

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 18 AUGUST 2010

**GARGIESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL – GROUND SURVEY RESULTS AND
DECANT ARRANGEMENTS**

**Joint Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services and
the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Support**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the unexpected results from ground condition surveys at Gargieston Primary School and Nursery Class and to advise of immediate action required to ensure continuity of education provision for the young people attending the educational establishment.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Cabinet agreed, at its meeting of 29 October 2009, to approve the construction of a new Gargieston Primary School and Nursery Class. Following this decision the Scottish Futures Trust subsequently allocated approximately £3.595 million towards the cost of the project.
- 2.2** On 16 June 2010 Cabinet considered a report on the new build proposals for Gargieston Primary School. Paragraph 4.3 of this report advised that in order to achieve best value it was necessary to demolish the existing buildings in advance of the new construction work. Cabinet also agreed the recommendations detailed at section 10 of this report which included :-
- The decant of Gargieston Primary School during the period of construction;
 - Remitting the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to make the necessary decant arrangements; and
 - That the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services consult with key stakeholders.
- 2.3** A series of meetings were held with the majority of Gargieston primary parents on 29 June, at which the anticipated timescales for the demolition of the existing buildings and construction for the new build were outlined. Parents were advised that the demolition process was scheduled to commence in January 2011, with the new build starting in late April or early May 2011. Parents were also advised of the need to undertake a series of ground condition surveys and that the first phase of this would be carried out during the summer period in 2010.

3. GROUND CONDITION RESULTS

- 3.1** The initial results of the survey work were reported to officers on 13 August and indicated that a “potential void space approximately 2 metres in height had been identified at 14.6 metres below ground level”. It was also reported that water within the void space appeared to be under pressure conditions, although further confirmation of this was required through testing.
- 3.2** The initial findings indicated that potential risk to existing and new developments existed from shallow mine workings and that “subsidence could be an issue”.
- 3.3** Following receipt of this information further ground tests were commissioned to provide a full picture of the ground conditions. In the meantime, an exceptional closure of Gargieston Primary School has been agreed by the Scottish Government and the school is closed to pupils from Tuesday 17 August to Friday 20 August inclusive. This decision was taken to ensure the health and safety of all Gargieston Primary staff and pupils. Out of school care arrangements, at Onthank Primary, have been put in place for Gargieston children who attend the service provided by PEACE.
- 3.4** The findings of the second feedback report were received on Tuesday 17 August and have provided the following comments :-
- A further void at a depth of 38 metres has been identified;
 - SMK Enviros, the consultants have indicated that the nature of the void space gives a potential significant risk of subsidence, and that the existence of multiple seams also gives a potential significant risk ; and
 - SMK Enviros have also advised that whilst, in their view, the overall risk of significant subsidence is low, in the circumstances they would advise taking a precautionary approach.
- 3.5** Comment has also been received from the Council’s insurers who have intimated that, in the event of any catastrophic building subsidence, the insurance risk would be second to that of protecting life and limb mindful of the legal implications for individuals from negligence to do so.
- 3.5** Further ground tests will be undertaken by the consultants to determine what treatment could be applied to the ground conditions for the new build project and the costs of this. Officers recognise that although the existence of mine workings around Gargieston has long been known, there also has been no evidence of significant subsidence. However, it is also recognised that the absence of such evidence would not offer any guarantee against future movement. The size of the void is significant and it is nearer the surface than professional engineering opinion believes to provide a guarantee of safety. The considered view therefore is that the only prudent action available to the Council is to consider the present building to be a controlled area and to vacate it at this stage. The following measures, detailed in section 4 of this

report, will ensure the health and safety of pupils and the continuity of education provision of Gargieston Primary School and Nursery Class.

