

Report

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Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	8 June 2016
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources) Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

Subject:	Walston Primary School and Rural Communities Nursery - Required Land Purchase, Proposed Relocation of School and Subsequent Statutory Consultation
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ request approval to undertake a statutory consultation on the relocation of Walston Primary School and Rural Communities Nursery to the village of Elsrickle
- ◆ request approval to conclude negotiations for the acquisition of land and any other associated access to enable the rebuilding of Walston Primary School and Rural Communities Nursery on the site identified in Plan1, conditional upon the outcome of the statutory consultation

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that at a statutory consultation is undertaken on the relocation of Walston Primary school and the Rural Communities Nursery; and
- (2) that the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Services), in consultation with the Head of Administration and Legal Services, be authorised to conclude all matters in respect of any subsequent acquisition and enter into the necessary legal agreements, on terms which are in the best interests of the Council.

3. Background

- 3.1. Walston Primary School and Rural Communities Nursery is currently located off the A721, approximately 6 miles from Biggar. Rebuilding of the school and nursery were programmed to commence in late 2015.
- 3.2. The existing school roll is currently 34 pupils. The Rural Communities Nursery also operates from the existing building and provides up to 20 places in the morning and 20 in the afternoon. The Nursery operates on the site for 2½ days per week.

- 3.3. A design of the new school on its existing site has been prepared and a parent and resident roadshow was undertaken on 5 February 2015 to share and receive comment on the plans. After this meeting a proposal was presented by a local landowner to sell the Council land adjacent to the village of Elsrickle to relocate the school.
- 3.4. An initial site investigation of the land has been undertaken which identified no significant impediment to the construction of a new school building at this alternative location. The site for the proposed new school is outlined in Plan 1.
- 3.5. There are a number of potential benefits to relocating the school to this new site:-
- ◆ Building the new school on this site would remove the need to decant pupils of Walston Primary School and the Rural Communities Nursery, who would be able to remain in the existing building until the new school is complete.
 - ◆ The new site would allow sufficient additional area to cope with any future, potential pupil growth by allowing for a 3rd classroom extension if required. This would be more difficult to achieve on the existing site.
 - ◆ The new site adjacent the village of Elsrickle would provide enhanced opportunities for community use of the school facilities outwith school hours and assist with the vitality and viability of the village. Following an assessment of the formal consultation outcomes, consideration will be given to how best to meet community needs in terms of the provision of community facilities.
 - ◆ The new site would provide a larger external area to develop the curriculum in line with the Council's Outdoor Learning Strategy.
 - ◆ The present site is often difficult to access in severe weather conditions. The proposed new location, accessed via the A721, is less likely to be affected by severe weather events and therefore less likely to experience school closures.
 - ◆ Currently community events at the school are not widely attended by members of the wider community. The school is confident that if the new school was located within the village of Elsrickle, school events would be more likely to be attended by members of the wider community.

4. Informal discussions with key stakeholders

- 4.1. Initial discussion took place with the Head Teacher. This was followed by a meeting with the Parent Council.
- 4.2. Given the initial positive feedback received by the Parent Council a letter was issued to all parents requesting their views on the possible relocation of the school. The options given were as follows:-
- ◆ I agree, in principle, with the relocation of Walston Primary School, to the village of Elsrickle opposite the Elsrickle Hall.
 - ◆ I would prefer Walston Primary School to be rebuilt on the existing school site.
 - ◆ I have no preference/don't know.

- 4.3. The feedback received is summarised below:-

Number of potential returns (1 per family)	33
Number of returns received	22

(2 families did not submit return as they are nursery parents and live outwith the school's catchment area)

	In favour of proposal	Against proposal	No preference / don't know
Parent of pupil	14	3	2
Parent of nursery child	3	0	0
TOTAL	17	3	2

- 4.4. Given the level of support demonstrated above, it would be appropriate to undertake a statutory consultation to propose the relocation of Walston Primary School.

5. Proposal

- 5.1. The terms of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010 require that, prior to a decision on relocation being taken by the Council, it must first undertake the statutory consultation process as provided in the Act.
- 5.2. If after the statutory consultation authority to relocate Walston Primary School is given, the indicative timeline for design and construction of the new school could be as follows:-

Stage	Indicative timescales
Assuming conclusion of statutory consultation and Executive Committee approval by	January 2017
Land Acquisition	Early 2017
Construction start	Summer 2017
New school open to pupils	August 2018

6. Statutory consultation timeline

- 6.1. Timeline of consultation process:-

Stage	Target Dates	Notes
Authorisation to proceed from Executive Committee	June 2016	Forward notification to Education Scotland Area Lead Officer to allow ES to ensure suitable resources available.
Consultation Notice published	August 2016	Press advertisement (Lanark Gazette)
Consultation period	15 August – 30 September 2016	Notification sent to stakeholders, available on council website and in Q&As and Libraries. Legislation states minimum of 30 school days within the consultation period.

Stage	Target Dates	Notes
Public Meeting	tbc – within consultation period above	Record views of attendees and include in Consultation Report
Collation of consultation feedback sent to Education Scotland for comment.	October 2016	Forward notification to Education Scotland Area Lead Officer to allow ES to ensure suitable resources available.
Education Scotland then to prepare their report and submit to the Council	November 2016	Legislation states 3 weeks for Education Scotland to prepare and submit their report to the Council or longer if agreed with Education Scotland.
Consultation Report (including feedback from Education Scotland) advertised and published	December 2016	Legislation states 3 weeks minimum prior to decision to implement
Executive Committee decision	February 2017	Executive Committee decision on implementation. <u>As not a closure proposal, no referral to Scottish Ministers required.</u>

7. Employee Implications

7.1. None.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. The additional costs associated with moving to the new site, including the proposed land purchase, will be managed from the Schools Modernisation Programme budget, from the subsequent disposal of the existing Walston Primary and Rural Communities Nursery and from the possible disposal of the Community Hall and/or land.

9. Other Implications

9.1. There were no significant issues for risk or sustainability in terms of the recommendations contained in this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

10.1. There is no requirement to carry out an impact assessment in terms of the proposals contained in this report. Consultation requirements are set out in section 5 of this report.

Jim Gilhooly
Executive Director (Education Resources)

Daniel Lowe
Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

19 May 2016

Link(s) to Council Values/Objectives

- ◆ Raise educational achievement and attainment
- ◆ Achieve efficient and effective use of resources

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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