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## **PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL – UPDATE REPORT**

**Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure**

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### **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**17 December 2020**

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

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress with the Peebles High School project.**
- 1.2 The report to Council on 28 November 2018 identified that individualised delivery plans should continue to be prepared for Galashiels, Hawick, Selkirk and Peebles HS. The report identified the priority ranking for the delivery of Peebles HS in terms of following on from Galashiels, Hawick and Selkirk.
- 1.3 The fire at the school in November 2019 necessitated a reactive change of approach to Peebles High School and the inclusion of a project in the 2020/21 Capital Investment Plan.
- 1.4 Discussions have continued during 2020 with the Council’s insurance provider over the claim for loss associated with the fire. This is now reaching settlement.
- 1.5 Progress has been made with the feasibility study that has considered the replacement of the parts of the building lost or damaged by the fire. This would require the retention of significant parts of the building and lead to compromises in form, and function. The delivery timescales for fully opening the new school would also be extended. The retention of the Millennium Wing would require the rebuild to proceed in close proximity to the functioning school and as such officers have now considered whether a complete new build would provide better value in terms of time and cost
- 1.6 A further short study has therefore now been undertaken to explore an alternative new build solution at Peebles High School is underway. The purpose of this is to assess the benefits, cost and timescales of the different solutions available to establish which best supports educational objectives, supporting learners in Peebles over the long term. The initial proposal is considered to have merit, overcoming the issues associated with the retention of the Millennium Wing noted above. It is therefore considered the complete new build option should be worked up into a full proposal for consideration.
- 1.7 In the continued presence of COVID-19, community consultation will have to rely on digital forms of communication. To assist with the next stages of the project, the appointment of an external stakeholder engagement organisation to work with the delivery team is proposed.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 It is recommended that Council:-**

- (a) Notes the contents of this report.**
- (b) Approves that the further entirely new build feasibility study work is concluded.**
- (c) Approves the appointment of engagement consultants to assist with a digital themed community consultation process.**
- (d) Notes the insurance settlement for the school is likely to fall short of original expectations and will require additional council capital funding to complete the project.**
- (e) Requests a follow on report in January setting out the costs and benefits of the partial rebuild, full rebuild options for inclusion in the capital programme.**
- (f) Agrees that in a change to the original plan, the old science block will now be demolished reducing future running costs for the school.**

### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The report to Council on 29 November 2018 identified that individualised strategic plans should be prepared for each of the four remaining secondary schools (Galashiels, Hawick, Selkirk and Peebles) where strategic capital investment is required. At that time, Peebles HS was considered to be fourth in the sequence and priority listing.
- 3.2 The serious fire at the school in November 2019 necessitated a reactive change of priority at the school. Following the rapid implementation a pupil displacement strategy, a series of works were undertaken to make the remaining building safe. This was followed by a recovery plan of temporary classrooms that enabled teaching and learning to recommence in early February 2020.
- 3.3 The fire in November 2019 caused the loss of 4,761m<sup>2</sup> of teaching space within the building equating to 32 teaching spaces.

Building	Department	Area (Gross Internal Area) m <sup>2</sup>	No. of teaching spaces
1936 block	Modern Languages	979	10
Art Block	Art & Design	651	5
ASN Block	ASN / Pupil Support	508	7
Tower Block	Mathematics	1,869	9
Gymnasium	PE	754	1
Total		4,761	32

- 3.4 Areas largely unaffected by the fire were:

Building	Department	Area (Gross Internal Area) m <sup>2</sup>	No. of teaching spaces
Assembly Block	Music	1,473	4
Atrium	Social / Circulation	462	n/a
CDT / Dining Block	CDT	1,970	6
Millennium Wing	English Social Subjects Home Economics ICT	4, 065	34
Science Block	Science	2,152	12
Sports Block	PE	1,753	4
Total		11,875	60

- 3.5 In this context, approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the school has been lost as a result of the fire or associated damage.
- 3.6 The Council's Capital Investment Plan approved on 26 February 2020 contained a new £30m project to replace the fire damaged elements of the school with the following profile.

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
2,000	15,000	12,000	1,000	30,000

- 3.7 A design team has been employed to consider and prepare a feasibility study of options to replace the parts of the building lost or damaged by the fire.

