

Note of the Main Points Raised at a Meeting held on 30 June 2014 at Strontian Community Hall to discuss the possible relocation of Strontian PS.

In Attendance:

Norma Young, Area Education Manager (West) (NY)

Ian Jackson, Education Officer (West) (IJ)

Iain Robertson, Housing and Property (IR)

Cllr. Thomas MacLennan (TM)

Chris Millar-Craig, Head Teacher, Ardnamurchan High School (CMC)

Mindy Ogilvie, Head Teacher, Strontian Primary School (MO)

Members of the Strontian Primary School Parent Council

NY explained that that, following the meeting held on 9 June, the Council had reviewed the representations made with the caveat that the Authority could not breach the “red line” around the PPP site. She commented that, following the 9 June meeting, there was also a need to clarify the sizes of the demountable buildings being proposed.

NY continued by repeating the options set out in the original paper, and those discussed at the meeting of 9 June, and said that the Council were seeking a view from the parents as to which options they would wish the Council to provide further details.

IR advised that many schools in Highland now incorporated modular buildings, for example Aldourie and Roy Bridge. The modular buildings were built to a very high standard and the gap between such buildings and permanent structures had narrowed considerably in recent years. In response to concerns expressed at the 9 June meeting, he advised that all of the classrooms in the modular buildings would be of an appropriate size – 55m² to 60m², and all necessary ancillary accommodation would be included – e.g. toilet facilities, a Learning Support base.

There was a consensus amongst parents for two options to be considered.

1. Refurbishing the existing school, keeping it in its current location in the centre of the village, and;
2. Building two classrooms with ancillary facilities, as close to the High School as possible, with shared use of the HS sports, music and dining facilities. It was requested that costs were obtained for both modular accommodation and traditional build.

There was no support for the option of utilising the existing nursery space within AHS as a classroom.

IR commented that Option 1 would include an extension to create a dining room.

Discussion took place on the possibility of a walkway from the primary school to the high school as part of Option 2 above. **NY** advised that any walkway could only be constructed up to the “red line.”

Parents suggested it would be important to look ahead to 2027, and suggested that any new build should then be linked with the AHS building. At that stage, (end of PPP contract) the Council would reconsider the accommodation.

It was requested that the Council obtain comparative costs per square metre for modular and traditional builds.

Comments were made that any refurbishment of the current accommodation had to include an extension to the playground. It was acknowledged this may be difficult due to lack of space.

There was discussion about the possibility of using the public play park across the road from the primary school as part of the school playground. It was suggested that the village road be re-routed to accommodate this. If this were done it could open up all sorts of possibilities for extending the school in its current location.

A suggestion was also made about shutting the road for certain periods of the day (e.g. school playtime), rather than re-routing it. **IJ** commented there may be legal difficulties with such a proposal.

NY commented that re-routing the road would almost certainly be expensive.

Some concerns were expressed about the size of the dining room furniture at AHS. **MO** commented that the primary school had used the AHS for lunches during a period when the kitchen at Dalmhor House was out of action. The children had loved going to the AHS and the size of the furniture had not been an issue.

Concerns were expressed about the impact on the community if the primary school were moved. **MO** commented that the education of the primary age children was the most important thing to consider.

CMC commented that if the primary school relocated they might be able to use the facilities at the school, and the school minibus, but that this would require consultation.

It was commented that other communities on the Peninsula were becoming annoyed at perceived educational advantages for Strontian PS pupils that could arise from this proposal.

Some discussion arose about the detailed location of the school, were it to move. **CMC** suggested the school could be located to the side of the AHS building, near the nursery play area. This might preserve the aesthetics of the current build.

Parents suggested that any new build should be designed to complement rather than detract from the existing building.

Cllr. MacLennan agreed that was possible and commented that the modular building at Roy Bridge had a more pronounced pitch roof than normal, in order to fit in with the other buildings on that site.

Parents were concerned that any new refurb/build should incorporate a “green” energy solution such as biomass.

IR confirmed that would definitely be part of Option 1.

Parents suggested that Option2 should also include a biomass boiler that could be plumbed into the AHS building come 2027.

Cllr. MacLennan sounded a warning about the difficulty of obtaining approval for capital funding at Committee. There was a great deal of competition for capital funding.

NY thanked everyone for attending. She had found it very helpful to narrow down the options to those that had support. She was aware parents had changed the end of term concert for the meeting, and was very grateful for that.

Helen Tait, Chairperson of the PC, raised the issue about playground supervision at the school, that had been raised at previous meetings. NY undertook to look into this as part of the annual ASN allocation exercise.

NY undertook to meet again with parents after the start of the new school session in August.