

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
11 November 2015

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ECAS 100/15

Review of the Provision of Education at Inverasdale Primary School

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

Following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, this report and accompanying information sets out a recommendation to discontinue the provision of education at Inverasdale Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Poolewe Primary School.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 20 May 2015, the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee agreed to proceed to statutory consultation on a proposal to discontinue the provision of education at Inverasdale Primary School.
- 1.2 Inverasdale Primary School has been “mothballed” since the end of session 2011-12, and current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of 5 by 2018-19.
- 1.3 The statutory consultation was taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 1.4 Elected members from the ward were consulted informally prior to the statutory consultation, and have been kept fully informed throughout.
- 1.5 Attached to this report is the final proposal for recommendation by Committee, following conclusion of the statutory consultation process. If agreed, the recommendation would then go to the next Council meeting, as a starred item, for approval.
- 1.6 The legislation requires that any proposal for decision must be published at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting at which any decision may be made, to allow time for further representations. The proposal was published on Tuesday 20 October.

2. The Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal document and appendices for consideration by the Committee are circulated separately as **Booklet A**. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council’s response to comments arising from the consultation.
- 2.2 A large majority of the comments received were in support of the proposal, although many with the caveat that the building should be handed over to the local community following the closure of the school (at present the school is used extensively for community purposes, including as a home for an exhibition of the

Russian Arctic Convoys of WWII). Education Scotland commented that the Council's proposal has clear educational and community benefits. They also noted that it has the strong support of stakeholders.

- 2.3 Having fully considered the responses received, the final recommendation from officials remains unaltered from that which this Committee agreed to go to consultation on in May of this year.
- 2.4 The proposal within the booklet sets out the rationale for the recommendation, and relevant supporting information, which includes:
- The educational benefits of the proposal;
 - The current school buildings condition and suitability scores;
 - The community impact of the proposal;
 - The environmental impact of the proposal;
 - The school transport and travel time implications of the proposal;
 - The financial implications of the proposal.
- 2.5 The booklet also contains details of any further representations received, since the proposal report was published on 20 October. Any further representations received up to the date of this Committee, will be tabled on the day of the Committee.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Following consideration by the Committee, if the recommendation is agreed the following timeline will be followed as required by the legislation.
- The recommendation of the Committee will be considered by the full Highland Council.
 - If ratified by full Council, the Council must, within 6 working days of the Committee decision, advise Scottish Ministers of the decision it has reached, provide them with the proposal paper and consultation report, and publish a notice stating that Ministers have been advised and the process through which representations may be made to Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal.
 - From the date of the Council decision, there is a period of 3 weeks in which representations to Scottish Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal can be made by any interested party.
 - Scottish Ministers then have a further up to 5 weeks in which to decide whether or not they will issue a call-in notice.
- 3.2 Subject to the outcome of the process, and in the event of formal closure of the school, the Council's asset management policy would apply, and would give scope for consideration of approaches from the community in relation to the future of the building.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Resource implications – are as detailed within the proposal report (**section 12 and appendix 1f**).
- 4.2 Legal implications – as described earlier, the statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The schools affected by the proposal are rural schools per the Scottish Government rural schools list. The Council's Legal Section has been consulted

in the preparation of the final report.

- 4.3 Equalities implications – an Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is included within the proposal report (**section 13 and Appendix 1g**).
- 4.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications – the proposal report addresses the environmental impact of the proposal, and highlights the estimated effects on carbon emissions from the operation of the new school and transport arrangements (**Appendix 1, paragraphs 4.2, 5.11, 7.4 and 7.5; and appendix 1e**).
- 4.5 Risk implications – the main risks associated with the recommendation relate to the potential for call-in by Scottish Ministers. Officers have sought to mitigate the risk through review and evaluation to ensure that procedurally the requirements of the Act and statutory consultation process have been met, and as stated above have consulted with the Council's legal section.
- 4.6 Gaelic implications – neither of the affected schools currently offers Gaelic medium education.
- 4.7 Rural implications – a Rural Impact Assessment has been prepared and can be found at **Appendix 5**.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are asked to consider the proposal set out in **Booklet A** and, having given consideration to further representations received, agree to recommend to the Council:
 - That the Council discontinue education provision at Inverasdale Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Poolewe Primary School.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 29 October 2015

Authors: Brian Porter, Head of Resources
Ian Jackson, Education Officer