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## **SCHOOL ESTATE PRE-CONSULTATION AND REVIEW**

**Report by Service Director Children and Young People**

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### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**6 September 2016**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides Elected Members with the feedback received from the stakeholders who participated in the school estates pre-consultation and review.**
- 1.2 Highlights key messages from the feedback from the 400 people who attended a school cluster engagement event, the 452 people who completed questionnaires and the 139 pupil questionnaires received.
- 1.3 Outlines next steps in the school estate consultation and review process.
- 1.4 Seeks approval to implement the recommendations made.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee:-**
  - (a) Note the positive engagement by stakeholders in the school estate pre-consultation.**
  - (b) Agree that all stakeholders are informed of the outcome of the consultation.**
  - (c) Agree the proposals to:**
    - 1. Implement Phase 1 of the School Estate Review during school session 2016/2017:**
      - i. Future of Mothballed Schools:  
Commence statutory consultations on proposals to permanently close Eccles/Leitholm Primary School, Ettrick Primary School and Hobkirk Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.**
      - ii. Carry out a focused pre-consultation on Roman Catholic Schools provision.**
      - iii. Commence focused pre-consultations on the future of Education provision in the towns of Jedburgh, Eyemouth, Hawick and Galashiels.**

- iv. Engage with rural schools with roll populations of less than 50 pupils regarding roll sustainability measures.**
  - v. Implement a Selkirk schools catchment review involving Yarrow, Kirkhope, Philiphaugh and Knowepark Primary Schools.**
- Note that Phase 2 of the School Estate Review will commence in school session 2017/2018 and include focused pre-consultations in the following school clusters: Berwickshire, Earlston, Kelso and Peebles.**
- Note that a commitment is given to carry out a review and consultation on the following within a two year period, ie before the end of school session 2017/2018:**
- i. School Transport Policy.**

### **3 PROPOSALS**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 Curriculum for Excellence is being implemented and further developed in all Scottish Borders schools. A review of the school estate must deliver maximum educational benefits for our children and young people within the school curriculum and the learning opportunities experienced within the education we provide.
- 3.2 Our school estate has buildings and locations, which have been in existence in some cases for over 100 years. Scottish Borders Council Executive (Education) Committee on 20 January 2015 agreed principles which would guide us in reviewing the school estate. These principles will ensure we take a strategic approach whilst delivering:
- a) Increased educational opportunities
  - b) Improved outcomes for children and young people
  - c) Sustainability
  - d) A future-proofed school estate
  - e) Affordability.
- 3.3 At the Executive (Education) Committee in February 2016 it was agreed to implement a pre-consultation and engage with all stakeholders to gather information and their views regarding the quality and issues within the current school estate provision. The consultation also sought views and ideas as to what our future school estates provision should aspire to look like.
- 3.4 This report provides an analysis of the feedback and information gathered from the pre-consultation, taking into consideration both the information from the public and our own data in analysing the existing school estate. This analysis has been used to identify a way forward as to how we will seek to improve our school estate and maximise educational benefits through the proposals that we bring forward for further consultation and decision making.
- 3.5 In preparation for the consultation, information was shared with Elected Members, Headteachers, Senior Officers and Parent Council Chairs. Feedback from these groups was used to shape the final formats of the pre-consultation for all schools.
- 3.6 The school estate pre-consultation began on 7 March. Data sets of core information relating to catchments and placing requests, school rolls, capacities, suitability and condition, transport and running costs were shared online and a questionnaire was available to be completed.
- 3.7 The pre-consultation was promoted through letters issued to every family via school mail, letters sent to all school user groups, Elected Members and Community Councils. A press release, frequent social media updates, posters and school newsletters were also used to advertise the pre-consultation events.
- 3.8 Nine consultation events were held, one in each High School over a three week period during March 2016. At these events, background

information about the legislation and process being followed as well as the core data regarding all schools across the Scottish Borders was shared.

