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## REPORT

To: Services Committee

26 November 2009

From: Blueprint Member/Officer Working Group / Head of Schools

### **BLUEPRINT FOR EDUCATION IN SHETLAND - CONSULTATION ON OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL ESTATE IN SHETLAND**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members for the Schools Service to undertake a consultation process throughout each area in Shetland on the options for change to the school estate.

#### **2. Link to Council Priorities**

- 2.1 In June 2007, the Services Committee agreed a 4-year plan, as the service element of the Council's Corporate Plan. In relation to the Schools Service, the 4 year plan states:-

*"Shetland schools population projections anticipate a substantial reduction in pupils within a relatively short time frame. The challenge for the authority is, therefore, to develop a modern "blueprint" for the shape of the Service across Shetland for 10 years time. This model will consider the educational and financial viability levels for schools, their host communities as well as important associated issues such as transport requirements. It will consider links with pre-school services and life long, vocational, further and higher education and training. It will consider the development of centres of excellence, focused on particular sectors of the economy across Shetland building on existing high quality facilities. It is anticipated that significant capital investment will be required to bring some schools and facilities up to a modern standard".*

- 2.2 The Council's Corporate Plan states:

*2.2.1 The Council will "ensure a model for education is developed by 2009 that considers the educational and financial viability for schools and communities and its outputs are then implemented."*

2.2.2 This will *“help us work to create and maintain a culture where individual learners can strive to realise their full potential.”*

### 3. Background

- 3.1 At the Services Committee in November 2007 a report was presented entitled, “Developing a Blueprint for the Education Service”. Members considered the report and agreed that:
- (a) the key drivers should be to provide the best quality educational opportunities and best quality learning environment for all;
  - (b) in so doing, the opportunity for savings to bring budgets to a sustainable level should be considered; and
  - (c) the final Blueprint comes back to Services Committee with an action plan to look at all schools, internal management, the necessary investment required, quality of education, new ways of delivering education and the potential for each school within a realistic timescale.
- 3.2 At the Council meeting in December 2007, the Vice-Chairperson of Services Committee clarified that the revised “Blueprint” should come back to Services Committee in January 2008.
- 3.3 At Services Committee in January 2008, a report was presented entitled, ‘Developing a “Blueprint” for the Education Service’. The Committee agreed to the establishment of the working group to undertake the “Blueprint” review (Min Ref: SC 09/08).
- 3.4 At Services Committee in June 2008, a report was presented to inform Members of ongoing work on the Blueprint by the sub-groups of the working group. At that meeting Members requested a seminar on the work undertaken so far on the Blueprint (Min Ref: SC 55/08). This seminar took place on 3 July 2008.
- 3.5 The Blueprint Member/Officer working group met on 26 June 2008 to review the information which had been gathered by each of the sub-groups, and to agree on emerging issues which would require further exploration. As previously agreed sub-groups were formed to look at quality education and transitions at three stages: Pre-School/Primary, Secondary/Further/Higher and for pupils with Additional Support Needs.
- 3.6 It became clear at the meeting that any Blueprint for Education in Shetland will require to be informed by current Scottish Government policy direction in education.

