

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 5 FEBRUARY, 2014

THE CREATION OF A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL ARISING FROM THE PROPOSED MERGER OF BELLFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND KIRKSTYLE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE REVIEW OF THE GRANGE ACADEMY AND KILMARNOCK ACADEMY CATCHMENT AREAS

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to issue the Proposal Document on the future of education provision at Bellfield and Kirkstyle Primary Schools.
- 1.2 Further, that due consideration is given to re-alignment of current P7-S1 transfer destinations in order to support future stability across primary secondary transition for non-denominational education in the Kilmarnock area. This has particular implications for Hillhead Primary School, Grange Academy and Kilmarnock Academy.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of 27 June 2012, Cabinet agreed with the objectives of the School Estate Management Plan 2012 which were to:
 - achieve an overall occupancy level of 85% of capacity;
 - address maintenance issues and condition;
 - meet statutory requirements including DDA legislation
 - improve property flexibility; and
 - supporting Curriculum for Excellence.
- 2.2 The Transformation Strategy, approved by the Council on 28 June 2012, also set out the target to achieve an overall target occupancy in schools of 85% capacity and to reduce the Council's building stock by 25%.
- 2.3 The remit of the School Estate Rationalisation Project Board, (formed to support delivery of this aspect of the Transformation Strategy), includes the responsibility to produce an overall strategy encompassing mergers, closures and re-zoning in order to meet the ambitions of the Transformation Strategy as listed in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 above.

3. PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

- 3.1 The Proposal Document is attached as Appendix 1 of this report, and subject to Cabinet approval will be made available to all stakeholders in accordance

with normal procedures under the terms of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010.

The Proposal Document seeks comment on two main elements. These are:

- The proposal to create a new primary school from the merger of Bellfield Primary School with Kirkstyle Primary School; and
- The proposed realignment of the catchment areas of Grange Academy and Kilmarnock Academy. If implemented, this would result in the catchment area of the new merged school being incorporated within the catchment area of Kilmarnock Academy and the catchment area of Hillhead Primary School being incorporated within the catchment area of Grange Academy.

CONTEXT

- 3.2 The rationale behind the proposals contained in the document reflects the priorities set out in the East Ayrshire Council Schools Estate management plan and the Transformation Board aims which focus on greater effectiveness in all aspects of service delivery.
- 3.3 The development of this set of proposals seeks to bring an additional new build school into the East Ayrshire School Estate and ensure that there is coherence across other elements of the School Estate Rationalisation programme. This part of the proposals would see the merger of Kirkstyle Primary School and Bellfield Primary School on a site yet to be determined
- 3.4 Specifically this set of proposals sets out to ensure that while providing a new build by bringing two primary school communities together, that there is a balance retained for the secondary schools to which pupils would consequently transfer to in the future. Currently Bellfield P7 pupils transfer to Grange Academy and Kirkstyle children go to Kilmarnock Academy. If the proposal for the merger of Kirkstyle and Bellfield Primary Schools is accepted following consultation, the children of that new school would transfer to the new secondary school resulting from the merger of Kilmarnock Academy and James Hamilton Academy with their peers. It is to be noted that if accepted, this proposal would have implications for Puddleducks Nursery which is presently located in Bellfield Primary School and the All-Ayrshire Technicians Service which is also located in the school.
- 3.5 In the consultation exercise which was conducted on the merger of James Hamilton Academy and Kilmarnock Academy, strong views were expressed about the perceived issues relating to transport to the new school should it be established on the land at the present James Hamilton campus. The eventual decision by Cabinet was that the new school would be sited at the James Hamilton site. This proposal seeks to directly address the issues raised in the James Hamilton Academy and Kilmarnock Academy consultation exercise by proposing that in future Hillhead Primary School pupils would at age of transfer go to Grange Academy instead of Kilmarnock Academy, or its

successor. This would address balance of numbers for the respective secondary schools since Grange Academy would also benefit from the increase in numbers from Shortlees Primary School resulting from the re-zoning of the area in Caprington.

