

REPORT of SEMINAR of MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL held in the Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith on Tuesday, 11 November 2014 at 11.15am.

Present:- Provost Wallace and Councillors Baxter, Bennett, Bryant (11.46pm), Constable, Coventry, Johnstone, Milligan, Montgomery, Muirhead, Pottinger, Rosie, Russell and Thompson.

Religious Representatives Present (Non Voting Observers for Education Business):- Mr V Bourne, Mr P Hayes and Mrs M Harkness.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Beattie, de Vink and Imrie.

1 Order of Business

There were tabled eight A3 colour maps showing the current position and options/proposals relative to the Catchment Review and School Estate Strategy.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were intimated.

3 Catchment Review and School Estate Strategy

(a) Report by Chief Executive

There was submitted report, dated 7 November 2014, by the Chief Executive, outlining (i) options that could address key issues relating to a sustainable School Estate Strategy; and (ii) proposals for the next phase of the school catchment review programme.

The report recalled that a programme of catchment reviews had commenced in 2009/10 to address the mismatch between Midlothian's schools' capacities and the demand for pupil places and to ensure that the school infrastructure would support the implementation of Midlothian's Local Plan. The report gave an update on developments since this review had been instigated and highlighted that a number of issues arising from this and other developments still required to be addressed, all of which were critical to a sustainable school estate strategy. These were:-

- (i) Options regarding the non-denominational secondary school estate, to address increasing and changing populations across the county:-
 - (1) The number, location and associated catchments of secondary schools serving Midlothian's communities, including the following issues:-

- (a) Secondary school provision for the communities along the A701 corridor;
 - (b) Potential of a single site for a merged Beeslack and Penicuik High School, due to pupil numbers in the Penicuik area being unable to sustain 2 separate secondary schools over the forthcoming years;
 - (c) Secondary school provision for pupils from the proposed new community at Redheugh / Prestonholm;
- (ii) Options regarding specific areas of the Council's Primary School estate:-
- (1) Mayfield, Newtongrange and Bonnyrigg Primary Schools' catchment boundaries and primary school provision for pupils arising from committed development sites at Mayfield, Newtongrange and Cockpen Farm;
 - (2) Loanhead and Paradykes Primary Schools catchment boundaries and primary school provision for pupils arising from committed development sites;
 - (3) The impact on Bonnyrigg from the level of house building at Hopefield Farm and the preferred sites in the next phase of housing development was such that substantial additional primary school capacity will be required. The potential solutions for the location of the additional primary capacity could require further primary school catchment revisions affecting Bonnyrigg, Burnbrae, Hawthornden and Lasswade Primary Schools;
 - (4) Review of denominational catchment boundaries and primary school provision across the county.
- (iii) The possibility to explore the concept of a 3-18 school for Shawfair and/or a new Gorebridge High School as part of a more detailed review.

With regard to the Non-Denominational Secondary School Estate, the report commented on:-

- The investment already secured;
- The optimum size of secondary schools serving Midlothian's communities; and
- Options for non-denominational secondary school provision.

With regard to the latter point, the report presented the following four options and commented on the advantages and disadvantages of each:-

OPTION 1: SIX SCHOOLS

Maintain the current position – the five (non-denominational, built) secondary schools, with the feeder primary schools (except Danderhall) staying as they currently are, plus Shawfair with Danderhall re-zoned to it. Shawfair would be required by the mid 2020's.

Proposed High Schools:- Dalkeith, Lasswade, Newbattle, New Shawfair, Existing Penicuik, Existing Beeslack

OPTION 2: FIVE SCHOOLS

As per Option 1 but combining Penicuik & Beeslack into one secondary school. Redistributing the primary schools (as shown in Appendix 2 to the report), with Loanhead PS and Paradykes PS going to the new combined Penicuik & Beeslack HS, the forthcoming Redheugh PS going to Lasswade HS and Moorfoot PS going to Dalkeith HS. Consideration should be given to ensuring that the existing Penicuik/Beeslack schools, and the proposals for the new Penicuik High School, meet the criteria for the next round of SFT funding (expected to be within the next 18-24 months), which would facilitate a planned opening date of 2020.

