STRATEGY FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION.

We are at a really important time for Secondary education in Shetland.

The key message is:

The status quo, as we know it, is not an option.

Firstly; some background information to help set the context.

There are two major factors that are influencing our thinking, - these are: changes to the education curriculum, and, the Council’s financial position as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Firstly; the changes to the education curriculum - this is happening nationally and is known as Curriculum for Excellence.

Curriculum for Excellence has been embedded in primary education over recent years and we are now at the point of fully implementing the secondary senior phase. This has been a key driver in considering the secondary school system we have in Shetland.

Shetland currently has a model of Junior High Schools that provide secondary education up to the end of Secondary 4.

To support Curriculum for Excellence the model with the clearest educational benefit is a six year school. Educationally, a transition in secondary education is best avoided but where it is required, it must be managed very carefully. The geography of Shetland means a transition for some pupils during their secondary education is inevitable. The question is for how many, and when?

A transition could take place at the end of Secondary 2, Secondary 3 or Secondary 4; our comparative work so far indicates that the end of Secondary 3 is educationally the best time.

The second reason that now is the time we need to consider the shape of secondary education in Shetland, is that the Council has agreed a Medium Term Financial Plan and, as it currently stands, the Children’s Services part of the Council needs to save £3.268M over the next three years. The majority of that has to come from schools. This is not the only reason we are looking at
the shape of education, but we cannot ignore it. Over the last five years more than £5M has been saved in this service so, in the main, all the things that would be nice to have, but not wholly necessary, have been taken out.

The options are set out below: there are five we have been working up:

The option of **Saving the Secondary School Estate and staying within the Council’s approved Medium Term Financial Plan**, identifies the cuts that would have to be made across all existing provision to achieve the required £3.268 million savings.

For pupils this would mean:

- That there would be no out of school clubs;
- There would be fewer teaching staff and other staff.
- In Baltasound, the whole of the Secondary school would become a composite class.
- More primary schools, beyond those in the current Blueprint, would be subject to statutory consultation on closure. If implemented, this would mean more young children would be expected to travel.
- Swimming and instrumental music instruction would be next on the list, meaning both would become a thing of the past. This is placed after further, potential Primary School closures in the scale of cuts, as they would be aspects of education that would be wholly removed.

At that stage we would have got to a saving of £2M, with another £1.268M still to go.

Next:

- all operating costs in schools would be lost; at this point pupils would not be able to access new learning resources.
- The subject choices for Secondary pupils would be considerably reduced as there would be fewer teaching staff available.
- Finally, in order to make all the required savings, whilst keeping all of the schools open, school meals would no longer be available, making Shetland the only Local Authority in Scotland not to offer school meals. This would, of course, impact on a lot of school catering jobs as well as the negative impact on pupils.
Head teachers involved in developing this option found it extremely difficult to consider savings in this way beyond the first £1.5M. Indeed at a meeting with all head teachers last week, none of them were able to support this approach as they felt the damage to education would be immeasurable.

The overall savings this option would make amounts to: £3.268M. However, the timescale for achieving the savings would be incremental and could take up to several years as in any agreed option, we will have to work through the staffing implications with all those whose job would be lost or changed.

The Extant Blueprint proposals which were agreed at Shetland Islands Council in September 2012, were to retain two Secondary 1 to Secondary 6 schools at Brae High School and Anderson High School, and a Secondary 1 to Secondary 4 school at Mid Yell Junior High School. Pupils who attend Mid Yell Junior High School would move after the end of Secondary 4 to the Anderson High School. In 2012, Members decided to keep Baltasound Junior High School Secondary Department open although its future will now be reconsidered in this option. Aith Junior High School, Sandwick Junior High School, Whalsay and Skerries School secondary departments would be recommended for closure and a formal consultation should take place on each. Skerries School Secondary Department consultation has already been undertaken and a decision will be made regarding its future on 10 October 2013, it will be factored in to each option once the decision has been made.

For pupils this would mean:

- that all Shetland mainland and Whalsay secondary pupils would be taught in a Secondary 1 To Secondary 6 school, with Aith and Sandwick pupils travelling further daily than they currently do.
- Pupils living in the far West and Whalsay would be accommodated in the Halls of Residence earlier than is currently the case.
- Mid Yell pupils and Baltasound pupils would have to make a transition at the end of Secondary 4 (either all from Mid Yell School or from both Mid Yell and Baltasound secondary departments)
The **Blueprint Next Steps** option, was put forward to Education and Families Committee, and Shetland Islands Council, in September 2013. This option retains Secondary 1 to 6 high schools at Brae High School and Anderson High School. It also retains Secondary 1 to 3 schools in Whalsay, Mid Yell and Baltasound. Pupils would then move at the end of Secondary 3 from Whalsay School, Baltasound Junior High School and Mid Yell Junior High School, following the completion of their Broad General Education. Aith Junior High School and Sandwick Junior High School secondary departments would be recommended for closure and a formal consultation should take place on each.

