
LEARNING ESTATE STRATEGY - SECONDARY SCHOOLS UPDATE

**Report by Service Director, Young People Engagement & Inclusion and
Service Director, Assets & Infrastructure**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

6 October 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Executive Committee on plans for the replacement of the Secondary School Estate and on the planned submission to Scottish Government seeking funding from Phase 2 of the Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP). The report outlines the further adjustments that require to be made to the Capital Investment Strategy to progress with the replacement of Galashiels Academy, while accelerating the replacement of Peebles High School following the significant fire in November 2019.**
- 1.2 The Learning Estate is a significant and valuable resource for the communities of the Scottish Borders and high value is placed on learning within well designed buildings, which facilitate the skills development required for the rapid changes of life, learning and work. It is therefore vital that the Learning Estate is planned, maintained and managed in an efficient, effective and strategic manner so that that all priorities meet the wider strategic objectives of the Council and the needs of our communities.
- 1.3 The replacement of outdated inefficient secondary schools in Galashiels and Peebles will make a substantive contribution to the sustainability and energy efficiency of the wider school estate and make a significant contribution to reducing future CO2 emissions.
- 1.4 The plan for secondary school replacement sits within a wider strategy, which will make recommendations regarding future work-streams and policies that will be required to deliver the overall Learning Estate Strategic Plan. This strategy will be presented to Scottish Borders Council following further engagements at locality level and feedback from Scottish Government, which is expected to be by the end of the year.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:-

- (a) Endorse the submission of an update proposal to Scottish Government seeking approval for funding support towards the replacement of Galashiels Academy and the substantive replacement of Peebles High School.**
- (b) Notes the requirement for additional upfront capital funding to replace Galashiels and Peebles Secondary Schools will require to be prioritised within the Capital Investment Programme 2020/21.**
- (c) Agrees that locality engagement will be undertaken on the overall Learning Estate Strategy in preparation for the presentation of the full strategy to Scottish Borders Council following cluster engagement and Scottish Government feedback.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Investment in the Learning Estate improves educational benefits for children and young people and increases learning opportunities for communities. In terms of the Secondary Estate, recent investment has provided a replacement High School in Kelso, the creation of an Intergenerational Learning Campus in Jedburgh and approval of progression of proposals regarding the learning provision in Galashiels and Hawick (November 2018).
- 3.2 In September 2019, the Scottish Government announced a new **Learning Estate Strategy** with a further £1bn of funding available with the key objectives of:
- a) supporting the delivery of Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy
 - b) improving the condition and suitability of the learning estate
 - c) establishing links across the learner journey where appropriate
 - d) supporting sustainable estate planning and improved stewardship
- 3.3 In response to the evolution of the School Estate Strategy and to incorporate the challenges being addressed in the Council's **Fit for 2024** strategies, a Learning Estate Strategy is being developed. As part of an overall property strategy, this adopts a joint approach across services and partners, including Health and Social Care, Social Work and Live Borders, to maximise investment opportunities and support communities to rethink and reshape the property portfolio to ensure that it meets all current and future needs, maximises and makes best use of resources and is sustainable.
- 3.4 In February, adjustments to the Capital Investment Strategy were approved by Scottish Borders Council to progress with the replacement of Galashiels Academy, while accelerating the replacement of Peebles High School following the significant fire in November 2019, maximising the opportunity to enhance facilities there.

4 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT LEIP PHASE TWO

- 4.1 On 15 September 2020, the Scottish Government requested a status update on the development of the Learning Estate Strategy and associated investment plans. The update is to include identification of priority projects for investment that are supported with an approved financial and political commitment. This should include high level costs, indicative delivery timescales and detail how the projects respond to the strategic outcomes of LEIP. A response is to be submitted by 13 October 2020.
- 4.2 The funding model of the LEIP is based on up front Local Authority capital borrowing. Successful submissions to LEIP are anticipated to receive ongoing revenue support to maintain the condition of buildings from Scottish Government. The premise of the funding will be on a 50:50 'like for like' basis to support the delivery of outlined outcomes, over a 25 year period.

- 4.3 Scottish Borders Council's Fit for 2024 programme looks to extend the use of schools as community assets. Where possible, the intention is to accommodate to a wider range of public services including Live Borders, with the aim of improving access and the quality of public services available. This aligns with some of the broader aims of LEIP and could create added value through opportunities to rationalise the Council's estate enabling more focussed investment in the long term sustainability of public service transformation.
- 4.4 In response to Scottish Government's request for a status update, it is proposed that Galashiels Academy and Peebles High School are presented as priority projects, a progress update on Hawick High School is provided and the draft Learning Estate Strategy is submitted for feedback.
- 4.5 Proposals for Galashiels Academy have been developed that provide:
- a) A new Secondary School with a roll of 1000;
 - b) An Additional Special Needs (ASN) unit for 50 pupils with hydrotherapy pool;
 - c) A replacement swimming pool and an increase in the games hall provision to enable the existing Galashiels Swimming Pool and Queens Centre to be closed and demolished;
 - d) Synthetic 3G and 2G sports pitches;
 - e) A site for future development of a replacement Primary School and Early Years Centre; and
 - f) Possible co-location of administrative functions of the Galashiels Police Station.

The proposed location for the new build is on the town side of the existing building and extends into the existing Scott Park.