- 3.9 Every school was represented and shared information about their achievements and plans for development as well as detail of the activities and opportunities offered in the school. Headteachers were present at their cluster event and all events were attended by Donna Manson, Service Director for Children and Young People, Michelle Strong, Chief Officer for Schools, Councillor Aitchison, Education Portfolio Holder, the Lead Education Estates Officer and the Senior Lead Officer for the cluster.

### Level of Response

- 3.10 In total, just over 400 people attended the engagement event with numbers in attendance as follows:

Berwick shire HS Cluster	Peebles shire HS Cluster	Eyemou th HS Cluster	Hawick HS Cluster	Gala Academ y Cluster	Jedburg h Gramm ar Cluster	Earlston HS Cluster	Selkirk HS Cluster	Kelso HS Cluster
15	60	40	40	50	85	55	30	40

- 3.11 Attendees were invited to complete questionnaires in either electronic or paper format and were given the opportunity to do so at the engagement event or at a later date.

- 3.12 In total, the survey responses representing 63 schools, broken down by secondary school cluster were as follows:

Berwick shire HS Cluster	Peebles shire HS Cluster	Eyemou th HS Cluster	Hawick HS Cluster	Gala Academ y Cluster	Jedburg h Gramm ar Cluster	Earlston HS Cluster	Selkirk HS Cluster	Kelso HS Cluster
20	86	31	63	50	79	27	72	24

- 3.13 Pupils were invited to respond via a young person's questionnaire and all schools were asked to invite their representative pupil group to submit their views. The following pupil responses were received as separate submissions from schools:

Berwick shire HS Cluster	Peebles shire HS Cluster	Eyemou th HS Cluster	Hawick HS Cluster	Gala Academ y Cluster	Jedburg h Gramm ar Cluster	Earlston HS Cluster	Selkirk HS Cluster	Kelso HS Cluster
0	6	6	4	33	74	5	1	10

The complete set of responses are available for Members in the Members' Library and can be made available for members of the public upon request at Council Headquarters.

- 3.14 There are 15,968 children and young people attending our schools and early learning and childcare provision in the Scottish Borders. The attendance of 415 people at engagement events and 452 responses on-line and 139 pupil questionnaires could be viewed as non-representative of the overall stakeholder group. However, in a pre-consultation event over 400 people did turn up to share their views and we had 591 written responses. These contributions are important and, in conjunction with our core facts, provide us with a basis to move forward in our review of

the school estate. As we do move forward into the next phase, we seek to increase participation and engagement as we plan the consultation process.

### **Consultation Feedback Across the Scottish Borders**

In all secondary school clusters across the Borders, key messages were provided by respondents during the consultation process:

#### **3.15 School Provision**

As stakeholders considered the core facts across the school estate, they identified that we need to rationalise the school estate and reduce the number of schools we have in order to achieve best value with the resources we have. Concerns were raised that some schools were costing so much more per pupil compared to others and this was viewed to be unfair, in particular if there were schools close to each other with spare capacity for pupils. There was consensus that we can reduce the number of schools we have based upon school roll figures and projections. There was a clear message both in the survey and at meetings that although it will be challenging to close some schools, the Council must take action to ensure that the resources we have in challenging fiscal times are used wisely and efficiently.

#### **3.16 Rural School Provision**

Stakeholders recognised (both those living in rural communities and those outwith) that there was a need for rural schools in parts of the Borders. There was a consensus of support for rural schools. Many comments were made at the public meetings about the importance of rural schools in the impact they have in sustaining our communities. However, there was a general consensus that there does come a point when schools may just be too small in being able to provide the range of learning experiences and the breadth and depth in the curriculum offer. It was also expressed that costs have to be reasonable too. Many communities expressed that the Council engage with communities when the roll is dropping from 3 to 2 or 2 to 1 classes to see what sustainability actions can be taken, rather than schools closing themselves once they enter into a 1 class school and roll of less than 19 pupils.

