

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

19 December 2019

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the Emergency Incident that took place at Peebles High School on 28 November 2019 and seeks authority to allocate £100,000 from the Emergency and Unplanned Capital budget to undertake an Options Appraisal to assist in determining future plans for the site.**
- 1.2 A serious fire within Peebles High School on 28 November caused significant damage to certain parts of the overall school buildings, immediately affecting 26 classrooms comprising Art, Complex Needs, Maths, Modern Languages as well as toilets, changing facilities and other accommodation.
- 1.3 A recovery plan has been activated to ensure that the provision of education can be resumed as soon as possible to those parts of the building where it is safe and practical to do so.
- 1.4 Detailed planning work and an options appraisal will be required to evaluate what future provision could look like on the site. This will require external advisors, designers and cost managers to be appointed to take forward this work.
- 1.5 This report relates to the long term use of the site and not any short-medium term plans to resume educational delivery as a direct consequence of the fire.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Council:-

- (a) Notes the contents of the report and that further reports will be brought back to Council in due course; and**
- (b) Agrees to allocate £100,000 from the 2019/20 Emergency & Unplanned Capital Budget to be used for an options appraisal at Peebles High School.**

3 OVERVIEW

- 3.1 At approximately 1pm on Thursday 28th November 2019, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) responded to a Fire Alarm in Peebles High School. SFRS from Peebles were in attendance at the school within eight minutes, and concurrently the entire building was successfully evacuated by teaching staff, with staff and pupils initially congregating on the 2G pitch adjacent to the new sports centre building.
- 3.2 Pupils were subsequently taken to the Old Parish Church and Priorsford PS and from there arrangements were put in place to have them transported by bus or collected by parents / carers, in full cooperation and support from Police Scotland.
- 3.3 Following an extensive period of fire-fighting by multiple SFRS personnel, comprising at times nine appliances and two high reach appliances, the fire was eventually extinguished and the site was handed back to the Council's Property team at 2pm on 30th November 2019.

4 PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS – FIRE DAMAGE TO CAMPUS

- 4.1 In very broad and general terms, the impact on Peebles High School can be categorised into three areas within the footprint of the building. The impacts also vary vertically across the buildings with ground and first (as well as 2nd / 3rd in the tower) the worst affected by smoke in addition to the extensive fire damage in and around the old gymnasium area. A plan has been prepared for reference purposes and included within Appendix A to this report.
- 4.2 Area 'A' (Green) – This is largely unaffected by fire or smoke. The immediate implications are linked to the restoration of power, ICT, water, heating and fire/intruder alarm systems.
- 4.3 Area 'B' (Amber) – These areas suffered significant smoke damage as well as the loss of power, ICT, water, heating and fire/intruder alarms systems.
- 4.4 Area 'C' (Red) - Significant and extensive structural / building fabric damage as a consequence of fire and smoke. Large areas including the gymnasium, changing facilities, Art and Additional Support Needs (ASN) are beyond repair and will require to be demolished.
- 4.5 The current understanding is that 26 classrooms have been significantly affected by either smoke or fire damage. In the days following the fire, immediate and executive action has, and will continue to be taken, to recommission elements of the building so that education services can be resumed as swiftly as possible. The extensive and irreparable damage to Area 'C' means however that a series of medium and longer terms actions will require to be taken to replace accommodation lost to the fire.
- 4.6 There are a number of options which could be considered, ranging from full new build replacement, to a simpler reinstatement of the facilities which have been most directly affected or lost – which include Art, ASN, toilet and

changing facilities – as well as other multiple alternative scenarios which can all be tested as part of any Options Appraisal process.

- 4.7 It is recommended that before any substantive decisions are taken with regard to permanent fire reinstatement works, that a full site Options Appraisal is undertaken urgently to determine the optimum solution for the retained Peebles High School site (in whole or in part), both in light of the emerging Learning Estate Strategy and as a consequence of the recent debilitating fire, and the timing of any such investment.
- 4.8 To assist in the development of these actions, it is proposed that £100,000 is allocated from the 2019/20 Emergency & Unplanned Budget from the £287,000 currently uncommitted. This funding will be used to commence development and consideration of potential long term plans, by employing the services of building related advisors such as architects, engineers and cost managers who will assist in the preparation of a full Options Appraisal.
- 4.9 Early discussions have taken place with Scottish Government, who have indicated they are supportive of the Council's position, and the Options Appraisal will be used to support further future consultation with the Scottish Government.
- 4.10 The Council is proceeding with a major insurance claim with respect to the direct and consequential losses and costs incurred, and the Loss Adjuster appointed by Zurich Municipal to manage this claim has already visited the site.

5 LEARNING ESTATE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Learning Estate Strategy and previous Council decisions set out a priority replacement programme for the remaining secondary estate on completion of the Jedburgh Campus (which is due to open in April 2020), in the following sequence:
 1. Galashiels Academy
 2. Hawick High School
 3. Selkirk High School
 4. Peebles High School
- 5.2 While notional timescales were identified for the replacement programme in the November 2018 report to Council, these are now subject to review within the capital programme as a consequence of the recent changes to the funding model for schools announced by the Scottish Government in September 2019 as part of their new Learning Estate Strategy. Timescales for the delivery of priorities identified within the wider Learning Estate Strategy may be affected by the need to prioritise investment in the Peebles building. Scottish Ministers have verbally indicated they are prepared to support the Council to minimise any such impact.
- 5.3 The Scottish Government has suggested that bids for the next round of Learning Estate funding (Phase 2) will likely be invited between Easter and Summer 2020 with the announcement of successful funding taking place around September 2020.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

The Options Appraisal proposals and outputs will be fully costed by independent cost consultants in conjunction with the Council's finance team.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

Operational actions will be taken to resume education services in Peebles as quickly as possible in the short term. To minimise the impact on young learners in Peebles, medium and longer term actions need to be taken to allow for the resumption of educational services in the town. There is a risk that such actions are taken without the consideration of the most appropriate option. This risk is treated through the implementation of an options based appraisal.

6.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment process will be undertaken on any projects that are taken forward following on from the option appraisal process.

6.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no sustainability impacts associated with this report. Any follow on projects that are delivered will be assessed as appropriate.

6.5 Carbon Management

There are no carbon impacts associated with this report. Any follow on projects that are delivered will be assessed as appropriate.

6.6 Rural Proofing

There are no rural proofing impacts associated with this report.

6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are anticipated.

7 CONSULTATION

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

Approved by

Martin Joyce

Service Director Assets and Infrastructure Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: Nil

Previous Minute Reference: Nil

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

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