- 3.6 The principal reasons for issuing this Proposal Document are to offer the Bellfield and Kirkstyle communities a new build school with the educational benefits that will come from a modern construction. It will also deliver the Council a best value alternative to the present situation since the respective rolls of Bellfield and Kirkstyle Primary Schools have fallen steadily in recent years and consequently spare capacity in each establishment has increased. The table below is an extract from the proposal document which highlights the main issues:

ESTABLISHMENT	PLANNING CAPACITY	PUPIL ROLL (SEPT 2013)	OCCUPANCY LEVEL	SURPLUS CAPACITY
Bellfield Primary School	429	226	52.68%	203
Kirkstyle Primary School	454	232	51.10%	222
	883	458	52.39%	425

The table demonstrates that there is significant under-occupancy within each of the schools and that the occupancy rates, both individually and collectively, are below the estate-wide, average occupancy level target of 85% set within the Council's School Estate Management Plan and Transformation Strategy. It should be understood that there is not an expectation that every school will reach the 85% threshold and, additionally, that schools should have some percentage of capacity available for contingency. The goal for the entire School Estate would be to achieve the average occupancy of 85% or better through closures/mergers/catchment re-alignment. Presently the range of percentage occupancy goes from 34% at Logan PS, to 94% at Annanhill PS. For secondary level establishments the range is 59% at Auchinleck Academy to 89% at St Joseph's Academy.

- 3.7 The school buildings concerned in merger proposals are both categorised for suitability and condition as part of the annual SEMP and are graded as shown in the table below:-

ESTABLISHMENT	SUITABILITY	CONDITION
Bellfield Primary School	B	B
Kirkstyle Primary School	B	B

- 3.8 There is funding available through the capital programme for a new-build establishment in the area, therefore it is proposed to build the suggested new merged school, on a site as yet to be decided, through the consultation process which would ensue if the proposals are accepted by Cabinet.
- 3.9 During the James Hamilton/Kilmarnock Academies consultation process it emerged during feedback from Parents at the public meeting held for Hillhead

Primary School, that should the new merged academy be sited on Sutherland Drive then Hillhead Primary School parents would want to transfer to Grange Academy. This matter has been included in the proposals document for consideration.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Any proposal regarding the closure or merger of schools, including rezoning must comply with the legislative requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. It should be noted, however, that the elements of these proposals which relate to the merger of Kirkstyle Primary School and Bellfield Primary School will be subject to those aspects of the Act that relate to Ministerial call-in. The elements which relate to rezoning and transfer arrangements are not subject to such call-in. If Cabinet approve the issue of the Proposal Document the consultation period will formally start on Friday 14 February 2014 and end on Friday 28 March 2014.

4.2 In terms of the application of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010 the proposal document has specific implications in terms of consultation for the following establishments in addition to the wider range of consultees listed in Schedule 2 of the Act:

- Bellfield Primary School
- Kirkstyle Primary School
- Hillhead Primary School
- Grange Academy
- Kilmarnock Academy
- James Hamilton Academy

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The cost of any consultation process will be met from existing Departmental budgets. Using the cost and area allowance published by the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) the capital cost of a new primary school for approximately 570 pupils would be £10.292 million.

5.2 The proposed merger of Bellfield Primary School and Kirkstyle Primary School, with the creation of a new build primary school will realise revenue savings of approximately £106,000 per annum.

6. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are implications for a range of teaching, administration, janitorial and cleaning staff which would be dealt with under the authority's established procedures.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 By undertaking this consultation exercise the Council is seeking views on the future of education provision at Bellfield and Kirkstyle Primary Schools. It is the view of the council that this process of improving the school estate will promote Lifelong learning.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 8.1 By undertaking a formal consultation process the Council will comply with the legislative requirements. Subject to the outcome of the process, and if the proposal is implemented, the Council will be able to deliver the significant educational benefits outlined in the Proposal Document.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet is asked to approve:

- (i) The Proposal Document attached as Appendix 1 of this report;
- (ii) That the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services makes arrangements for public consultation on these proposals in line with legal requirements;
- (iii) That the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services gathers and analyses comments and feedback obtained during the consultation period and prepares a Consultation Report to be submitted to a future Cabinet in 2014; and
- (iv) Otherwise note the contents of this report.

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Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

AW/GRS
23 January, 2014

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Cabinet Report – School Estate Management Plan
2. Council Report – Transformation Strategy (28 June 2012, Agenda Item 7)

Any members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services on 01563 576017, or Euan Couperwhite, Head of Service: Projects on 01563 576090

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