#### **3.17 Early Learning and Childcare**

The importance of Early Learning and Childcare provision being available to sustain rural communities was highlighted at many public meetings.

#### **3.18 Roman Catholic School Provision**

Stakeholders with children not in attendance at Roman Catholic Schools expressed whether Roman Catholic School Provision should be maintained and whether it should be rationalised considering the low numbers. Stakeholders raised concern at the engagement meetings about inclusion of families who are Roman Catholic coming in from Eastern Europe who are attending the Roman Catholic School and not

integrating into local community activities.

3.19

#### School Catchment Areas

The strongest representations for a catchment review came from Trinity Primary, Yarrow Primary, Kirkhope Primary and St Boswell Primary Schools' parents. In all of the cases being made, changes had been made to these school catchments a number of years ago and the communities wished for the old catchment boundaries to be reinstated. Families from the old catchment boundary addresses tended to still attend these schools, but entitlement to transport was an issue and this had resulted in falling rolls, although many parents stated that they would return to the schools above if the catchments were changed. The communities felt aggrieved as they were not consulted when these catchment changes were made. Consultation legislation has now changed and they feel that there is a strong argument for catchment consultations to be brought forward to rectify the complaint that communities were not consulted in changes which have had a significant impact upon the school roll in their schools. They expressed concern that families who continue to choose according to the old catchment boundaries have the anxiety of waiting for notification of placement at the school through placing request procedures and have to bear the additional cost of school transport.

3.20

#### School Transport

A range of matters were commented upon with regards to school transport. Most stakeholders expressed content with the quality of transport. Jedburgh was the only place where concern was expressed about traffic congestion and pupil safety in the town at school drop off/pick up times. Lack of transport beyond the school day impacts upon accessibility to after-school and evening activities for children and young people and was raised as a significant issue. Aspects of transport policy such as the entitlement distance or the privilege lift system were raised as concerns.

3.21

#### School Buildings and Facilities

Stakeholders raised concern about the inequity that currently exists across schools regarding building condition and suitability. Stakeholders from schools with ratings of C and D raised particular concern that their children were being educated in buildings in very poor condition compared to those children in the Borders who are in new build schools or schools who have had significant investment in their buildings. There is a call for transparency in how capital priorities are set. The communities of Eyemouth Primary School and Jedburgh town schools expressed most concern about their school facilities and felt that the Council should take urgent action and invest in their schools or consider new provision to address the category D and C status of their school buildings.

3.22

## Quality of Education and Learning Opportunities

The feedback about the quality of education across the Borders was very positive overall. However, key issues were raised in particular how the learning environment has an impact upon the range of learning experiences for the young people, eg the Jedburgh Grammar pupil hockey team feel very aggrieved that their sports participation is severely hampered by their poor facilities and view this as a disadvantage, especially considering the facilities at many other secondary schools in the Scottish Borders.

Stakeholders in smaller secondary schools raised concerns about the range of curriculum subjects on offer to young people compared to the large secondary schools.

There was feedback on the importance of children receiving high quality experiences and the need for poor teaching performance to be viewed as being addressed by the Council.

The challenge of teacher recruitment was expressed and concerns raised that poor buildings and learning environments are impacting upon recruiting staff to key schools.

The range of outwith school experiences listed by stakeholders was excellent and highlighted a tremendous range of activities taking place across communities in the Borders. Good evidence was provided to endorse that our children and young people have high levels of participation in sporting, cultural, arts and volunteering activities in their communities. There is inequity of opportunity across school communities.

A brief analysis of feedback from each secondary school cluster area is in Appendix 1.

