
PROPOSAL TO MOTHBALL EDDLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report by Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

23 June 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from Elected Members to the recommendation to mothball Eddleston Primary School in accordance with the terms of the Council's Mothballing Policy.**
- 1.2 Mothballing is the term used when a school is closed temporarily as pupil numbers are so low that the Council and/or the Community consider that while the school is not presently viable, that there is a reasonable prospect that the number of pupils will increase to allow the school to re-open in the future. As part of the mothballing process the catchment area for a school must also be temporarily rezoned.
- 1.3 This recommendation is being made following a significant drop in the school roll at Eddleston Primary School (the **School**). At the start of the 2021/22 school year there were 24 pupils enrolled at the School, which in accordance with Scottish Government Regulations equated to a single composite class. This resulted in a number of placement requests being submitted by parents. The school roll reduced throughout the school year and there are currently 4 pupils enrolled at the School. Council officers have been working closely with the parents at the School, who have now approached the Council asking for the School to be mothballed until there are sufficient number of children to allow the School to re-open.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

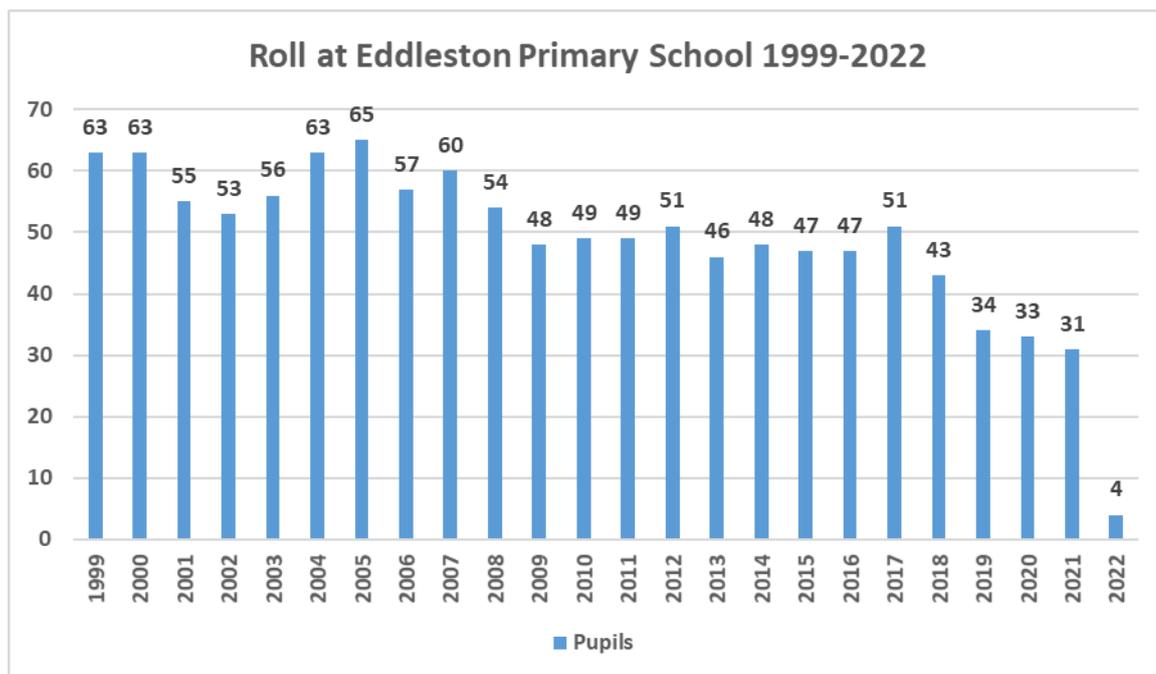
2.1 I recommend that the Elected Members approve:-

- 2.1.1 The recommendation to mothball the School in accordance with the Council's Mothballing Policy;**
- 2.1.2 The temporary re-zoning of the catchment zone to Newlands Primary School; and**
- 2.1.3 The review of the mothballed status of the School on at least an annual basis.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Eddleston Primary School is a non-denominational primary school, with capacity for 100 pupils, located in a village about 5 miles north of Peebles.

3.2 Pupil numbers have declined over recent years and when numbers dropped from 31 (2020/21) to 24 (2021/22), this resulted in the School dropping to a single class school. Many parents then chose to submit placement requests at this time and there are currently only 4 children enrolled at the School. The chart below shows the roll profile since 1999:-



3.3 As at April 2022 there were 30 primary aged pupils residing within the Eddleston catchment area. Over the last few years there have been a small number of placement requests made by parents to other school each year. These requests then increased significantly when the School dropped to a single class. In Scotland parents have right to submit placement requests and there are very few grounds for a Council to refuse a placement request.