4. FUTURE EDUCATION PROVISION AT GARGIESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY SCHOOL'S EXISTING BUILDINGS

4.1 For academic session 2010/11 Gargieston Primary will operate a 13 class structure, comprising the nursery class and 12 primary classes. The primary aged pupils are broken down as follows :-

- P1 2 classes (46 pupils)
- P2 2 classes (47 pupils)
- P3 1 class (30 pupils)
- P3/4 1 class (25 pupils)
- P4 1 class (33 pupils)
- P5 1 class (32 pupils)
- P5/6 1 class (25 pupils)
- P6 1 class (31 pupils)
- P7 2 classes (53 pupils)

4.2 A review of available accommodation has been undertaken and the following paragraphs indicate the preferred decant solutions, having taken account of travel distance, the need to minimise the number of locations used, and the educational impact for both Gargieston and the receiving schools. It was also considered appropriate to keep the pupils and staff of Gargieston Primary within their own Learning Community, if possible.

4.3 This review of educational establishments has confirmed that sufficient space is available within :-

- Crosshouse Nursery;
- Shortlees Primary;
- Bellfield Primary; and
- Grange Campus

4.4 These establishments have been chosen to minimise the number of establishments used during the decant period. As the school operates a 12 class primary structure, in addition to a nursery class, this will allow the primary pupils to be split into four classes, which keeps pupils with peers at a similar stage. For example, the four Primary 1 and 2 classes will be located together, the Primary 3 – 5 classes will be kept together and the Primary 5/6 to Primary 7 classes will be placed in one location. The use of the Grange Campus will also mean that children will be on the same site as their associated secondary school with improved opportunities for transition and cross sector work. Of prime importance is the need to maintain the identity of Gargieston Primary School and consideration of how this can best be achieved will be taken forward with the Head Teacher, the school staff and the Parent Council.

4.5 Nursery Class

- (a) Early discussions have taken place with the Care Commission and confirmation has been received that the registration of Crosshouse Nursery School can be increased to 60 / 60 (60 morning places and 60 afternoon places). Due to the numbers attending the establishment this will allow all of the pre school pupils to attend 5 sessions per week, and it is hoped that, with consultation with the Head Teachers and parents, that all 3 year olds can receive 3 sessions per week.
- (b) Due to the layout of accommodation the children in the Nursery Class will be taught in the same main room with their Crosshouse peers. It is hoped that this close interaction will promote joint working between the two sets of staff and the children, although ultimately there will be a need to ensure the excellent transition arrangements currently in place at Gargieston Primary for children entering Primary 1.

4.6 Primary 1 and Primary 2 Classes (2 classes at each stage)

- (a) Primary 1 and 2 classes can be accommodated within Shortlees Primary. This is a modern school with exceptional facilities. There are 15 teaching rooms, Shortlees Primary currently operating an 11 class structure, plus a nurture class. Discussions with the Head Teachers of Shortlees and Gargieston have confirmed that the 4 classes can be accommodated.
- (b) Further discussion is required to ensure that school access to the community room adjacent to the dining hall is secured during school time. Efficient timetabling will be put in place to ensure that all pupils from both schools receive appropriate access to the complete range of facilities which will deliver the full breadth of the curriculum.

4.7 Primary 3, Primary 3 / 4, Primary 4 and Primary 5 Classes

- (a) It is proposed that these 4 classes are located within accommodation at Bellfield Primary, which currently has 14 teaching rooms and a 10 class structure for this academic session within 9 classrooms. Cabinet will acknowledge that the school currently accommodates Crossroads Primary and to locate Gargieston Primary pupils some reallocation of the accommodation will be necessary until the formal closure of Crossroads on 8 October 2010. This will require to be undertaken sensitively so as not to impact on the education provision for Bellfield Primary pupils, but may impact on the location of the Bellfield Out of School Care provision and the location of the Bellfield Primary School library. Accommodation options being considered for the Out of School Care Service include Kirkstyle Primary and Bellfield Community Centre, although liaison with the Care Commission on whichever location is chosen will be required prior to the physical relocation.
- (b) After the October break an additional room will be released with the formal closure of Crossroads Primary and this will ease any temporary accommodation difficulties.