### 3.23 **Analysis and Options**

#### Pre-Consultation Process

The initial pre-consultation process enabled the Council to engage with parents, pupils, staff and members of the school community on the subject of our school estate and the quality of our education provision. We have shared core facts, presented key information about each school, engaged in conversations relating to the information shared and have a reasonable response to the on-line survey. We have received a reasonable response across the Borders and a significantly high response from the communities of Jedburgh and the Selkirk valley school communities. There is an acceptance and understanding of why we have to modernise our school estate. Stakeholders can see that we have too much capacity overall and that reductions are required to fulfil our duty of securing best value with the resources we have. We have had an opportunity to share possible next steps, ie that there may be school closures, or amalgamations of schools, alternatives suggested by stakeholders, or that our existing education provision may have to look

different, eg 3-18 models for education provision. Stakeholders also understand the link between learning environments, learning opportunities and school structures for our children and young people. They have expressed concern that there are challenges in providing an equity of educational benefit within our existing provision, eg not all secondary pupils experience the same breadth of curriculum. However, this pre-consultation process has also highlighted that parents choose schools for different reasons. Some parents wish their child to attend a small school whilst others prefer a large school. Most parents were supportive of parental choice and the Council's approach to grant almost all placing requests.

3.24 In moving forward, it is important that our stakeholders see that any changes proposed will be based upon a strong rationale, which will bring educational benefits for children and young people whilst fulfilling our best value duty. Proposals will also consider the likely impact of any proposed changes upon the local community.

#### Pre-Consultation into Statutory Consultation

The level of engagement was varied across the secondary school clusters and communities. In our review of the school estate there are matters to be looked into in all of the clusters. To make any changes to the status of education provision we must embark upon further pre-consultation, which will enable us to gather more information within communities and consult on specific changes within communities in advance of statutory consultation, particularly with respect to legislation and rural schools. It is important that we get a level of participation which really engages and empowers communities to understand and help shape the proposals that will affect them. We would then expect to move to statutory consultation which could lead to a range of major changes to the school estate within the Scottish Borders. The options that will be explored within the next 2 years will be:

School rationalisation, school closures, school amalgamations, different models of provision, eg 2 – 5 years, 5 – 12 years, 2 – 18 years, and alternatives to current provision, such as school closures.

It is proposed that there are 2 phases to the implementation of the School Estates Review to ensure that consultation processes are robust, open, fair and fulfil all the requirements as set out in the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010:

Phase 1 : September 2016 – October 2017

Phase 2 : August 2017 – October 2018

This will require a significant level of staff resource, member involvement and engagement with stakeholders. There is a level of resource required from Education Scotland who play a significant role in any statutory consultation process and this has to be planned so that the level of staff resource is available at the key times it is required in the consultation procedures. The Scottish Government also have responsibilities in the



3.25 final phases of a school closure proposal, should Scottish Borders Council make a decision to close a school. It is expected that implementing the process over a 2 year period, with clear proposals set out within each phase, that a very thorough review will have been completed which has future proofed our school estate.

#### Capital Plan and Scottish Government School Build Investment Programme

Investment in school buildings has to be planned into the Capital Planning process as it involves significant resource within the Council's investment strategy. School new builds in recent times have been completed in funding partnership models with the Scottish Government through the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT). The SFT have meetings planned with the Council in August to consider the investment required in school and Council buildings to deliver the extension of Early Learning and Childcare provision from 600 to 1200 hours by 2020. This could mean that for many of our nurseries who may currently provide morning and afternoon placements to 20 children, actually require space to have 40 children throughout the whole day by 2020. There is no doubt that significant extension to current school building provision will be required to deliver the expansion of entitlement in Early Learning and Childcare.

The Scottish Government over many years have announced school build investment programmes and we would wish to be clear about our priorities for investment with the expectation that we could be included in further rounds of investment.

Stakeholders made many comments about the difference in facilities between the new secondary school builds of Berwickshire, Earlston, Eyemouth and Kelso High Schools and the other secondary schools. We must establish a priority timeline for investment for the remaining 5 secondary schools and this must be considered in conjunction with the primary school estate priorities.

