

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

### EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES COMMITTEE

The views of consultees are sought on a variety of options for improving the accommodation at Strontian Primary School. Options include a major upgrade to the present building, or relocating Strontian Primary School from its present location to Ardnamurchan High School and to retain its separate identity therein. The latter option is the preferred option of the Education, Culture and Sport Service.

### EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

#### **THIS IS A CONSULTATIVE PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010**

This paper seeks views on the most effective means of improving the current accommodation at Strontian Primary School (SPS). Options identified include upgrading the present building or relocating SPS from its present location to Ardnamurchan High School (AHS) and to retain its separate identity therein. If agreed, the latter option would be implemented for the start of the school session in August 2015.

#### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 During the course of 2012, The Highland Council proposed to undertake construction works that would improve aspects of the accommodation of SPS. The work was due to start in early 2013 and it was acknowledged that there would have been major disruption to the school during building work.
- 1.2 On being notified of the proposed building work, the SPS Parent Council indicated that they would welcome discussions on the possibility of re-locating to the AHS campus, thereby creating a "3-18 campus." Informal meetings with parents were held on 16 January 2013, 18 March 2014, and 29 April 2014. A meeting was also held on 30 September 2013 with members of the Sunart Centre Management Committee and other community representatives. At these meetings parents indicated that they supported the issue being taken to formal consultation. A brief summary of the issues raised at those meetings are at **Appendices 1(a) to 1 (c)**.
- 1.3 The population living in the AHS catchment area grew by around 120 during the last decade, an increase of 5%, although this was accompanied by an ageing of the population and a fall in the number of women of child-bearing age.
  - 1.3.1 Population projections for the wider Lochaber area show a 4% increase over the next decade and putting this together with the economic position in the AHS area it is likely that future population change will be similar to recent

historic trends, with modest increases accompanied by a general ageing of the profile.

1.3.2 Population change is taken into account in school roll forecasts through new house building. The Council's West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan allocates 15 sites for housing in the AHS catchment area with a capacity of 237 houses. The most significant of these are:

- 2 sites in Strontian with a capacity of 53 houses, but with lapsed planning permission and no activity;
- 3 sites in Lochaline with a capacity of 57 and no activity but recent planning permission for 6 houses on small parts of two sites;
- 1 site with a capacity of 70 houses in Acharacle but no activity and no planning permission.

1.3.3 In view of the minimal progress on large sites, roll forecasts for the area assume that house building will continue to be mainly on small or single plot "windfall" sites distributed fairly evenly across the catchment. The assumption used in the roll forecast for AHS is 14 new houses per year, equal to the historic average from 2000 to date: 4 of these are in the Strontian catchment.

1.3.4 Interim 2014 forecasts are given in the table at paragraphs 2.3 and 3.2 below. They show that the AHS roll is forecast to increase to 141 - as the increase in the birth rate that began in 2006 feeds through the school system – before falling again as the birth rate falls because of the ageing population. The roll in Strontian Primary is forecast to fall steadily and this is due to a low number of births in the area in recent years, which is assumed to continue. This is unusually low and the age profile of Strontian suggests that if the current age profile is maintained we might expect to see a rise in the number of births to 3 to 4 per year giving a school roll in the region of 25, but this will not be achievable if the population continues to "age" as it has in recent years.

## **2.0 School Details – Strontian Primary**

2.1 SPS is a 2-classroom non-denominational school located at the head of Loch Sunart at the junction of the Ardnamurchan and Morvern Peninsulas. The school serves a wide rural area. The present school was built in the mid-1970s. The school is contained within a wider complex which includes a school/community hall, an adult care home (Dalmhor House) and a medical general practice.

2.2 Pre – school provision is located in the nearby AHS and is managed by the Primary School Head Teacher.

2.3 The school has a current roll of 38. The expected roll for August 2014 is 34. Current roll projections for future years are as follows:

2015-16 - 31  
2016-17 - 31  
2017-18 - 23  
2018-19 - 20  
2019-20 –17  
2020-21 –15

2021-22 - 15  
2022-23 - 15  
2023-24 - 16  
2024-25 - 16  
2025-26 - 16  
2026-27 - 16  
2027-28 - 17

The significant drop in numbers in 2017 reflects a large year group of 10 in the current P4 class, and the projected replacement of that year group by a P1 intake of 2 in 2017-18.

