

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
25 August 2016

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ECAS 56/16

Statutory Consultation – Closure of Dalwhinnie 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 Dalwhinnie Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Newtonmore Primary School.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 20 January 2016 this Committee agreed to commence a statutory consultation, per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, to discontinue the provision of education at Dalwhinnie Primary School.
- 1.2 Dalwhinnie 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 2019-20.
- 1.3 The final proposal for decision, following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, is circulated separately in **Booklet B (i)** and **Booklet B (ii)**.
- 1.4 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 3 August 2016.

2. The Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal for decision, the original proposal issued for consultation, and relevant appendices for consideration by the Committee, circulated separately in **Booklets B(i)** and **B(ii)**, 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 The majority of written representations received were in support of the proposal to close Dalwhinnie Primary, as were the comments made at the public meeting. Pupils at Gergask and Newtonmore Primary Schools were consulted and whilst all those attending Gergask Primary were in favour of the closure proposal, opinion amongst children in Newtonmore was more evenly split. The main issue raised in consultation was the reassignment of the catchment area. The majority of responses from the community of Laggan opposed the suggestion that the Dalwhinnie catchment should be reassigned to that of Newtonmore Primary, suggesting instead that it should be reassigned to that of Gergask Primary.
- 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, both in respect of the closure of Dalwhinnie Primary and the reassignment of the catchment.

2.5 The proposal within the booklets 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.
- The implications for catchment areas

2.6 The booklets also contain details of any further representations received, since the proposal report was published on 3 August. 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.

4. Implications

4.1 Resources – are as detailed within Appendix 1K, originally part of the Proposal Paper.

5.2 Legal – the statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

5.3 Equalities – are as detailed within Appendix 1L, originally part of the Proposal Paper.

5.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – the proposal report addresses the environmental impact of the proposal, and highlights the estimated effects on carbon emissions from the closure of school and transport arrangements (Appendix 1, paragraphs 8.14, 9.19, 10.15, 12.5, 12.6, and 12.7; and appendix 1J)

- 5.5 Risk – 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.
- 5.6 Gaelic implications – Newtonmore Primary offers Gaelic Medium education, and under current arrangements this is available to children from Dalwhinnie. The proposal will have no impact on the provision of GM education at Newtonmore Primary.
- 5.7 Rural implications – All 3 affected schools are rural primary schools as defined by Scottish Government, and consideration has been given to the requirements relating to rural schools within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. A Rural Impact Assessment and can be found at Appendix 1M.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the proposal set out within the Consultation Report and associated appendices and, having given consideration to further representations received, agree to recommend to the Council:

- That the Council discontinue education provision at Dalwhinnie Primary School, reassigning its catchment area to that of Newtonmore Primary School.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 15 August 2016

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

Background Papers: Final Report and Appendices