3.26 The consultation, the work required and decision making would impact upon the Capital Planning process that the new Council would embark upon.

#### School Build/Learning Environment

3.27 The review must address any school build or structural issues which are impacting upon the learners' experience, or schools where we feel that a change in structure or build would bring significant educational benefits. All stakeholders were concerned about the range of condition and suitability ratings/gradings across the school estate. It must be the ambition of the Council to have all school buildings at a condition/suitability rating of A or B and to have a plan to address any school environment ratings/gradings for condition/suitability currently assessed within our core fact data at level C or level D.

#### Quality of Education Provision

- 3.28 The review must also prioritise any schools where there are factors affecting the quality of education or the children's learning experience. Enhancing educational benefits must be at the heart of every statutory/relevant proposal.

#### Level of Response from Stakeholders

- 3.29 In the initial pre-consultation, the levels of response were varied. There are some communities who engaged at a much greater level than others; this is because they feel they have pressing issues. It would be important to respond to these communities within Phase 1 if possible. There are some communities who did not really engage at all.

#### Mothballed Schools

We currently have 3 schools that have been mothballed. Ettrick was mothballed in 2012 and was to be reviewed within 3 years, Hobkirk was mothballed in November 2015 and to be reviewed within 1 year and Eccles/Leitholm was mothballed in May 2016 and to be reviewed within 1 year. The future of all mothballed schools will have to be considered as part of Phase 1.

### **Proposals for Consultations-Phase 1**

#### Mothballed Schools Review

- 3.30 Statutory relevant proposals regarding the future of Ettrick Primary School, Hobkirk Primary School and Eccles/Leitholm Primary Schools will be presented as separate papers to the Executive Committee in October 2016.

#### Roman Catholic Schools Review

Engagement from the Roman Catholic School stakeholders was very limited in the pre-consultation process. The viability and provision of the existing Roman Catholic school provision was raised by a number of respondents from other schools. There has been considerable challenge for the Council over a number of years in recruiting staff to all four schools, in particular into leadership posts. In 2012, following a review, a management structure was put in place with 1 Headteacher for the 4 schools. However, following Council quality improvement processes and supported by issues raised during school inspection procedures, enhanced leadership structures and support have been in place for over 12 months now to address concerns from school staff and parents that existing structures are not working. St Joseph's Primary School has been in inspection for 3 years and has not been signed off yet, as concerns remain from the inspectorate about a range of educational aspects of the school.

When the Roman Catholic Schools Review was conducted by the Council in 2012, it was to be evaluated within 2 years. It is proposed that a focused pre-consultation is embarked upon, commencing in September 2016, to consider school leadership structures, the continuation of provision in 4 localities, staff recruitment and the quality of education

3.31 provision. This consultation will enable a more focused engagement with key stakeholders connected with the Roman Catholic Schools, including the Church, and act as a preparation for any possible relevant formal proposals which may be brought forward to be consulted upon within the context of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. A background paper has been provided in Appendix 2.

#### Jedburgh Cluster Schools Review

The community of Jedburgh provided the highest level of engagement and responded most consistently in asking Scottish Borders Council to further engage on the future of education provision within their cluster of schools. Clearly the school communities expressed concern about the condition of their school buildings, the quality of their facilities and the lack of investment in their school buildings, as well as the challenge of sustaining a broad curriculum for all children from 2-18 years. The community have quite strongly requested a debate on future structures for Education in their town and expressed that there is a need for the Council to do this as quickly as possible.

The inconsistent catchment arrangements in place for secondary education are raised as an issue and asked to be reviewed, ie that pupils can choose between Jedburgh Grammar School and Hawick High School. The future of the Hobkirk catchment is also raised as a matter for review.