3.4 As at the end of March 2022 there were 4 pupils attending the School and the other pupils having submitted placement requests as follows:-

Primary School Placement Request	
Halyrude Primary School	6
Kingsland Primary School	9
Newlands Primary School	5
Priorsford Primary School	3
West Linton Primary School	3

3.5 We have reviewed the number of children within the catchment area and considered the Council's current projections regarding housebuilding in the area and the current birth rates. Council records indicate that there are

currently 5 children in the Eddleston catchment area who will be starting school in the school year 2022/23, with a further 2 aged 3-4. Based on this information the Council currently projects the number of primary aged children in the catchment zone will continue to be between 29 and 30 children for the next 6 years.

4 MOTHBALLING

- 4.1 Council officers have kept in close contact with the Parent Council at the School throughout the school year. The Parent Council recently contacted officers requesting that the School be mothballed as the remaining families wish to send their children to be educated at other school(s) in the area.
- 4.2 In line with the Council's Mothballing Policy, officers commenced an Options Appraisal report and met with the Parent Council and Staff on 17 May to discuss the proposal to mothball and then the wider community on 26 May.
- 4.3 The Options Appraisal is attached as an Appendix to this Report. The Appraisal considers all reasonable options for the School and concludes that the most reasonable option is presently to mothball the School.
- 4.4 It is clear that the Community is keen to see the School re-open and there has been and will continue to be discussions with the Community regarding the future of the School and the building.
- 4.5 Strong interest has been expressed in the Community for the provision of an Early Learning and Childcare setting in the School. Officers investigated this recently with the expansion of the funding of Early Learning funding and it was determined that there were not the numbers within the village for a setting to be viable and that there was sufficient provision close by. This will be monitored on an ongoing basis and will form part of the annual review required in the Mothballing Policy to establish if there could be a viable setting within the village.

5 CATCHMENT AREA

- 5.1 When a school is mothballed the catchment area requires to be re-zoned. This is done on a temporary basis as any permanent change would require a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. It is Council policy that transport will be funded for all children to their catchment school if they live more than 2 miles from the school
- 5.2 Families of the children still attending the School have identified a number of issues relating to the size of the School and the effects on the children's education. These include limited opportunities to socialise and have a friendship and peer group; lack of opportunities for team sports and wider access to clubs and activities, including after school provision. While it is recognised that the children have benefitted in some ways from a very small class size it has also been recognised that the small numbers have impacted on the ability to collaborate and work with peers. As a result the pupils have been attending Newlands Primary School in Romanno Bridge once a week to give them opportunities to develop wider friendship groups and take part in group learning and play activities.

- 5.3 It is proposed that the catchment area for the School is temporarily re-zoned to Newlands Primary School. There are strong Educational Benefits for this proposal as the schools currently share a Head Teacher and the schools are partnered along with Broughton Primary School. The pupils at the School have already developed friendship groups and strong ties to staff and Newlands through their weekly visits. Families of the pupils currently attending the School have also expressed a strong preference for Newlands as they are keen for the children to have the experience of a smaller, rural school.
- 5.4 Newlands Primary School has capacity for 100 children and there are currently 61 children enrolled at the school so there is capacity within the school for all the primary aged children within the Eddleston catchment.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

There are currently significant costs attached to running the School and while these will be reduced when the School is mothballed, there will be residual costs to maintain the building and to provide the transport that will be required to take the children to Newlands. Pupil transport have indicated that the cost of transporting the children could be in the region of £47,000 per annum, however this is based on the market at present and could change when the contract is tendered. This figure would equate to c50% of the projected savings for mothballing the School.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

Once the school is mothballed there is a risk that the building could deteriorate. To mitigate this the Corporate Landlord will be required to ensure that the School and grounds are maintained. The loss of the School could have a negative impact on the village and the community is keen not to lose the asset. This can be mitigated through the annual review process and officers collaborating with the Community and the Community Council regarding future housing developments within the area and assessing the demand for the School to re-open

6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An integrated Impact Assessment has been completed considering the Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty and no negative impacts were identified.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

It is not anticipated that there will be any negative environmental impacts. Environmental and ecological impacts will be considered throughout the review process and when a decision is made regarding the School's future.

5.5 Climate Change

Commencing a new transport service for the children to Newlands will have some impact on emissions. We will seek to ensure that this is minimised during the tendering process.

5.6 Rural Proofing

N/A

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

It is anticipated that the proposals in this report will have a minimal impact on data subjects and the Data Protection Officer has confirmed that a Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes required to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of this proposals.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into this report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

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Background Papers: N/A

Previous Minute Reference: N/A

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