- 4.6 A budget of £50.8m is allocated for Galashiels Academy in the Capital Plan approved in February 2020. Current proposals are estimated to cost £55.5m, £4.7m higher than budget. The increase is due to the inclusion of the swimming pool, the ASN hydrotherapy pool and the additional games hall provision.
- 4.7 Recognising the budget pressure, it is noted that it is relatively straightforward at this stage to remove the swimming pool and games courts. This should bring the project back within this current budget. It should be recognised that closing and demolishing the existing swimming pool and Queens Centre could realise modest receipts from land sales, which could be used to offset some of the additional capital costs.
- 4.8 The delivery programme for Galashiels Academy is summarised:

Design Stage 1	09/2020 – 07/2021
Design Stage 2	04/2021 – 06/2022
Main Construction and Opening	07/2022 – 03/2025
Demolition and Finishing Works	03/2025 – 12/2025

4.9 Proposals for Peebles High School seek to redevelop the existing school site to:

- a) Provide accommodation for a school roll of 1400, the largest Secondary School in the Scottish Borders;
- b) Provide a replacement ASN unit for 50 pupils;
- c) Retain and refurbish the existing Millennium Wing;
- d) Extend the Millennium Wing replacing the fire damaged elements, but also those older less functional elements of the existing building;
- e) Retain the existing Sports Building;
- f) Provide a new synthetic 3G sports pitch; and
- g) Retain the existing Science Building for future conversion for an undetermined non educational use.

One of the key drivers for this project is to minimise disruption to learners during the construction process over a 3 year period.

4.10 A budget of £30m is allocated for Peebles High School in the Capital Plan approved in February 2020. This assumed a £10m funding contribution from an insurance settlement. Current proposals are estimated to cost in the region of £40m and insurers have advised that their settlement will be £7.1m, (£2.9m less than budgeted), meaning that overall costs are estimated to be £12.9m higher than budget. The increase in costs is partly due to the logistics and phasing associated with a major construction project on a challenging site, whilst minimising disruption to learners.

4.11 The delivery programme for Peebles High School is summarised:

Design Stage 1	10/2020 – 04/2021
Design Stage 2	02/2021 – 06/2022
Construction Phase 1	06/2022 – 06/2024
Construction Phase 2	07/2024 – 05/2025

4.12 Proposals for Hawick High School are in the early stages of development. They seek to redevelop the existing school site, retaining some limited historically important elements, whilst replacing the less functional elements of the existing school. The design roll is 900 with an ASN unit for 50 pupils.

4.13 A budget of £48.4m is allocated for Hawick High School in the Capital Plan approved in February 2020. As outlined within the Capital Plan, the delivery of Hawick High School runs slightly behind that of Galashiels Academy and Peebles High School with completion expected in 2026/27. A further update on budget and delivery programme will be provided once the current design stage is concluded.

4.14 On 25 September 2020, Scottish Borders Council declared a Climate Emergency. As projects progress, proposals will seek to achieve the highest environmental credentials. This may add further pressure to project budgets, which will be carefully monitored throughout the design and delivery stages. Progress updates will be provided at key stages in the delivery programme.

- 4.15 The Learning Estate Strategic Plan seeks a transformative review of each of the 9 clusters. The review will highlight schools requiring a more detailed appraisal which may include:
- a) Capital investment
 - b) Reconfiguration
 - c) New school/merger/relocation
 - d) Shared headships
 - e) Catchment reviews
 - f) Closure/rationalisation
- 4.16 Scottish Government have invited submission of the draft Learning Estate Strategy alongside and to support the submission for funding in October 2020. Feedback from this process will be considered and reported at the next step in the process of seeking approval of the strategy.
- 4.17 Engagement with each cluster will enable key stakeholders, as well as Ward Members, to consider the strategic vision for the local area, as well as the overall scope of the strategy, to inform the overall proposals and long term approach to the Learning Estate and how this links with the wider estate.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

The proposals for Galashiels Academy and Peebles High School add a £17.6m pressure to the Capital Plan. It is expected that the Capital Plan being developed for 2021/22 will be reviewed and revised to reflect the increased estimated costs for both projects, as well as other aspects which will need to be considered in the context of the entire Capital Plan.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The main risk to these proposals is Funding Risk. All investment models for the Learning Estate are delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government. In September 2019 the Scottish Government announced a new £1bn would be made available as part of its Learning Estate Strategy. The funding will be available following bids from Local Authorities in released tranches. To ensure that Scottish Borders Council remains in a position to receive this funding, the Service Directors of Young People Engagement & Inclusion and Assets & Infrastructure continue to maintain regular dialogue with the Scottish Future Trust and Scottish Government Officers regarding our Learning Estate Strategy and plans for investment, and detailed work is being undertaken to ensure that bids are ready for submission by 13 October 2020.

5.3 Equalities

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been commenced in relation to this report. Individual Integrated Impact Assessments will be undertaken in respect of all future recommendations in terms of the Learning Estate Strategy.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

Sustainability is a guiding principle of the Learning Estate Strategy. Scottish Borders Council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency will place a renewed focus on achieving the highest environmental credentials achievable.

5.5 Carbon Management

Carbon management assessments will form an integral part of each recommendation made in terms of the Learning Estate Strategic Plan.

5.6 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate a new policy or strategy regarding rural proofing. Any future recommendation regarding changes to rural learning provision will consider the impact on rural communities. Rural proofing is embedded in the legislation that governs any permanent changes to the Learning Estate.

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 recommendations contained in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

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 are being consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the report during the meeting.

Approved by

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Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference:

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