3.32 It is proposed that a focused pre-consultation is embarked upon from September 2016 to consider the specific areas of the structure of education in the town of Jedburgh, secondary catchment areas and investment in school buildings and facilities raised by the community and recognised in the core facts data presented by Scottish Borders Council. Feasibility work will be carried out considering a range of options in preparation for the focused engagement with key stakeholders connected with the Jedburgh Schools cluster and act as a step towards relevant formal proposals which may be brought forward to be consulted upon within the context of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

#### Eyemouth Cluster Schools Review

Concerns were raised in relation to the condition and capacity of Eyemouth Primary School, with the lack of space being highlighted in most responses. Suggestions to resolve this included a new build on the existing site, moving the more senior classes from the Primary into the High School building and others suggested creating a 2-18 campus in the High School. A feasibility exercise has been carried out: Eyemouth High School has the capacity to provide Education for both primary and secondary roll projected numbers. Within the PPP contract, the current building is costed for provision of education for significantly more children than are currently using the building.

Parents of Eyemouth Primary raised concern about the increasing roll and ability of the current building to cope with possible roll increases.

There is interest in developing the site of the old Eyemouth High School which is in the ownership of the Council.

The catchment areas around Burnmouth, Lamberton and Chirnside were raised as being potentially worthy of review.

The dropping roll at Cockburnspath was also raised as a matter to be considered.

- 3.33 It is proposed that a focused pre-consultation is embarked upon, commencing in September 2016, to consider the specific areas of catchments within the cluster, the structure of education within the town of Eyemouth, addressing the future capacity and building challenges of the primary school and discussing the sustainability of all schools currently within the cluster. This consultation will enable a more focused engagement with key stakeholders connected with the Eyemouth Schools cluster and act as a preparation for any relevant formal proposals which may be brought forward to be consulted upon within the context of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

#### Hawick Cluster Schools Review

- 3.34 The highest response in the Hawick High School Cluster area was from the stakeholders at Trinity Primary School, who requested that primary catchments in the town are reviewed. There is support for a review of primary catchments from stakeholders in other town primaries, however some primaries have not engaged in the pre-consultation. The Scottish Borders core facts data also suggests the need for a catchment review to balance out the rolls across the primary schools and respond to the regular and significant placing requests made from key parts of the town to associated primary schools. There also has to be consideration that the core facts highlight a declining pupil roll in the town schools and significant spare capacity. The Council has to consider how to address this spare capacity moving forward, as well as a number of building condition and suitability issues. It is proposed that a focused pre-consultation is embarked upon during school session 2016-2017 to consider the specific areas raised by the community and highlighted in the core facts data presented by Scottish Borders Council. This consultation will enable a more focused engagement with key stakeholders connected with the Hawick Schools cluster and act as a preparation for any relevant formal proposals which may be brought forward to be consulted upon within the context of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

#### Gala Academy Cluster Schools Review

Overall respondents were very positive about the quality of education across all the schools in the Galashiels cluster. The most significant area of concern was about the quality of buildings and the impact they are having upon learning, especially at Galashiels Academy. Stakeholders are looking for a future plan regarding the upgrade of secondary provision in the town and feel quite aggrieved re the quality of their secondary building compared to the new secondary school builds in the

3.35 Borders. There was recognition that the future of education provision could look different in the town and that the catchments need to be reviewed. The core facts highlight significant spare capacity across the primary schools in the town. Many of the primary school buildings have issues in terms of condition and suitability. It is proposed that a focused pre-consultation is embarked upon to consider more specific possibilities for the shape of future education provision in the town. We must also engage with some of the rural schools in the cluster about their sustainability. This consultation will enable a more focused engagement with key stakeholders connected with the Galashiels schools cluster and act as a preparation for any relevant formal proposals which may be brought forward to be consulted upon within the context of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

#### Selkirk Cluster Schools Review

The community response from the Selkirk cluster was significantly high. A robust representation was made by the Kirkhope and Yarrow communities regarding the re-generation of the Selkirk Valleys and the importance of Education provision in sustaining rural communities. Scottish Borders Council fully accepts its responsibilities regarding rural proofing. A request has been made to formally review the catchment areas for the Selkirk cluster of primary schools. The Council is in agreement with this request and will form a relevant formal proposal to be consulted upon within the context of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and to be brought forward during Phase 1.