- 2.4 Details of the number of placing requests in and out of SPS have not been provided due to the very low numbers involved and the need to avoid the identification of pupils.
- 2.5 The school has a permanent capacity of 50. The August 2014 roll of 34 pupils therefore represents 68% use of capacity.
- 2.6 On average 17 pupils (44%) of the total school roll take paid school meals. The number entitled to free school meals is not broken down to avoid the identification of pupils.
- 2.7 The most recent HMIE report was published in September 2007. The school was assessed as “Very Good” on 3 aspects, “Good” on 5 aspects, “Adequate” on 5 aspects and “Weak” on 1 aspect.
- 2.8 The anticipated year group numbers for August 2014, based on current enrolments, are as follows:

P1 – 1  
P2 – 5  
P3 – 5  
P4 – 5  
P5 – 10  
P6 – 2  
P7 – 6

Pupils will be organised into two classes, P1 to P4 - 16 and P5 to P7 - 18.

- 2.9 The 2013-14 staffing entitlements, as per the Council’s Devolved School Management policy are as follows;
- Head Teacher – 1.00 FTE
  - Un-promoted Teachers – 1.00 FTE
  - Management Teacher 0.20 FTE
  - Clerical Assistant – 17 hours per week

The school nursery is staffed with a Nursery Assistant at 19.50 hours per week and a Nursery Auxiliary at 15.00 hours per week

In addition, 0.10 FTE Additional Support Needs (ASN) teaching provision and 28.00 hours per week ASN non-teaching provision are currently allocated to the school to meet identified needs.

The Catering and Cleaning Service employs the following staff at the school;

- Cook 1 (Catering Assistant) 8.75 hours per week
- Cleaning Operative – 10.50 hours per week

2.10 There are 2 school transport routes funded by the Council, which on average carry a total of 14 pupils. Therefore, approximately 37% of the total school roll accesses free school transport on a daily basis.

2.11 The Highland Council assesses all of its schools for Suitability and Condition, per the Scottish Government's School Estate management guidelines. Schools are assessed on scales from "A" to "D". Strontian Primary School is currently rated as "C" for both educational suitability and building condition. This indicates an assessment of the accommodation as "Poor", defined as *"showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (the school buildings and grounds impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)."*

2.12 The scores for each component part of the suitability assessment are as follows:

- Learning and Teaching General B
- Internal Social C
- Internal Facilities C
- External Social C
- External Facilities C

2.13 Particular weaknesses in the school's accommodation were identified as follows:

- There is a small office which is used by the School Clerical Assistant, as a staffroom and office for the Head Teacher. Consequently the Head Teacher does not have appropriate accommodation to deal with private or confidential matters;
- The lack of space in the school means that when individual pupils are receiving instrumental instruction it is disruptive to other pupils;
- Older pupils take their meals at the lower end of the stage, which results in meals being carried down the stage steps.
- The school playground is restricted and does not meet national area guidelines for a school of this size;
- The former storage cupboard at the end of the school hall has been converted into a disabled toilet. The toilet door opens directly into the hall and does not afford appropriate privacy for users. As a consequence there is no dedicated storage for large items of PE. The disabled toilet was put in this location because the hall doubles up as a village hall which is used quite extensively in evenings and weekends;
- The Pre-school's off-site location raises logistical issues, due to the need for the Head Teacher to travel between the two sites. Despite the low pupil

numbers a second member of staff is employed at the nursery because of the offsite location.

### **3.0 School Details – Ardnamurchan High School**

3.1 AHS was constructed in 2002. It is located around a quarter of a mile from the Primary School. Both externally and internally the building is maintained in excellent condition. The school benefits from excellent ventilation and natural lighting. Classrooms are spacious, as is the games hall and the theatre, and there are a good number of smaller tutorial rooms located all around the school. Practical areas are well-appointed and there are practice and recording rooms adjacent to the music classroom. There are also excellent external sports facilities and in essence the school provides the ideal location for good quality learning and teaching. The building is designed to be fully accessible to disabled pupils.

3.2 The school has a current roll of 108. The expected roll for August 2014 is 106. Current roll projections for future years are as follows:

2015-16 - 102  
2016-17 - 104  
2017-18 - 116  
2018-19 - 126  
2019-20 –137  
2020-21 - 139  
2021-22 –141  
2022-23 –140  
2023-24 –125  
2024-25 –114  
2025-26 - 106  
2026-27 - 102  
2027-28 - 98

3.3 Over the last 6 years the school has received 8 placing requests from elsewhere, whilst 11 pupils from the catchment have entered other schools.