- 3.7 The specific issues here are:
- The increase in hours within the entitlement to pre-school education;
  - *Skills for Scotland, a Lifelong Skills Strategy*;
  - The content of the new Curriculum for Excellence for Scottish Schools as described in *Building the Curriculum 3*, published in June 2008;
  - The current consultation on changes to the National Qualifications Framework in Scotland, which closed 31 October 2008, with outcomes expected in the first half of 2009.
- 3.8 At Services Committee in August 2008, a report was presented for approval which set out the key issues from the three sub-groups, Pre-School/Primary, Secondary/Further/Higher and Additional Support Needs.
- 3.9 At Services Committee on 9 October 2008, a report was presented for approval on the proposed methods of consultation with each stakeholder group and the format for the key issues. This formed the questionnaire which was widely distributed across Shetland.
- 3.10 At Services Committee on 12 February 2009, following analysis of the consultation outcomes, a report was presented for approval of principles for education in Shetland (Min Ref: SC 14/09).
- 3.11 The agreed Principles For Education in Shetland are:
- To ensure strategic planning, effective leadership and quality assurance to bring about improvement;
  - To ensure effective partnership working;
  - To ensure that all families have access to quality early education and childcare provision;
  - To ensure all schools deliver Curriculum for Excellence, specifically, a broad curriculum, a breadth of experience, social interaction and learning experiences;
  - To ensure all learners experience smooth transitions between stages of learning, supported by the highest possible professional standards;
  - To ensure all learners in Shetland have equal opportunity throughout their educational experience to enable them to achieve their full potential;
  - To ensure that these principles are delivered within the Council's Budget.
- 3.12 Action plan areas and a timetable were approved at Services Committee on 12 March 2009 (Min Ref: SC22/09).

3.13 The areas to be considered, from July to October 2009, were as follows:

- Pre-School / Primary Strategy
- Residential Accommodation – Learning
- Primary Staffing Review
- Secondary, S1 to S3

3.14 At Services Committee on 8 October 2009, Members approved (Min Ref: SC 94/09):

- the increase in pre-school provision to be met through the use of Early Years Workers
- the introduction of Early Stage Units in specific schools identified by the Schools Service as appropriate
- the Schools Service to continue to finalise proposals for the action plans according to the Blueprint timeline.

#### **4. Current Position**

4.1 Since 8 October 2009, the Blueprint Member/Officer Group has met on a number of occasions to discuss specific proposals for the future of the school estate in Shetland.

4.2 These discussions have focussed on options for the future of both primary education and secondary education in Shetland, based on the agreed Principles For Education in Shetland.

4.3 The Member/Officer Working Group believe that the current scheme of provision of schools cannot deliver the agreed Principles For Education in Shetland.

4.4 The Member/Officer Working Group consider that the next stage of the Blueprint work is to progress to consultation on options for the future of the school estate in Shetland.

4.5 At the request of the Member/Officer Working Group all Head Teachers who were potentially to be affected by the options were informed by the School Service. Following these discussions there was a request for a special meeting with all head teachers. This was held on 12 November 2009 to discuss the initial options suggested by the Member/Officer Working Groups.

4.6 On 13 November 2009 the Member/Officer Working Group held two identical seminars for Members to share their thinking on the future of the school estate. At these seminars there was a request from Members for more radical thinking and for options across Shetland to be considered.

4.7 Union representatives have also been informed of this report and of the proposed consultation which will allow all employees to contribute.

## **5. Proposals**

- 5.1 In order to progress the future direction of the school estate in Shetland, the Member/Officer Working Group propose that the Schools Service undertake a consultation process to gather information on options for change across all schools in Shetland.
- 5.2 The proposed consultation process is outlined in the Blueprint for Education Consultation Plan (Appendix 1).
- 5.3 An outline of options put forward by the Schools Service to be discussed during the consultation, is set out in the Blueprint for Education Consultation Plan (Appendix 1A).

## **6. Financial Information**

- 6.1 The cost of the proposed consultation process will be met from within existing resources of the School Service.

## **7. Policy and Delegated Authority**

- 7.1 In accordance with Section 13 of the Council's Scheme of Delegations, the Services Committee has delegated authority to make decisions relating to matters within its remit for which the overall objectives have been approved by Council, in addition to appropriate budget provision.

## **8. Recommendation**

It is recommend that Services Committee:

- 8.1 agree that the current scheme of provision of schools cannot deliver the agreed Principles For Education in Shetland as detailed in 3.11 of this report;
- 8.2 approve the proposed Blueprint for Education Consultation Plan to consider the future of the school estate across Shetland detailed in Appendix 1; and
- 8.3 authorise the Schools Service to begin the informal consultation process outlined at stage one of the Blueprint for Education Consultation Plan detailed in Appendix 1.

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