

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL 29 JUNE 2016

STARRED ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 24 MAY 2016

3. ECCLES/LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People proposing changes to the status of Eccles/Leitholm Primary School in that it was proposed that the school be mothballed for a temporary period and that the decision to do so be reviewed within 12 months. The report outlined the background to the falling pupil roll at Eccles/Leitholm Primary School, leaving 3 pupils at the school for school session 2016/17. Arrangements for accommodating the pupils within other Scottish Borders schools were described and included transport, staffing and the educational and social benefits to be achieved through the process. The Service Director drew Members' attention to the section of the report which referred to the School Estates Review. During the pre-consultation for the Review the Council had engaged with school communities which currently had a pupil roll of less than 20 pupils regarding future sustainability. The intention was for the Council to intervene at an early stage, should there be a prediction of falling rolls. These ongoing discussions would be represented within the report going to Council in June 2016. In the ensuing discussion Members recognised that the situation at Eccles/Leitholm was a sad reflection of the changing age profiles in many rural areas. Parent representative, Mrs Aitchison, urged the Council to undertake early engagement with schools which had rolls of less than 50 pupils as she believed there could be other schools under threat in that size category. Members recognised that school rolls could fall at an alarming rate creating a downward spiral, if parents felt their children's learning experiences started to be affected by the size of the school. The Service Director stressed that there would be further engagement during the Summer on proposals relating to the School Estates Review when all comments would be picked up about provision within a locality. She had noted in responses to the pre-consultation that the public commented on the need to rationalise provision in terms of the number of schools whilst recognising the importance of rural schools.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- * (a) to recommend to Council that Eccles/Leitholm Primary School be mothballed with immediate effect for a temporary period;
- (b) to review the status of the school within the next 12 months; and
- (c) in the interim to provide transport to Coldstream Primary School for any new pupils who moved into the existing catchment of Eccles/Leitholm area.