal of the Arbroath Secondary Schools and Reimagining Montrose projects from the Angus Schools for the Future Programme. It is noted that no funding has been identified for either project.
- 5.4 As part of on-going work to review the current operating model for the delivery of Early Education and Childcare an opportunity to deliver a management efficiency linked to the two ELC settings based at the Abbey View Campus in Arbroath has been identified. The nature of the proposals is purely administrative, however legal advice indicates that a statutory consultation is required under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. As such, it is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee approves the proposal paper

attached at Appendix 3 and directs the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to undertake the required statutory consultation and then to provide a report on the outcome of the consultation to Children and Learning Committee.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Funding arrangements are already in place for any established capital projects.
- 6.2 The proposal in relation to Abbey View Campus could result in a saving of circa £28K annum, with the potential for this to increase in future years.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Director of Finance and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services have been consulted in the preparation of 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
- Report 36/18
- Report 329/20
- Report 152/22
- Report 116/23
- Report 127/23
- Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
- Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – School Rolls Summary

Appendix 2 – Mothballing Policy

Appendix 3 – Abbey View Proposal Paper