Proposed High Schools:- Dalkeith, Lasswade, Newbattle, New Shawfair, New Combined Penicuik/Beeslack

OPTION 3: SIX SCHOOLS

As per Option 2 but with a replacement Penicuik High School to serve the Penicuik area, and a relocated Beeslack HS to serve the remainder of the A701 corridor. The primary schools would be redistributed as shown in the appendix to the report, with the forthcoming Redheugh PS going to Lasswade HS and Moorfoot PS going to Dalkeith HS. Shawfair would be required by the mid-2020's. Again, a replacement for Penicuik High School should be targeted to coincide with future rounds of SFT funding, which in this context, together with consideration of the roll projections across Penicuik, would be for the school to be open by August 2020.

A fundamental assumption in this option was that Beeslack would be relocated. In the context of SFT funding, it was thought unlikely that both Penicuik and Beeslack schools would be successful in the same round of SFT funding. With that in mind, and given the respective condition ratings for both schools (Penicuik was a C condition rating and Beeslack a B), it was thought likely that SFT would prioritise investment in Penicuik. However, the relocation of Beeslack at the earliest possible date would be key to realigning the catchment areas. The details were shown in Appendix 3 to the report.

Proposed High Schools:- Dalkeith, Lasswade, Newbattle, New Shawfair, New Penicuik, New relocated Beeslack

OPTION 4/

OPTION 4: SEVEN SCHOOLS

As per Option 1 but with a replacement school for Penicuik, a relocated Beeslack High School to serve the remainder of the A701 corridor and an additional school in Gorebridge. The primary schools would be redistributed as shown in the Appendix to the report. In this scenario Shawfair and Gorebridge would both be required by the mid 2020s, although the pace and spread of development in the Gorebridge area in particular could significantly impact on this.

Fundamental assumptions in this option were that (a) Beeslack was relocated; and (b) an additional secondary school was provided in Gorebridge. Details were contained in Appendix 4 to the report.

Proposed High Schools:- Dalkeith, Lasswade, Newbattle, New Shawfair, New Penicuik, New relocated Beeslack, New Gorebridge

Thereafter the Chief Executive's report went on to comment on the Primary School Estate, and in particular on:-

- Mayfield and Newtongrange Primary Schools;
- Loanhead and Paradykes Primary Schools;
- Bonnyrigg / Lasswade School Provision;
- Denominational catchment boundaries and school provision.

In summary, it was considered that decisions regarding the Loanhead / Paradykes and Mayfield / Newtongrange areas were required as soon as possible to support the completion and implementation of Section 75 agreements. In order to facilitate a positive consultation process it was considered that the proposals for secondary school provision in the Loanhead area was required. It was also considered that a decision on non-denominational provision in Bonnyrigg was required as soon as possible to allow continued development on the Hopefield Farm site.

Finally, the report advised that an option which the Council had not had the opportunity to consider to date was the "3–18" school model, where one school catered for the full time educational needs of children from the ages of 3 to 18. This could be a school for pupils from the ages of 3 to 18 years with one head teacher or it could be a hub model where primary and secondary schools were co-located. There was a pressing requirement to come to a decision on the site for the new Shawfair High School in the very near future, and whether it needed to be sized to accommodate a 3-18 school. If the 3–18 school model was employed at Shawfair, either Danderhall PS or alternatively one of the new primary schools could be co-located with the new Shawfair High School.

The secondary school at Shawfair was projected to be required by the mid-2020's, although it would take several years to reach a sustainable capacity. A 3-18 school would contribute to the viability and operational costs of a new Shawfair High School and its sustainability in the early years of this development.

It was proposed therefore that a detailed feasibility study, looking at all the options available to the Council, be progressed as a matter of urgency and a report brought back to Council updating Council on the relative costs and benefits of each option.

(b) Presentation

A presentation on the Catchment Review and School Estate Strategy was given by Ogo Onwuchekwa, Head of Service (Transformational Projects) and Sandra Banks, Resource Manager, both of the Education, Communities and Economy Division.

