

MEETING:	Statutory consultation public meeting on the proposal to Close Merkland and Campsie View schools, and establish a new build Additional Support Needs school in Kirkintilloch
VENUE:	Merkland School
DATE/TIME:	15 th May 2018 - 3:30pm-5pm and 6:30pm – 8pm
OFFICERS ATTENDING	Thomas Glen - Depute Chief Executive Jacqueline MacDonald - Chief Education Officer Jan Pollok - Education Officer Alan Bauer - Strategic Lead - Assets & Facilities Fraser Robb - Capital Programme Manager Samantha Burke - Project Officer
MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC	36 attendees

Two meetings were held in Merkland School; one at 3.30 and the other at 6.30. The meetings had the same format and the issues raised at both meetings have been summarised.

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Thomas Glen, who welcomed those present and introduced panel members. He then gave details of the agenda and the format of the meeting in terms of questions and answers.

Jacqueline MacDonald provided a short presentation on the proposal.

The Chair invited questions from the floor. These have been summarised below. Questions have been grouped around the main topics discussed.

The model of provision at the new school was discussed, including:

- **Who will attend the new school?**

Parents asked if all children at Merkland would go to the new school, if pupils would continue to attend the base at Gartconner, and if there would be more time spent by pupils in bases.

Officers advised that all current Merkland and Campsie View pupils will have a place at the new school. There will always be pupils who can only be educated in specialist provision, and the new school will be the right place for them.

- **Will pupils spend time in the new bases?**

No pupils currently in the school will be required to move to the new Enhanced Learning bases. There will be enhanced learning resources in Wester Cleddens and Castlehill, and potentially in Kirkintilloch in the future. These will provide options to support young people in most appropriate way for them. There is currently a base at Gartconner, which is run as a part of Merkland school, and this works well for the pupils based in it.

A teacher from Campsie View noted that the secondary base provision, run as part of Campsie View, within Kirkintilloch High School, works really well. The pupils are not within the mainstream school but are able

to access some of the school's resources. All pupils are supported and are safe. Teachers are well trained and supported.

- **Will there be additional training for staff ?**

It is essential that staff have the skills and knowledge to support children with additional support needs. There is a comprehensive professional learning programme for all staff. Currently one teacher in each primary and secondary school has been trained as an autism adviser and there is specialist training for all staff as well as leadership training. This is provided for staff in mainstream as well as specialist provision.

- **Will there be two head teachers in the school?**

The Council has made a commitment that all staff will transfer to the new school. There will be one head teacher. The senior management structure will need to be considered but there is a commitment for the school to have all of the staff required to run the school. The Council will work closely with trade unions if this proposal is to go ahead.

- **Will class sizes stay the same in the new school?**

Officers advised that the maximum class sizes would not change, and that the class sizes in each case would be decided by the school, based on pupils needs.

The move to the new school was discussed.

Parents asked what the process would be to move to the new school, and if Merkland would stay open until the new school was open.

Officers advised that if the proposal goes ahead, both schools will remain open until the new school is complete. All pupils will transfer when the new school is open. If agreed, the full design process will be between 12-15 months and then 15-18 months for the build of the new school. This would give an indicative 30 month project from start to finish. This process would begin once approval has been granted from the Scottish Government.

Officers noted that the transition to the new school is a very important part of this process. Officers and staff will work with other local authorities to understand what lessons they have learned from similar transitions to new ASN schools.

The design of the new school was discussed.

Parents commented that open plan designs seen in other recent schools would not be appropriate for an ASN school, and asked about the design process.

Officers advised that the Council is committed to working with everyone with an interest in the development of the new school. If the proposal goes ahead, architects would work with school users to understand how the school can meet the needs of the young people using it. The design of the new school will have spaces that are flexible but also appropriate for young people with ASN. There is no off the shelf design for this school and the Council expects to bring stakeholders together to look at different aspects of the new school, including design and travel. This is a long process, and officers will be talking to stakeholders regularly and inviting people to workshops for design development

Officers emphasised that members of the local community would play an important part in that design process.

The choice of site was discussed.

Residents from Waterside emphasised that almost all residents opposed the proposal. The residents are very concerned about the loss of green space and the impact of additional traffic on the area. The community council noted that they are not opposed to a school being built, but felt that they were not consulted on the site selection.

They felt that the community of Waterside has wants and needs and that children in Waterside need recreation space. Residents asked how the site was selected, and if various other sites had been considered.

Officers advised that all sites of a suitable size in East Dunbartonshire had been considered, and that feasibility assessments had been carried out on 13 sites. Of these, only the Auchinairn Primary site and the Waterside site were considered viable. To meet the needs of the pupils a school on one level is required and the Waterside site provided the ability to deliver this.

Members of the community asked how the lost sports facilities at the site could be replaced for local teams, and noted that cost of pitch rental at other site such as the Merkland pitches was very high. It was noted that there were proposals for the design to include pitch facilities. If this was to be the proposed replacement, these pitches would need to be full-size to meet the communities needs.

The opportunities for working with the community were discussed.

Officers emphasised that this was the start of a process of consultation and engagement about the proposal, and asked how attendees would like to see the school and community working together?

Staff at the school noted that that they have been working with the local community for 26 years and they have always been very supportive of Merkland School. The proposal would be an opportunity for our most vulnerable pupils and they would like to see more links with Waterside. It was hoped that the school could provide facilities for the community to use.

Officers advised that the design process would involve representatives from the community, and would aim to balance the needs of the school and community. It was noted that the site at Waterside was very large (20,000 square metres) and that the school would not need to take up all of this space. It was also noted that school space could be shared with the community.

The consultation process was discussed.

Parents asked what would happen if the proposal were not to be taken forward. Officers advised that if the Council published a consultation report, and decided not to pursue the proposal, it could be required to wait five years before re-visiting the proposal. In this case, due to the pressures on both schools, alternative options would need to be found.

It was noted that some parents felt that the discussion at the meetings had focussed on the choice of site. It was agreed that drop in sessions would be held at the schools to allow parents to discuss the proposal with officers.

It was noted that Waterside community felt that they had not been fully consulted on the choice of site. A further meeting with the community council was offered.