

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 12 FEBRUARY 2003

**THE RESULT OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE A
NEW BUILD NON-DENOMINATIONAL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL
PROVIDING QUALITY ACCOMMODATION FOR:**

- **BELLFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL**
- **SHORTLEES PRIMARY SCHOOL**
- **INCORPORATING EARLY YEARS PROVISION**
- **ENHANCED COMMUNITY LEARNING PROVISION AND INTEGRATED SERVICES**

**APPENDIX A - THE CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT
APPENDIX B - SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS**

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS FROM INTERESTED PARTIES ON THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ARE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION IN THE MEMBERS LOUNGE.

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Report by the Director of Educational and Social Services

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On the 21 November 2002 East Ayrshire Council's Education Committee approved the issue of a consultation document which proposed a new build for a non-denominational community Primary School providing quality accommodation for the communities of Bellfield and Shortlees, and including additional facilities for pre-school provision, community learning and integrated services. A copy of the consultative document is attached as Appendix A.

1.2 The main issues raised in the consultative document were:

- A key factor for the Council is the need to ensure that the best possible educational environment is available through the provision of a safe, secure and up-to-date environment
- The Council's vision for the school's estate and the need to:
 - Ensure that all aspects of the modern curriculum can be delivered to children of all abilities.
 - Provide the most up to date Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in all schools.
 - Provide maximum access for pupils, staff and parents.
 - The development of the Arts, Culture and Sports and Health education and the creation of Centres of Excellence to deliver an agenda of continuous improvement.
 - Provide a secure environment for all who are educated and work in the school.
 - Provide access to the community having regards to those with particular need.
 - Provide catering and dining facilities of the highest standard in a modern environment.
 - Provide appropriate social area provision for parents and pupils.
 - A commitment to the environment and environmental issues.

- Develop Learning Partnerships through the New Community Schools model and forming strong partnerships with local/national organisations committed to offering support.
- The recognised need for a significant investment in the school estate.
- The availability of national funding under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiative.
- The submission of an outline business case to the Scottish Executive according to guiding principles, which are:
 - (i) Rationalisation of school provision
 - (ii) A commitment to social inclusion and a presumption in favour of mainstream education
 - (iii) Provision of pre-school provision
 - (iv) Access to lifelong learning through an integrated community learning provision
 - (v) Partnership with other agencies supporting community development and better neighbourhoods

1.3 In relation to Bellfield Primary

Built in 1964, the projected future maintenance costs for the building are in the order of £1,094,000. Such costs coupled with an occupancy level less than 50% (roll of 217 against a 461 capacity) does not reflect efficient use of the Council's resources.

1.4 In relation to Shortlees Primary School

Built in 1964, the projected future maintenance costs for the building are in the order of £2,589,000. Such costs coupled with an occupancy level of less than 50% (roll 273 against a capacity of 594) does not reflect efficient use of the Council's resources.

1.5 In relation to Pre-School Provision

At Bellfield Primary School there is currently an Out of School care service as well as a partner provider for pre-school education for children aged 3 to 5 years.

Within Shortlees Primary School building there is a Nursery School with a capacity for 50 places in both morning and afternoon sessions and a further 16 places in each session funded from the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund.

1.6 In relation to Community Learning

A local community centre is currently located with the buildings of Shortlees Primary School and makes a significant contribution to the development of Lifelong Learning in the area.

1.7 Inclusion

The Council is committed to a policy of inclusion. A number of changes in legislation bring obligations to ensure that all have equal access to facilities. Possibilities offered under this proposal would address a number of issues related to equal access.

2. THE CONSULTATION

2.1 Written representations on the Committee's proposals were sought from interested parties in terms of the Education (Publications and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981 and Amendment Regulations 1987, 1988 and 1989.

2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements parents of affected schools and the appropriate school boards have been consulted. Copies of the consultation document were also made available to the staff of Bellfield and Shortlees Primary Schools, Shortlees Nursery school, representatives of teacher and staff unions, the appropriate members of the Scottish Parliament and the appropriate Member of Parliament.

2.3 The existence of the document was publicised in the press and copies were made widely available in the Education Offices and affected schools, in the local community and to local interest groups.