#### **4 OUTCOME OF FEASIBILITY STUDY**

- 4.1 The Council appointed a team of technical advisors in early 2020 to consider and prepare a detailed feasibility study that looked to develop proposals for a new building that would replace those elements impacted by fire.
- 4.2 Aligning with wider strategic educational aims, the new building should provide suites of learning spaces that offer a mixture of flexible, agile, specialist and traditional rooms. The learning environment should be appropriate to the nature of the activity and respond to the needs of the learners at different stages in the learning journey supports a range of opportunities for learners to explore, collaborate, create and develop.
- 4.3 The technical team, led by an architectural practice visited the school in early February and March of 2020 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. An initial consultation exercise with representatives of the parent council and community took place just prior to the national lockdown in late March 2020. The feasibility design work has had to be completed remotely during the remainder of 2020.
- 4.4 The brief to the technical team was to develop proposals that looked at replacing both parts lost/unusable from the fire and also other areas that have been considered to be in a poor or undesirable condition. The design team were given the following brief:
- The Millennium Wing and the Sports Block is to be retained for continued school use (total area c. 5,815m<sup>2</sup>).
  - The Science Block, which was the original school building is to be retained for another non educational but undetermined use.
  - The Atrium, 1936 Block, Entrance/ Tower Block, CDT/ Dining Block, Assembly / Music Block and Link Corridor to Science are to be demolished (total area c. 6,750m<sup>2</sup>).

- 4.5 At an early stage during the feasibility work, a location for the new building emerged that was attached to the existing Millennium building and was orientated in an east/west direction. The layout identified provided an architectural and civic presence that the design team considered to be appropriate to the site and its location within Peebles. However, the deliverability of this arrangement would involve an extremely complex logistical 5 step phasing to the overall construction process that, on review, was considered to be too disruptive to the young learners.
- 4.6 An alternative approach was then investigated that considered a more compact building footprint attached to the Millennium Wing and extending in a northerly direction. The technical solution for this alternative would be a mixture of 4 storey with a lower 2 storey element.
- 4.7 The phasing for this was moderately complex with a 3 stage phasing, including a final phase to refurbish the Millennium Wing. This solution would mean a total build period of around 3 years with completion in 2025/26. Throughout which construction activity would be undertaken in very close proximity to learning. There would be significant disruption as elements of the existing building are demolished and a connection is formed between the new building and the Millennium Wing. The sustained construction period would also mean continued and potential expanded use of temporary modular buildings.
- 4.8 However, indicative costs were calculated ranging from £36m for the new build part with the costs increasing to between £40-50m depending on the extent of the refurbishment to the existing Millennium Wing. Clearly, this range of costs is outwith the current capital budget.

## **5 INSURANCE SETTLEMENT**

- 5.1 The inclusion of the Peebles HS project within the 2020/21 Capital Investment Plan was made with an assumption of £10m funding from the Council's fire insurance policy.
- 5.2 Detailed and sometimes protracted negotiations have taken place with the loss adjustors appointed by the Council's insurance provider during 2020. Council officers consider that the negotiations have reached a conclusion and that the settlement figure will be £6m. It can be seen that this is some £4m less than envisaged at the time of including the Peebles HS project within the 2020/21 Capital Investment Plan. This places further pressure on the current budget.

## **6 WAY FORWARD**

- 6.1 Officers have considered both the outcome of the feasibility study and of the likely settlement figure from the insurance claim. In particular, detailed consideration has been undertaken on the impact of a part new build, part refurbishment on young learners during the construction stage. While the solution identified within the feasibility study minimises the phasing, works will be disruptive are likely to take longer when compared with a stand alone new build.
- 6.2 The architectural solution identified within the feasibility study is also styled as a direct consequence of the desire to retain the functional elements of the existing school – the Millennium Wing. This raises three issues.