3.4 The published capacity of the school is 318, so the expected roll of 106 for August 2014 represents 33% of capacity.

3.5 On average 82 pupils (76%) of the total school roll take paid school meals, of whom 14 (13%) are entitled to free school meals.

3.6 The anticipated year group numbers for August 2014, based on current enrolments, are as follows:

S1 – 18  
S2 – 16  
S3 – 13  
S4 – 20  
S5 – 20  
S6 – 21

3.7 The 2013-14 staffing entitlements, as per the Council's Devolved School Management policy are as follows;

- Head Teacher – 1.00 FTE
- Depute Head Teacher – 1.00 FTE
- Principal Teachers – 3.00 FTE
- Un-promoted Teachers – 8.81 FTE
- Administrative Assistant – 1.00 FTE
- Clerical Assistant – 0.70 FTE
- Technician – 0.50 FTE

In addition 27.50 hours per week ASN non-teaching staff are allocated to the school.

The Catering and Cleaning Service employs the following staff at the school;

- Cook 3 (Cook-in-Charge with supervisory responsibilities) - 35 hours per week
- Cook 2 (Cook-in-Charge without supervisory responsibilities) - 16 hours per week
- Cook 1 - 25 hours per week

Additional building management staff are employed by the management company for the building

3.8 There are 5 school transport routes funded by the Council, which on average carry a total of 80 pupils. Two of the 5 routes are "feeder" journeys. Therefore, approximately 74% of the total school roll accesses free school transport on a daily basis.

3.9 The school is currently rated as "A" for both educational suitability and building condition. This indicates an assessment of the accommodation as "Good", defined as "*Performing well and operating efficiently (the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and communities).*"

3.10 Ardnamurchan High School was built as a community school and one entire wing of the building, Àrainn Shuaneirt/The Sunart Centre, is managed by High Life Highland as a community facility. The theatre and sports facilities are used extensively by the community and there is a joint school and community library. A well-attended youth club takes place twice a week during the academic year based around a café close to the main entrance area. There are also two community rooms currently used for a variety of purposes. Most notably the space is used 2/3 times per week for medical purposes. There is also a well-appointed room given over for use by a local Mother and Toddler Group.

#### **4.0 Outline of Options**

4.1 Option 1 proposes enhancing current accommodation at the current site to bring the school accommodation up to at least a "B" rating for Suitability and Condition. The proposal would extend the playground, create a new kitchen

and store, and create a new staffroom and disabled toilet. A plan is at **Appendix 2**.

4.2 Option 2 proposes relocating SPS on the following basis:

- Reassign the existing nursery space, within the Sunart Centre, as the SPS infant classroom;
- Reassign the room currently used by the Mother and Toddler Group as the new school nursery;
- Either, reschedule the Mother and Toddler group to the afternoon when they could use the Pre-school classroom (which is not used in the afternoon), or potentially offer them use of space in the existing SPS hall;
- Install a new demountable building to accommodate the upper stages classroom for the Primary School, pupil toilets, and a staffroom;
- Adapt the current office space next to the Pre-school classroom into an office for the Primary School Head Teacher;
- Install secure doors in the corridor leading to the Primary School accommodation, to ensure security, whilst leaving in place the current public access to the community room and public toilets.
- Create a playground space for the Primary School pupils;
- Install a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to further improve the school and community facilities;
- Timetable access to Physical Education inside and outside as necessary;
- Operate staggered break times for Primary and Secondary age pupils, with the Primary pupils having use of the two sports fields during their break times;
- Operate staggered lunch breaks;
- Provide IT infrastructure for the new Primary School accommodation.

4.3 A plan is available at **Appendix 3**.

4.4 Option 3 proposes relocating SPS on the basis of a two classroom demountable unit, on land adjacent to AHS, with toilets, office, staffroom, and playground accommodation being provided. A plan is available at **Appendix 4**.

4.5 As with Option 2, timetabled access to indoor and outdoor PE would be arranged with AHS, and Primary- age pupils would use the dining room within AHS, with the two schools having staggered lunch breaks. Appropriate IT infrastructure would be provided and the Authority would consider installing a MUGA.

4.6 Under Option 3, pupils may need to be supervised whilst moving between SPS and AHS. The extent of supervision might vary according to the precise location of the building.