For pupils this would mean:

- that all Shetland mainland pupils would be taught in a Secondary 1 to Secondary 6 school, with Aith and Sandwick pupils travelling further daily than they currently do, with a few pupils living in the far West being accommodated in the Halls of Residence earlier than at present.
- Mid Yell, Baltasound and Whalsay pupils would have to make a transition at the end of Secondary 3, meaning a move away from home and being accommodated in the Halls of Residence a year earlier than is currently the case.

A **telepresence option** is where a teacher within a classroom would remotely teach a number of classes in different schools, with classroom assistants supervising pupils in the remote locations. The teacher could be based anywhere, but will most likely be in a high school. All subject areas are to be considered for delivery in this way, except practical subjects and PE. In this option, junior high schools in Aith, Baltasound, Mid Yell, Sandwick and Whalsay would remain open. Pupils could eventually complete their secondary education in local areas without having to make a transition to a high school.

For pupils this would mean:

- That they could potentially be taught remotely whilst staying in their local school, when the option was fully implemented.
• apart from practical subjects and PE, pupils would be receiving the majority of lessons through remote teaching, which in the UK is, as yet, an untested methodology of teaching young people.

The hub option, with consideration given to the feasibility of both one and two hubs. This means there would be one or two high schools (Anderson High School or Anderson High School and Brae High School) with campuses at existing junior high schools. Closer links with Shetland College would also be explored. There would be a single staffing complement for each hub which would be timetabled across the campuses with teachers travelling during the working day. There are alternative ways a core and campus option could be staffed including a range of staff being based in each campus moving on perhaps an annual basis. Each hub would have one management team. Pupils would make a transition to a high school most likely at the end of Secondary 3.

For pupils this would mean:

• That they would be able to be educated in their local community campus until the agreed point of transition.
• Teaching staff would move between the Core and Campuses rather than mainly based in one school as they are now.

The proposed stronger links with the UHI set out in the hub options could be pursued within the Extant, the Next Steps and the Telepresence options. To establish a senior phase that is truly able to offer a wide range of academic, vocational, work experience, voluntary work and other wider achievement opportunities close partnerships with other bodies is essential. It is imperative that we are able to accommodate the wishes and needs of all young people.

Each of the five options has been considered under a number of headings:

• The fit with legislation, local guidance, strategies and reviews. All of the models are acceptable within these criteria although the educational impact of Saving the Secondary School Estate option is of increasing concern as it progresses.
The staffing implications for each option. All options demonstrate a reduction in current teaching staff (and other school staff for some) with the telepresence model identifying a requirement to employ additional technical and classroom assistant staff.

The transport implications have been looked at. The Extant and Next Steps options demonstrate more travel for pupils. The Hub option describes more travel for teachers, as does the Saving the Secondary school estate option.

Community impacts have been drafted. These will be finalised and ratified as part of the work on the socio-economic study that has been commissioned.

The number of buildings required for the delivery of secondary education in Shetland will be less for the Extant and Next Steps options but there will be little or no impact on the requirement for buildings in the other options.

Integrated impact assessments are being undertaken for each option and the findings will be included in the final report as will a summarised outcome of this informal consultation.

Advantages and disadvantages, as well as risks, are being described and quality assured for each option.

Development and implementation costs, as well as expected savings, have been considered for each option. None of the options apart from Saving the Secondary School Estate option demonstrate the full savings required within the Medium Term Financial Plan with the telepresence option making the least savings.

Apart from the option of Saving the Secondary School estate and staying within the Council’s Medium term Financial Plan, we developed every other option from an educational benefit perspective. Our early estimates show that the telepresence option would have a substantial net cost for the first two years with an annual saving of approximately £350,000 thereafter. The other options save between £900,000 for a two hub secondary 4 option up to over £2,000,000 for the Extant option, including closure of Baltasound. For the purposes of the meetings this week we want to concentrate on the best strategic future rather than dwell on finance.

The timeline for implementation varies across the options with the telepresence option estimated to take longest to implement fully (although early implementation could begin in early course) with all
the other options capable of implementation by Summer 2016, although staffing implications, and thus savings, may take longer to implement.

Following this informal consultation exercise, an independent expert is going to consider each of the options, the implications such as for transport, communities, staffing and costs. He will consider how and where the options interrelate, draw conclusions and make recommendations for the future.

He will draw on the description of the options, the feedback from the informal public consultation, national and international education thinking, local education views and his own expertise.

These recommendations will be presented to the Education and Families Committee, and Council, on 13 November. Then the work will begin to implement those changes agreed, to ensure we create a secondary education service in Shetland that is sustainable and serves our young people for many years to come.

The key message again: The status quo, as we know it, is not an option.

Be in no doubt your views will be taken into consideration, this is the future of our young people so we have to get it right.