4.8 Primary 5 / 6, Primary 6 and Primary 7 (2 classes)

- (a) Work has identified that 4 classes can be placed within accommodation at the Grange Campus. As discussed with parents, at public meetings on 29 June 2010, this will provide an opportunity to enhance the transition arrangements for this cohort of pupils.
- (b) To accommodate Gargieston pupils into the campus will require the relocation of the Gaelic Unit into smaller accommodation and the need to move a Park class into a smaller room within the campus. Both of these moves will be done without negatively impacting on either class sets' space requirements

4.9 Out of School Care

- (a) Officers have worked with PEACE to identify locations to maintain an effective out of school care provision. This service could be established at Grange Campus, which can accommodate 20 additional pupils from Gargieston Primary, and work will continue to finalise this service in time for the return of pupils on Monday 23 August.
- (b) Further availability is also present at Onthank Primary for 14 children, if the anticipated demand increases.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 In the time until Monday 23 August 2010, when the pupils of Gargieston Primary School and Nursery Class will resume their education, a number of factors need to be addressed. A brief outline of these is given in the following paragraphs of this section.

5.2 Pupil Transport

- (a) Officers are making the necessary arrangements to transport the pupils to 3 of the 4 decant locations. During the public meeting a number of parents intimated that they did not see it necessary to transport pupils to Grange Academy during the decant period, which was scheduled to commence in January 2011. It may be however that some children will be entitled to free transport under the Council's policy. The need for this will therefore require to be assessed on an individual basis.
- (b) Pupil transport will therefore be arranged for the nursery class children and the P1 to P5 pupils attending Gargieston Primary at Shortlees Primary and Bellfield Primary.

5.3 Head Teacher Liaison

- (a) All Head Teachers of the receiving schools have met with members of the ESS Directorate over recent days. A meeting of all Heads was arranged for 18 August at which operational matters were discussed in detail and close

monitoring of the decant arrangements will be put in place to ensure that educational standards are not adversely affected for pupils from any of the schools.

5.4 Relocation of Educational Materials from Gargieston Primary

- (a) A risk assessment has been completed by suitably qualified staff and limited access to the building will be provided over the next two days. This will allow each class teacher to take the necessary resources to their decant location. It is envisaged that this will be completed by Friday so that when pupils return on 23 August they do not lose any further learning and teaching time.

5.5 Communication Strategy

- (a) Officers are committed to establishing, and maintaining, an effective communication strategy with the pupils, staff and parents of Gargieston Primary and those of the receiving schools. As soon as it became aware on 13 August that ground condition issues were apparent, letters were sent to all parents, staff and local residents. This letter was also copied onto the Council's website, alongside a list of Frequently Asked Questions, and the Council helpline was able to provide advice over the course of the weekend. Officers have also been liaising directly with staff and the Chair of the Parent Council to keep them apprised of the situation.
- (b) Following this Cabinet meeting a further letter will be issued to parents advising them of the need to decant the school and setting out the decant arrangements. Contact with local residents will also be maintained through correspondence to ensure that they are kept informed of any relevant information. Officers have also committed to attend a meeting of the Parent Council on 18 August. As soon as transport arrangements have been confirmed these will be relayed to parents.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Nil

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Estimated costs associated with the decant of the school during the construction of a new building were provided to Cabinet on 16 June 2010. Due to the nature of this emergency decant these will be revised and reported to Cabinet in a future report. The majority of expenditure will be incurred in transporting the pupils.

8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 These arrangements will ensure that the Council continues to meet the promotion of lifelong learning element of the Community Plan.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The decision to implement an exceptional closure was taken to ensure the health and safety of all staff and pupils at Gargieston Primary School and Nursery Class. The immediate decant of pupils to accommodation within the establishments detailed in section 4 of this report will allow the Council to maintain education provision for all children and pupils attending Gargieston.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that Cabinet :-

- (i) Note the results of the ground condition surveys;
- (ii) Endorse the actions set out in section 4 of this report to ensure the delivery of pre school and primary education for all Gargieston pupils;
- (iii) Note the arrangements being made to continue the Gargieston Out of School Care;
- (iv) Note that further tests will be conducted to establish the required ground works for the new build project, and that this will be reported to a further meeting of the Cabinet along with the estimated costs; and
- (v) Otherwise note the contents of this report.

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and Social Services

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EC /
17 August 2010

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Report – 29 October 2009 (Agenda Item 1E)
Cabinet Report – 16 June 2010 (Agenda Item 2E)

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: (01563) 576017 or Euan Couperwhite, Head of Resources, Tel: (01563) 576090.

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