## **5.0 Educational Benefits**

5.1 Highland Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Highland.

5.2 With the above aim in mind, Highland Council has adopted the above indicators in reviewing its' school estate:

- Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for Condition and Suitability;
- Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group;
- Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art;
- Pupils with additional needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting;
- Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (Primary) or 45 minutes from the nearest road pick-up point to school (Secondary), although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural Council area such as Highland;
- School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends;
- School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution;
- Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented;
- Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility;
- The implications of school location to local communities should be considered;
- Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built up community.

5.3 In 2009 the Scottish Government also set out its vision for the future school estate in Scotland, in 'Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future'. Local Authorities are required to take account of these aspirations in planning changes to their school estate, namely:

- All children and young people will be educated in, and community users will 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 well-being, 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 2009, 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 that 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

5.4 Each of the identified options would provide improved accommodation for SPS. In particular, each option would provide for better office, dining and playground facilities.

5.5 Option 1, if delivered, would meet the majority of the above criteria. One exception would be the aim that teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility. If the projected fall in the roll is confirmed, the school will fall into the 1.50 FTE teacher staffing band by 2019-20.

5.6 Option 2 would meet all of the criteria in paragraph 3.2 above and most in paragraph 3.3. It would also create an integrated 3-18 campus. The Head Teachers of both schools recognise that in terms of educational benefits there is much to be gained from such an arrangement. The transitions between Pre-school and Primary, and between Primary and Secondary stages, would be virtually seamless. The Primary pupils and staff would have access to facilities which would be a significant improvement on the current provision.

5.7 Option 3 would also meet all of the criteria set out at 3.2, although transition arrangements may be marginally less effective than with Option 2.

5.8 It is difficult to identify any issues in any of the proposals that would cause educational disadvantages, either to pupils in the primary school or the secondary school. During informal consultation, parents have highlighted that Option 2 would result in poorer room accommodation for the nursery. Set against that, Option 2 would allow for co-location of the nursery and the primary school.

5.9 The Table attached at **Appendix 5** outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the 3 options in respect of educational benefits and the criteria set out at 3.2 above.

## **6.0 Effects on School Transport**

6.1 The proposal is not expected to have any significant effects on school transport.

## **7.0 Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

7.1 It is intended that SPS retains its separate identity and that the current management arrangements for the school will remain. The Highland Council would consult with the two Parent Councils regarding any future changes to the future management of the school.

- 7.2 Under Option 1 there would be no changes to school staffing.
- 7.3 Option 2 would result in some limited changes to the current staffing arrangements. The number of Pre-school could be reduced to one as a result of co-locating the facilities. Under Option 2 the number of cleaning hours would be reduced to 5 per week. Under Options 2 and 3 the total catering staff hours between both schools would be more or less the same as those currently being worked, although the provision would be located in the AHS kitchen.

## **8.0 Effect on the Local Community**

- 8.1 As already highlighted, the existing SPS building currently houses a joint school/community hall. If the Primary School was to be re-located, the entire building would be declared surplus for educational purposes. The future uses of the accommodation would be determined in accordance with the Council's current asset management policy. Under this policy, the building would be offered first to other Services within the Council. The Care and Learning Service would be willing to consider bids from the Community to allow the continued operation of the Community Hall, subject to the appropriate business case being made.
- 8.2 Àrainn Shuaneirt/The Sunart Centre currently hosts a Mother and Toddler Group. Option 2 would have an impact on the Group, as set out at 2.2 above. There would no other measurable impact on Àrainn Shuaneirt/The Sunart Centre.
- 8.3 As set out above, the proposals for relocating the Primary School include the creation of a new MUGA. If this came to fruition, it would provide a new community facility for Strontian.

## **9.0 Financial Consequences**

- 9.1 Indicative capital costs for the 3 options can be found at **Appendix 6**.
- 9.2 The table at **Appendix 7** illustrates the effect of the various options on revenue costs.
- 9.3 Only indicative figures can be provided for the potential running costs of the various options.

## **10. Recommendation**

- 10.1 Taking into account the potential educational benefits, Highland Council recommends that Strontian Primary School is relocated from its present location to Ardnamurchan High School and to retain its separate identity therein.
- 10.2 Of the 3 options, The Highland Council is of the view that Option 2 provides the most significant improvements to educational benefit.

10.3 The Council must formally consult on changes to provision, hence the options to be considered in terms of the Council's policy on changes to educational provision. This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority's agreed procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Education, Children's and Adult Services Committee of the Highland Council.