#### Rural Schools Engagement

As set out in Section 3.16 of this report, there is a need to engage with rural schools with rolls of 50 pupils or less, to develop sustainability plans. The rural schools list is set out in Appendix 3 and the schools identified with a roll of 50 will be engaged with through Officer attendance at Parent Council meetings starting in September 2016. This preventative action is a requirement as set out in school estates guidance and legislation.

### 3.36 **Proposals for Consultations – Phase 2**

#### Berwickshire Cluster Schools Review

Owing to a low level of response, it is viewed that further engagement is required to ascertain the views of stakeholders. We will attend Community Council and Parent Council meetings in the period September – December 2016 to discuss the core facts and gather responses to the questions before a decision is made on whether any form of focused or formal consultation is required.

It is important to note that the issues raised relating to the condition of Swinton Primary School will be addressed as a priority through our Estates Management Board where Education and Estate Senior Officers meet to address property maintenance and investment issues.

### 3.37

### Earlston Cluster Schools Review

Roll pressures and future capacities were raised as an issue by respondents, but these concerns do not match the core facts data, ie Scottish Borders Council has no concern re capacity issues at Melrose and Lauder Primary and Earlston High Schools as these can be managed through the management of placing requests by Headteachers and Scottish Borders Council. We are confident that we have education provision in the right place in the cluster and that all existing school provision should be maintained.

- 3.38 The only area we will consult upon is in response to the presentation made by parents from the St Boswells area requesting a catchment review of Earlston Primary School and Newtown Primary School with a specific focus on the areas outlined by parents. Refer to Appendix 4.

### Kelso Cluster Schools Review

- 3.39 Owing to a low level of response, it is viewed that further engagement is required to ascertain the views of stakeholders. We will attend Community Council and Parent Council meetings in the Kelso cluster area during period September– December 2016 to discuss the core facts and gather responses to the questionnaire before a decision is made on whether any form of focused or formal consultation is required.

### Peebles Cluster Schools Review

- 3.40 Future-proofing the school estate in the town of Peebles was viewed as the key consideration. The core facts inform us that this is not an imminent concern, ie that we do have sufficient school capacity to provide for future roll projections in the medium and long term. Work has to be carried out to look at a detailed analysis of all possible housing developments in the long term, timescales and how these might impact upon the school estate. The number of schools in the cluster has been raised and requires consideration. It is proposed that a focused pre-consultation is embarked upon to consider the specific areas raised by the community and recognised in the core facts data presented by Scottish Borders Council. This consultation will enable a more focused engagement with key stakeholders connected with the Peebles Schools cluster and act as a preparation for any relevant formal proposals which may be brought forward to be consulted upon within the context of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

### School Transport Review

A review of the existing transport policy will take place within Phase 2. This review will examine existing policy, practice and procedures and consult with stakeholders. The review will take cognisance of the budgetary pressures and consider national developments in policy and practice too.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The School Estate Review pre-consultation resulted in positive engagement from a range of stakeholders. The contributions made are invaluable and it is important that we listen to the public and are viewed to progress the School Estate Review, taking cognisance of this initial engagement from our stakeholders. We have identified that we need to further engage with school communities in response to the matters they raised and the correlation with our set of core school estate facts as follows:

(a) Implement Phase 1 of the School Estate Review during school session 2016/2017:

Future of Mothballed Schools:

- i. Commence statutory consultations on proposals to permanently close Eccles/Leitholm Primary School, Ettrick Primary School and Hobkirk Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- ii. Carry out a focused pre-consultation on Roman Catholic Schools provision.
- iii. Commence focused pre-consultations on the future of Education Provision in the towns of Jedburgh, Eyemouth, Hawick and Galashiels.
- iv. Engage with rural schools with roll populations of less than 50 pupils regarding roll sustainability measures.
- v. Implement a Selkirk schools catchment review involving Yarrow, Kirkhope, Philiphaugh and Knowepark Primary Schools.

