

**REPORT TO EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE –
26 AUGUST 2021**

LONGHAVEN SCHOOL

1. Reason for Report/Summary

This report provides an update on Longhaven School and update on the engagement carried out with the community as part of the options appraisal process approved on 29 August 2019.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

2.1 Note the updated information on Longhaven School; and

2.2 Agree to receive a further report in December 2021, following completion of the options appraisal which will include the next steps for Longhaven School.

3. Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 In April 2018 pupils were temporarily relocated from Longhaven School to neighbouring schools, due to difficulties in appointing a head teacher for the school. Reference is made to Education & Children's Services Committee on 11 October 2018, 21 March 2019 and 29 August 2019 when update reports were considered by elected members.
- 3.2 A decision to temporarily mothball Longhaven School from 12 October 2018 was taken by the Director of Education & Children's Services, with annual extensions issued to date.
- 3.3 In line with the Scottish Government's statutory guidance contained in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act of 2010, mothballing is the temporary closure of a school which does not in itself lead to statutory consultation. The full guidance can be found at the following link:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/schools-consultation-scotland-act-2010-statutory-guidance/>
- 3.4 It is important that a school should not remain mothballed for a prolonged period, as this causes further uncertainty for families and the community. A report considered by Education & Children's Services Committee on 29 August 2019 sought approval for officers to begin an options appraisal on the future of the school.
- 3.5 Officers planned to hold a minimum of two public engagement sessions for the Longhaven community, with additional sessions and dialogue to be scheduled as required.

- 3.6 The first engagement session was held in October 2019, however due to the impact of Covid-19, the second public drop-in session has been postponed until restrictions on public gatherings are lifted. An online survey was conducted as an alternative to meetings, with a letter providing details posted to every address within the catchment area.
- 3.7 A report will be brought back to Education and Children's Services Committee with the completed options appraisal with officer recommendation for next steps.

4. Discussion

- 4.1 The Primary 1 admission period for all Aberdeenshire Schools takes place in January each year. Press releases are issued in January each year, to inform families that applications could be made for pupils to join the school. No applications to Longhaven School have been received since 2019 until now.
- 4.2 The deadline for submitting out of zone placing requests is 15 March annually. There have been no applications received from families wishing for their child to attend Longhaven School via placing requests over the last three years.
- 4.3 The first public engagement session regarding the future of Longhaven School took place on 9 October 2019 at Longhaven Village Hall. Members of the community were notified of the meeting by a letter posted to every address within catchment. This was also shared with the community council and with local elected members to raise awareness.
- 4.4 The session was attended by 15 community members, including 5 parents. The majority of the attendees were local residents. Seven comment cards were completed by attendees, and officers were available to answer any questions raised on the night. Parents attending the meeting were concerned regarding the viability of the school if it reopened with small numbers. Although, the attendees were disappointed with the existing position of the school, there was a sense of understanding and awareness that the Council did what was possible to keep the school open. One local resident without children of primary school age, was very unhappy that the school was mothballed and has not yet reopened.
- 4.5 In early 2021, when it became clear that face to face public meetings would still be subject to restrictions for a number of months, a decision was made to conduct an online survey of residents. 124 letters were posted with details of the survey to all properties within the catchment area. Alternative methods of contact were also suggested for residents wishing to comment but uncomfortable with completing a survey.
- 4.6 The survey was open from 12 April until 14 May 2021. A total of 7 people responded. The survey asked a range of questions including whether the respondents wished to see the school reopen, and if so whether they would enrol their children; what alternative uses they would like to see for the building

if it cannot reopen; and how Aberdeenshire Council could encourage more families to enrol.

- 4.7 Parents completing the survey did not support the school reopening, and in line with comments received at the public session had concerns about viability of the school with small numbers. Other respondents did wish to see the school reopen, however did not have children of school age who could attend.
- 4.8 There is a clear emotional attachment to the school with many community members having attended or worked at the school.
- 4.9 Officers will continue to analyse all responses, comments and other available information in order to complete the options appraisal process, however it may be appropriate for further engagement to take place.
- 4.10 If the officer recommendation of the options appraisal is that the school cannot be reopened, then a formal consultation on the permanent closure of the school will be required under the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010. This will require the Council to set and publish a deadline by which any further alternatives to closure can be made by the community. This must take place before the statutory consultation can commence.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Education” and “Health and Wellbeing” within the pillar “Our People”, and the “Economy and Enterprise” within the “Our Economy” pillar, securing continuous improvement in outcomes for ALL children and young people and ensuring better, integrated working arrangements in pursuit of improved outcomes for children and young people.

This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Estate Modernisation” within the Pillar “Our Economy”, having responsible finances and having an estate that is sustainable, efficient and fit for purpose.

- 5.2 This report helps deliver against: Scotland’s Learning Estate Strategy Connecting People, Places and Learning and Aberdeenshire Council’s Learning Estates and Accessibility Strategies.
- 5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	X		
Staffing	X		
Equalities		X	
Fairer Scotland Duty		X	
Town Centre First		X	
Sustainability		X	
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		X	

- 5.4 The financial implications of the options appraisal exercise are minimal, these are in terms of completion of the options appraisal process by the officers and potential distribution of communication content to the Longhaven community by post.
- 5.5 All existing expenditure relating to the Longhaven School building remain the same.
- 5.6 There will be staffing implications regarding the options appraisal exercise. Officers will be required to complete the process and to attend an engagement event(s) as part of the process. However, this will be undertaken alongside current duties.
- 5.7 The options appraisal exercise will not generate any staffing implications for Longhaven School staff members, as all support staff at the school had already been offered alternative arrangements at local schools in line with their existing contracts.
- 5.8 An integrated impact assessment is not required at this stage because the options appraisal process will incorporate an integrated impact assessment. The recommendations in this report do not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 5.9 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: ACORP007 Social risk (demographic change).
[Corporate Risk Register](#)
- 5.10 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level: ECSR002 Developing Excellence and Equality.
[Directorate Risk Registers](#)

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 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 and in terms of Section E3.4 as it relates to overseeing the functions of the Council under the Education (Scotland) Acts and all other relevant legislation and regulations.

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Director of Education & Children's Services

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