



HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICE

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO RELOCATE ST. CLEMENT'S SCHOOL, DINGWALL, TO ALLOW THE CREATION OF NEW ACCOMMODATION

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal:

- To relocate St Clement's School, Dingwall, to a new site located off Dochcarty Brae, Dingwall, to allow the creation of new school accommodation

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period.
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting held online on 10 March 2022.
- The report from Education Scotland.

This document has been issued by the Highland Council under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

After reviewing the consultation exercise, the Council considers that the Proposal should be implemented. The reasons are explained in detail below.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Education Committee, at its meeting on 24 February 2022, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to relocate St. Clement's School in Dingwall, to allow for the construction of new school accommodation.
- 1.2 **Appendix A** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendices B - C** are the appendices to the original proposal.
- 1.3 It is recognised that the current. St. Clement's School has poor quality accommodation. Relocating the school will permit the construction of a replacement school with greatly improved facilities.

2.0 Consultation process

- 2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Wednesday 2 March 2022 to Friday 29 April 2022. Written representations on the proposal were sought from interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were consulted:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending St. Clement's School; including parents of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) The Parent Council of St. Clement's School.
- (iii) All Community Councils for the Highland Council wards of Dingwall and Seaforth; Black Isle; and Cromarty Firth; as well as Strathpeffer Community Council
- (iv) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal.
- (v) Staff of St. Clement's School.
- (vi) Trade Union representatives.

2.3 The proposal document was also advertised on the Highland Council website.

2.4 A public meeting was held online on 10 March 2022. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website, Twitter Account and Facebook page, and in the *Ross-shire Journal*. The minute of the meeting is at **Appendix 2**.

3.0 Review of proposals following the consultation period

3.1 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meeting, officials reviewed the proposals.

3.2 The feedback from the consultation was considered by a range of Council officials. This ensured that the Council met the requirements of the 2010 Act.

3.3 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

4.0 Responses received

4.1 No written responses were received to the formal consultation, although the Parent Council of St. Clement's School were heavily involved in discussions with the Council prior to the formal consultation, and have been enthusiastic about the prospect of a new school for St. Clement's.

4.2 The views of the pupils at St. Clement's School were sought and are summarised at Appendices 3 and 3i. The pupil suggestions relate to facilities and other resources to be provided to the new school.

5.0 Overview of Issues raised during the consultation period

5.1 Excluding Council officers and HMIE, the public meeting was attended by a total of 21 people, including 11 parents and other members of the local community, 7 members of the school staff, and 3 elected members of Highland Council (see **Appendix 2**). A total of 15 questions are recorded in the note along with the associated answers.

- 5.2 The main issues raised at the public meeting concerned the facilities to be included in the new school building, and its location at the edge of Dingwall. Parents are concerned to ensure their children will still have access to the community facilities in the town centre. These points were all addressed during the public meeting, with the responses noted at Appendix 2.
- 5.3 The current statutory consultation is being undertaken to establish the principle that a new school should be provided at the site off Dochcarty Brae. The detailed facilities and resources to be provided will be discussed at the regular stakeholder meetings which will continue after the conclusion of the current statutory consultation.

6.0 Summary of the issues raised by Education Scotland

- 6.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council's proposals. A copy of the report from Education Scotland is appended – **Appendix 4**.
- 6.2 In their report, Education Scotland recognise that the proposed new building could bring considerable educational benefits for all current and future children and young people at St Clement's School. They agree that the new building should be of a quality that supports and improves outcomes for learners placed at the school. The current poor quality accommodation at St Clement's can pose issues for the dignity of children and young people, as well as accessibility issues.
- 6.3 HM Inspectors believe there are considerable educational benefits in the proposal to replace and relocate St Clement's School. All stakeholders that HM Inspectors met support the proposal. A purpose-built school would provide significantly improved facilities to support learners with complex additional support needs. Good access to the outdoors and improved teaching spaces could improve the learning experiences for all the learners who attend St Clement's.
- 6.4 HM Inspectors agree with the Council's desire to place the needs of every child and young person at the centre of the design of the new school. They advise that this should include consideration of facilities to support the development of lifeskills. They further advise that it will be important to ensure that the capacity and design of the new school meets possible future needs of learners. Points for further consideration are set out below.
- 6.5. HMIE suggest that, should the proposal go forward, the Council should continue to work with stakeholders to address concerns about the location of the new school on the edge of town. Stakeholders would welcome more detail about how children and young people will be able to access community facilities in Dingwall. Well-considered transition planning, involving all stakeholders, will be an important consideration in taking the proposal forward.

- 6.6 The Council agrees with the comments set out at 6.5 above, and commits to discussing these issues in future Stakeholder meetings.

7.0 Effects on the Community

- 7.1 The proposal is not expected to have any negative impact on the wider local community. It will retain the traditional link between St. Clement's School and the town of Dingwall, and the consultation exercise suggests there is wide community support for retaining that link.

8.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies

- 8.1 There were no alleged omissions or inaccuracies.

9.0 Review of Consultation Exercise

- 9.1 No opposition has been expressed to the proposal to build a new school to replace the current St. Clement's building. There appears to be widespread support in principle for a new school. Any concerns expressed were on points of detail concerning the design and resourcing of the new school building, and will be discussed during the informal consultation with stakeholders, that will continue following the conclusion of this exercise.

10.0 Legal issues

- 10.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
- 10.2 As provided for in section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland, such education to be directed towards the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children or young persons to their fullest potential (Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000). As with all Council duties, the Council also has a duty to secure best value, and in securing best value the Council is required to maintain an appropriate balance between, inter alia, the quality of its performance of its functions and the cost to the authority of that performance (Local Government in Scotland Act 2002, section 1). Each of the above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.

11.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was issued with the proposal paper and can be found at Section 9 to the Proposal Paper. The consultation exercise did not identify any additional equality issues.

12.0 Conclusion

- 12.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council's response detailed in sections 5 and 6 above. For the reasons set out above, Highland Council considers that implementation of the proposal is appropriate.
- 12.2 Education Scotland staff visited St. Clement's School, to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.
- 12.3 The Executive Chief Officer (Education), on reviewing all of the submissions, the note of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; concludes that the proposal offers educational benefits and that implementation of the Proposal in full is the most appropriate response to the reason for formulating the Proposal. The reasons for this conclusion are set out at Sections 5 and 6 above.

13.0 Recommendation

- 13.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council approves the proposal to relocate St. Clement's School to a new build school off Dochcarty Brae.

Nicky Grant
Executive Chief Officer (Education)
4 August 2022