2.4 A number of meetings including two public meetings were arranged in partnership with the school boards of the establishments affected. These meetings were attended by parents, staff and members of the community. They offered the opportunity for discussion and clarification of the proposals as well as a forum for people to express their views of the proposal. The one organised for members of the community was well attended and gave the opportunity for very many views to be expressed.

3. VIEWS EXPRESSED

3.1 A total of 108 written submissions were received, including those made by e-mail . These submissions included those from:

- Constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament
- Chief Executive of Ayrshire and Arran Health Board
- Bellfield Primary School Board
- Shortlees Primary School Board
- Bellfield Community Council
- Puddleducks Nursery, Bellfield
- Shortlees Nursery
- Parents, Relatives and Residents
- Teachers and Pupils
- Unison
- Head Teachers Association of Scotland

Of the 108 submissions, two contained multiple enclosures giving a total of 217 submissions. A full summary of respondents is included at Appendix B.

In addition to the written submissions, the meetings referred to in 2.4 enabled a number of significant issues to be raised. The following paragraphs attempt to summarise the issues raised at the meetings and in the written responses to the consultative documents.

- 3.2** Bellfield Primary School Board rejected the proposals to close Bellfield Primary as the school currently lies at the heart of their Community. There were also many concerns raised about child Health and Safety not just in travelling to and from school, but also, with regard to items such as an integrated Health Centre which was viewed as a Methodone distribution centre for drug users, by many respondents.
- 3.3** Shortlees Primary School Board agreed, in principle, to the proposals but raised concerns over the existing overhead power cables, the linking of a “Better Neighbourhood Centre” within the grounds and the need for a “safe” play area for the pupils during any proposed building works.
- 3.4** The majority of responses expressed a strong negative opinion in respect of the proposed closure of Bellfield Primary School and its relocation within Shortlees. Community spirit and pupil safety lay at the centre of these submissions.
- 3.5** Margaret Jamieson MSP welcomed the decision to invest in the future of our young people and commended the approach to an integrated provision. She asked to be further advised on staffing proposals as she was concerned that, as a fundamental part of the delivery of integrated services, all staff should remain employees of East Ayrshire.
- 3.6** The Head Teachers Association of Scotland supported the policy of building renewal as a benefit to pupils and to the process of learning and teaching.
- 3.7** The East Ayrshire Branch of UNISON, while not opposed to the policy of building renewal, expressed serious concerns about the PPP funding model and for the future employment position of staff.
- 3.8** The Chief Executive of Ayrshire and Arran Health Board expressed the view that integration of the two schools would address some existing concerns for the schools individually. It would be important however to recognise that while integration creates opportunities for bringing communities together there is a need to continue to recognise the individual nature of health issues for both of these communities.
- 3.9** The Head Teacher and staff of Shortlees Primary School, supported the proposals. It was appreciated that an excellent opportunity existed through the integrated services approach to support the communities concerned and

to assist in their regeneration. Any changes in conditions of employment would be the subject of consultation.

- 3.10** Bellfield Community Council expressed great concern over the proposals to close Bellfield Primary School. The school is seen as an asset to the community and a centre of excellence within the area.
- 3.11** The Head Teacher and staff of Shortlees Nursery School saw an excellent opportunity, through these proposals, to improve services for the community. Several points were raised relating to staffing and accommodation which would have to be addressed during the continuing consultation process, if the proposals were to go ahead. Questions were raised by parents of the Nursery with regard to future class sizes if the new build was to go ahead.
- 3.12** The senior staff of the Puddleducks Nursery, situated in Bellfield Primary School, highlighted their current level of working and the benefits enjoyed through their strong links with the Primary School. Being a partner/provider nursery they expressed the desire to be included in any new developments and were committed to continuing to provide and improve on the current provision for the community of Bellfield.