(c) Questions and Answers

Arising from the Chief Executive's report and the aforementioned presentation, the officers provided clarification on a number of matters, as follows:-

- (i) That it was intended to report on the recommendations of the Seminar to the meeting of the Council on 16 December 2014;
- (ii) That the proposals referred to in the report covered a timescale of over 30 years;
- (iii) The proposals presented took account of population projections arising from the Draft Local Plan and nothing beyond that;
- (iv) Under Option 4, the roll of Newbattle High School in 2024 would be above capacity. However, as 10% flexibility had been allowed for expansion, the assumption had been made that the school would not need to be extended;
- (v) Pending the construction of a new secondary school at Shawfair, Dalkeith High School, which was currently operating at under capacity, would accommodate pupils from Danderhall and Shawfair. Currently just under 200 pupils from the Danderhall area attend Dalkeith HS;
- (vi) The "3-18" model had long been associated with private (independent) schools but if Midlothian was to go down this route then it would need to be explored in much more detail;
- (vii) Around 300 pupils from the Gorebridge area attended Newbattle High School;
- (viii) Around 16% of pupils in Newbattle High School's catchment area did not attend Newbattle but travelled instead to Dalkeith High School (8%) or Lasswade High School (8%);
- (ix) Pupils from Moorfoot Primary School went on to attend a number of different secondary schools;
- (x)/

- (x) There was limited and conflicting academic evidence about whether the size of a school mattered. St Andrews Secondary School in Glasgow, in an area of deprivation, which had a pupil roll of 1,600, was regarded by HMiE as the best in Scotland. The main factors however in determining whether a school would be successful were seen as being values, leadership and economic advantage;
- (xi) In Edinburgh, some P7 pupils were being educated in High Schools mainly because of the availability of space. Midlothian's head teachers didn't want the secondary roll to fall below 750 as this could adversely affect curriculum delivery;
- (xii) To note the financial challenge going forward, in particular that the difference between Option 2 and 4 was £2million, which would require to be met from elsewhere within the budget.
- (xiii) To note that Education staff would arrange to provide members with information about the rolls and capacities of all Midlothian schools, both denominational and non-denominational;
- (xiv) To note that officers from Education and Planning would make themselves available to assist members in getting a clear understanding of the issues around the review, particularly in advance of any public consultation;
- (xv) To note that the replacement of Paradykes Primary School could be relocated to a site adjacent to Loanhead Leisure Centre and the proposed redistribution of the housing between Loanhead and Paradykes Primary Schools took that into account. The catchment review would need however to be undertaken in a timely manner to ensure that the Council was able to make the best use of the capacities at both schools;
- (xvi) To note the proposal for a review of the catchment boundaries of the seven denominational primary schools across Midlothian, where two of these were oversubscribed and three undersubscribed;
- (xvii) To note the urgent situation facing St Matthews RC Primary School in Rosewell where the building was old and in the next two years the roll was expected to drop from 20 to 10, making it unsustainable;
- (xviii) To note that in the Bonnyrigg/Lasswade area, where primary school provision was already close to capacity, significant new housing development was planned both now and in the foreseeable future.

(d)/

(d) Decision

The Seminar:-

- (i) agreed to recommend to Midlothian Council:-
 - (1) that consultation, with specific options as to possible action by the Council, be commenced on the optimal number and location of secondary schools in Midlothian, specifically:-
 - (a) the strategy for the Penicuik & A701 corridor; and
 - (b) the strategy for high school provision for the Gorebridge area;
 - (2) that approval be given to proceed immediately with the required catchment reviews for the Mayfield / Newtongrange / Bonnyrigg primary schools, Loanhead / Paradykes primary schools, denominational primary schools (county wide) and the new schools (Bilston & North Gorebridge primaries);
 - (3) that approval be given to proceed immediately with a feasibility study into non-denominational Primary School provision in the Bonnyrigg area;
 - (4) that approval be given to proceed with a feasibility study into denominational Primary School provision in the Bonnyrigg/Rosewell area; and
 - (5) that approval be given to proceed immediately with a feasibility study into a "3-18" model for the Shawfair catchment area;
- (ii) noted a proposal that the Council should not dispose of the former Hopefield Primary School site for housing purposes if this was the only site currently available to accommodate a new primary school unless an alternative site for the school could be identified;
- (iii) noted advice from the Head of Finance and Integrated Service Support, that:-
 - (1) the former Hopefield Primary School site was held under the General Fund Account, therefore use for social housing would require a transfer of the asset at an appropriate value to the Housing Revenue Account;
 - (2)/

- (2) a financial appraisal would be required for any proposals relating to the combination of St Mary's and St Matthew's RC Primary Schools into a single stream school within the Bonnyrigg area and release of Dundas Buildings; and
 - (iv) congratulated the staff involved in preparing the report.
- (Action: Director, Education, Communities and Economy)

The meeting terminated at 12.26pm.