(b) Note that Phase 2 of the School Estate Review will commence in school session 2017/2018 and include focused pre-consultations in the following school clusters: Berwickshire, Earlston, Kelso and Peebles.

(c) Note that a commitment is given to carry out a review and consultation on the following within a two year period, ie before the end of school session 2017/2018:

- i. School Transport Policy.

4.2 It is important to note that all the comments made about small works building issues will be collated and discussed at the Estates Board in conjunction with our Building Inspectors and action taken through our maintenance activity and prioritisation of the block grant.

4.3 All the comments and feedback re school quality and suggested improvements will be shared with Headteachers and actions identified in response to the comments made. Headteachers will be asked to communicate through newsletters and to their Parent Council how they intend to respond to the feedback they have received through this

consultation process.

- 4.4 It is important that Scottish Borders Council is viewed to be listening to the stakeholders who contributed to this pre-consultation on the school estate. It is genuinely welcomed by the Children and Young People's Directorate and, if agreed by the Executive, a letter will be sent to all our families informing them of next steps and outcomes. Most importantly, stakeholders will be thanked for their positive engagement, their honesty and be informed of how their views will be taken into account as we continue to move forward in improving the quality of the education and learning environments in all our schools in the Scottish Borders.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

The Review of the School Estate will influence the Council's Capital Investment Plan and long term Revenue Financial Planning. The size and condition of the school estate means investment will have to be prioritised over the 10 year capital programme. Future restrictions placed upon public funding will inevitably lead the Council to prioritise investment that keeps buildings safe, wind and watertight and as energy efficient as possible. Significant enhancement to the quality of existing education facilities will be dependent on the provision of future grant funding by the Scottish Government through the schools for the future programme.

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

A strategic approach to the School Estate is required to ensure there is scope for improving educational outcomes for all children and young people across the Scottish Borders. We must ensure we have a sustainable estates plan which maximises educational benefits for all children and young people or the Council could face significant risks such as poor condition school buildings and unmanageable building maintenance issues. We also have to ensure we follow due process as set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as it could bring serious reputational and legal risk to the Council.

### **5.3 Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of each relevant statutory proposal as they are brought forward.

### **5.4 Acting Sustainably**

There will be significant impacts on the economy, community or environment arising from the proposed engagement with families and communities as proposed within this report. However, the School Estate Strategy will seek to ensure sustainability, which will be considered within each proposal as they come forward.

### **5.5 Carbon Management**

There could be significant effects on carbon emissions arising from the proposals contained in this report. However, the School Estate Strategy will seek to promote environmental responsibility and effective carbon management as part of any proposals as they come forward within this Review of the School Estate.

### **5.6 Rural Proofing**

The development of a School Estates Strategy will seek to ensure that



services are enhanced within the context of rurality. This will be a key component of any discussions which alter the school estate. We will ensure that we pay full attention and follow the guidance set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014) and the Statutory Guidance issued pursuant to that Act.

#### 5.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

### **Approved by**

**Donna Manson**  
**Service Director Children and Young People**

**Signature .....**

### **Author(s)**

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Donna Manson	Service Director Children and Young People

**Background Papers:** The pre-consultation responses from stakeholders have been collated and are available to Members in the Members' Library. The public may access these papers upon request by contacting School Estate Pre-consultation, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA

### **Previous Minute Reference:**

### **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1 – School Estate Pre-consultation Response – Cluster Summary**

**Appendix 2 – Roman Catholic Schools Review 2016**

**Appendix 3 – Rural Schools List and School Rolls**

**Appendix 4 – St Boswells Primary Parent Submission regarding Catchment Issues for Families in the Mertoun Area**

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Donna Manson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA.