



REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – 29 AUGUST 2019

LONGHAVEN SCHOOL

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Approve the preparation of an Options Appraisal on the future of Longhaven School, with one potential option being permanent closure of the school.**
- 1.2 Support community engagement as part of the Options Appraisal process to identify alternative options that should be considered.**
- 1.3 Agree to receive a further report in due course.**

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 Longhaven School is an accessible rural school in the Peterhead Schools network in Aberdeenshire. The two storey school is located on the A90 in the settlement of Longhaven, 5 miles from Peterhead. The school has a capacity of 50 pupils, with all teaching accommodation located on the ground floor, and the head teacher's office based on the first floor.
- 2.2 As previously reported to the Education & Children's Services Committee in March and May, 2018, continued attempts to appoint a new head teacher to the School were unsuccessful and Aberdeenshire Council was no longer able to deliver education at Longhaven School on return from the break in April, 2018. Officers worked closely with all affected families to support their children to settle at an alternative school of their choice.
- 2.3 A decision to temporarily 'mothball' the school from 12 October. 2018. was taken by the Service. As reported on 21 March. 2019, the decision was taken to mothball the school for a further session. Longhaven School has been mothballed throughout the 2018/19 session and there were no approaches made to Aberdeenshire Council for any new pupils to enrol at the school from August .2019.
- 2.4 In order for the school to become operational again. there needs to be sufficient pupils on the roll to make educational experiences viable and to ensure that pupils receive the entirety of the broad curricular entitlements that the local authority is expected to provide to children.
- 2.5 School roll forecasts show a very small number of families living in the catchment area with children who are under school age. As Longhaven School will be mothballed for a second academic session from August, 2019, and with the small number of in-zone potential pupils, it is appropriate to

consider the future of the school. Officers propose that an Options Appraisal is conducted, which will consider all available information.

- 2.6 Following the Options Appraisal, a report will be brought back to the Education & Children's Services Committee in due course, detailing the outcome of the Appraisal and the next steps that will be required.
- 2.7 One of the options identified as part of the Appraisal could be to close the school. If this is considered to be the only viable option for the school, then Aberdeenshire Council must undertake a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. If this was the only viable option, there would be extensive consultation with the affected community and Buchan Area Committee. As a rural school, there is a presumption against closure and Aberdeenshire Council must ensure all other alternatives have been identified and robustly considered prior to undertaking any statutory consultation on this matter.
- 2.8 The Longhaven community must have the opportunity to present alternatives to closure for the authority to consider. Therefore, as part of the Options Appraisal process, officers intend to engage with the community to explore all possible options for the future of the school.
- 2.9 Officers will hold a minimum of two public engagement sessions for the Longhaven community. Further sessions can be scheduled if it is appropriate to do so, and further dialogue is required.
- 2.10 It is important that the process is not extended for a prolonged period, as this causes further uncertainty for the community. However, it is also imperative that a full conversation can be had with all relative stakeholders, particularly future prospective parents who may wish to see the school re-open. With this consideration, whilst having no specific end date, the Options Appraisal stage should incorporate the Primary 1 admission period for the 2020/21 school session which will take place in January, 2020.
- 2.11 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated. They are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3. Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section E.3.3 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the statutory functions of the Council under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 including those relating to approval of proposals, and the requirement for authorities to conduct a pre-consultation in relation to potential rural school closures.

4. Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required at this stage because the Options Appraisal process will incorporate an equality impact assessment.

The recommendations in this report do not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

- 4.2 There are no staffing implications at this stage. The recommendations of this report will not generate any additional financial implications, all existing expenditure relating to the Longhaven School building remain.
- 4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level 'A Future Fit E&CS Estate'. The Council needs to be assured that the estate will deliver an inclusive and positive environment for learning, working and engagement.
<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/21265/directorate-risks.pdf>

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