4. COMMENTS ON THE VIEWS EXPRESSED

- 4.1** The issue of the consultative document raised considerable interest and concerns amongst staff, parents, school boards, community groups and other interested parties. The number of written responses and the level of attendance and questioning at meetings confirms the important place that schools have in the community, the real interest that parents and others have in the quality of education that their children receive and particularly the concerns that parents and others have over proposals for change to the existing arrangements.
- 4.2** The expressions of support which were made by a number of respondents in respect of aspects of the proposal are to be welcomed.
- 4.3** Anxieties which have been expressed in respect of health and safety issues which have been generated by these proposals are recognised. Health and Safety remain a top priority for any new development.
- 4.4** A strong commitment exists to continue to work in partnership with the staff of both schools, and their School Boards, in the development of future educational provision for their communities and will ensure that the appropriate mechanisms exist to take this forward.
- 4.5** The points raised by the communities in Bellfield outline their opposition to the inclusion of Bellfield Primary School in this forward looking new community primary school development. In considering carefully the views expressed in opposition, it remains important to recognise that the opportunity to develop new, purpose built facilities based on the new community schools model cannot be rejected easily. Little of the expressed opposition to the proposal

centred on learning and teaching issues, integrated service delivery or enhanced access to the most up-to-date ICT provision and opportunities for raising attainment. In the final analysis, these remain key objectives permeating the proposal.

Greatly enhanced provision for future generation of young pupils in attendance at the proposed new build should be grasped. Locally, positive perceptions require to be developed over the planning period. Sensitive and participative planning and further consultation should be key ingredients of the development of the project. Considerable input on these lines is required if this proposal is to be taken forward in its entirety. There is a commitment to achieve this with the co-operation of Head Teachers, staff, school boards and key representatives of the community working together. Only on this basis will the project be successfully delivered. A commitment exists to facilitate this strategy as a priority for action within the department.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1** Having carefully considered the responses made during the consultation period, and placed these alongside the current condition of the fabric of the existing buildings, the current and projected occupancy levels of the buildings, their limited viability in delivering the modern curriculum for children of all abilities, the poor access for pupils, staff and parents, and the current levels of pre-school and community usage, it is concluded that the original proposals remain valid for further participative development. Not to proceed with the inclusion of both primary schools would result in greatly reduced opportunities for Bellfield Primary pupils. The points raised in consultation require careful consideration and require to be addressed in the planned implementation phase.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1** Taking account of all the issues raised in consultation, it is recommended that the Education Committee agree that:
- i) Bellfield Primary School be closed with effect from the end of the school session June 2006. That the pupils will transfer to the new build non-denominational primary school to be constructed on the campus of the present Shortlees Primary School in August 2006, or as soon as possible thereafter;
 - ii) Shortlees Primary School will be closed with effect from the end of the school session June 2006. The pupils will transfer to the new build non-denominational primary school to be constructed on the campus of the present Shortlees Primary School in August 2006, or as soon as possible thereafter;
 - iii) Shortlees Nursery School will be closed with effect from the end of the school session June 2006. The pupils will transfer to a new facility within the campus of the new build non-denominational primary school

to be constructed on the campus of the present Shortlees Primary School in August 2006, or as soon as possible thereafter;

- iv) included within the development will be facilities for
 - (a) the delivery of integrated services
 - (b) enhanced community learning

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

DM/MR
28 January 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- i) Written responses to the consultation document

Members wishing further information should contact John Mulgrew, Director of Educational and Social Services, Telephone (01563) 576017.

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

Margaret Jamieson, MSP
Head Teachers Association of Scotland
UNISON
Chief Executive of Ayrshire and Arran Health Board
Bellfield School Board (including 96 parental responses)
Shortlees School Board
Head Teacher Shortlees Primary School
Bellfield Community Council
Puddleducks Nursery, Bellfield (Senior Staff)
Shortlees Nursery (Staff)
Shortlees Nursery (involving 14 parental responses)
Bellfield Primary School (involving 2 individual staff responses)
Bellfield Primary School (involving 8 individual pupil responses)
Shortlees Primary School Parents (involving 2 individual responses)
Bellfield Primary School (involving 84 individual responses from parents, former parents, former pupils, grandparents, nursery parents, residents of the area and other relatives of pupils)
Shortlees Nursery (results of a survey, undertaken by the Head Teacher, of those present at the Christmas Nativity)