- 6.3 Firstly, the delivery of a teaching and learning model would always be constrained by the part new build / part refurbishment. The current shape and form of the Millennium Wing is very traditional in its layout of classrooms and would not easily provide learning spaces that offer a mixture of flexible, agile, specialist and traditional rooms that have been delivered at the new Jedburgh Grammar Campus. This would raise issues of equality of provision across recent projects. There is a concern that the effort required to alter this existing part of the project will end up being extensive where the building will have to be stripped back to its structural shell.
- 6.4 There is also a significant question about the cost, effort and disruption required to retro fit the Millennium in to current environmental and sustainability target – especially relevant if the Council is successful in the bid to the Scottish Government’s Learning Estate Investment Programme.
- 6.5 Finally, from an architectural and town planning sense, the shape, appearance and form of the part new build / part refurbishment project will always be constrained by having to work around the existing Millennium Wing.
- 6.6 Overall, Officers are concerned that the overall benefits of the current project will not be realised in a way that would provide the town and the wider High School catchment with a school that would leave a lasting legacy. The Council aspires to a level of excellence in its education projects that has, project-by-project, continued to set an ambitiously high target.
- 6.7 Officers have revisited the project to explore an entirely new build solution. This short study has identified a viable solution that importantly focuses on supporting strategic educational objectives and provides an appropriate environment for learning, enabling the pupils of Peebles to realise their potential. This solution would be located on a part of the site that does not impose any phasing issues and significantly reduces the impact upon young learners during construction. The additional benefit is that a new build solution would be delivered more quickly and at a comparable cost to the solution developed during the feasibility study as explained in Section 4 above.
- 6.8 This study has not yet concluded, however initial cost estimates of the project, indicates the quicker construction timescales may result in a cost of new build which is not materially different from the upper end costs of the cost envelope identified to carry out a rebuild and full refurbishment of the existing millennium wing. This early indicative cost of the new build at £46m which includes a 12% uplift for enhanced environmental energy performance which would be more challenging to achieve with refurbishment option. It is proposed that this work can be completed relatively quickly and Officers will be able to report back by late January 2021. Reporting back in this way may allow a revised project budget to be presented to Council as part of the 2021/22 Capital Investment Plan. It is noted that within this further work, the existing Games Block constructed in recent years will be retained.

## **7 COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The community expectation in Peebles is high in terms of the level of engagement when the project moves to the next stages. It would be normal to undertake those next stages of the project, both the education and planning elements through direct engagement at meetings and

presentations. Given the continued COVID-19 difficulties, this approach will be a significant challenge.

- 7.2 In response to this, it is proposed to supplement the existing technical Architect team with a specialist Architect with a particular focus and experience in digital engagement. The role of this specialist will be to devise and implement a digitally themed consultation process to ensure that full community and stakeholder engagement can take place to connect people to the decision making process.
- 7.3 The scope of the engagement consultant will focus on creating a project specific website, prepare and facilitate a series of digital workshops with local stakeholders, clubs and groups – including the secondary school pupils. Consideration will also be given to a real presentation in a local town setting, subject to current restrictions.

## 8 IMPLICATIONS

### 8.1 Financial

- (a) The Capital project budget for the construction of the Peebles High School as contained within the 2020/21 Capital Investment Plan is as below.

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
2,000	15,000	12,000	1,000	30,000

- (b) It is noted that a bid to the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Investment Programme has been made in relation to the Galashiels Community Campus. At the time of writing this report, Officers are not aware of the outcome of this bid. Subject to a positive outcome, the project will qualify for revenue based financial support based on a range of criteria.
- (c) It is clear from the output of the feasibility study work undertaken to date that the project is not capable of being delivered within the current £30M budget.
- (d) The expected settlement from the insurance claim is less than that assumed within the 2020/21 Capital Investment Plan.
- (e) The costs of the refurbishment solution are estimated to be £36-50m, requiring an additional budget of £10-24m net of the assumed £6m insurance receipt.
- (f) The early indicative costs of the new build solution are estimated to be £46m including a 12% allowance of enhanced energy efficiency. This will require an additional budget approval of £20m net of the assumed insurance receipt.

## 8.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) The outcome of the feasibility study has identified that it is not possible to deliver a project within the current capital budget unless more of the existing school is retained such as Music, CDT and the Assembly areas. There is a risk that providing a project within the existing current budget will not provide a lasting legacy.
- (b) To provide a part new build/ part refurbishment project will exceed the current budget quite significantly and there is a risk that the project will not deliver the overall benefits expected.

## 8.3 Equalities

- (a) An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been carried out on this report.
- (b) It is anticipated that there are no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals in this report.

## 8.4 Acting Sustainably

It is noted that overall the project will have a positive impact on energy consumption when compared to the existing buildings.

## 8.5 Carbon Management

It would be planned that the project will seek to minimise the use of fossil fuels.

## 8.6 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

## 8.7 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.

## 9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

### Approved by

**John Curry**

**Service Director Assets & Infrastructure Signature .....**

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**Previous Minute Reference:** Nil

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