

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET12 March 2020Report by Director of EnvironmentNEILSTON LEARNING AND LEISURE CAMPUS AND WIDER REGENERATION**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To seek Cabinet approval for the proposals in relation to Learning in Neilston and to advise of the possibilities and opportunities for the wider regeneration of the Neilston area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to:
- (a) proceed to design stage for the learning campus subject to final agreement on funding from Scottish Futures Trust;
 - (b) note the timescales; and
 - (c) note that further work will be done to develop proposals for the leisure campus taking into consideration the opportunity to regenerate Neilston.

BACKGROUND AND REPORT

3. In October 2018 the Education Committee approved the education statutory consultation report on Learning in Neilston and subsequently indicative provision of £30.4m was made within the Council's General Fund Capital Programme to support its delivery.
4. This financial provision is a marker to take forward a Learning and Leisure campus approach in Neilston renewing both Neilston and St Thomas' primary schools and Madras Family Centre on a joint site in the locale of Neilston and Madras. This campus funding is to include library and leisure facilities that our partners in the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust manage.
5. In September 2019 the plans took an important step forward with the welcome announcement that the Council will receive revenue funding for this project as part of the first phase of a £1billion Scottish Government investment programme. Discussions are currently being held with the Scottish Futures Trust with regard to the actual level of support.
6. Statutory education approval was given to the new build replacement Neilston and St Thomas' primary schools and Madras Family Centre as a campus in the locale of Neilston and Madras. The inclusion of a new library and swimming pool was also initially planned as part of this campus. Subsequent developments have emerged which make the new location of the swimming pool at the current St Thomas' Primary School site a better solution as part of wider regeneration of the village. The library will remain part of the learning campus.
7. It is therefore proposed that the Learning and Leisure campus will take a two stage two site approach. The first phase would include the building of a learning campus (in the immediate vicinity of the current Neilston Primary School) comprising the two schools, family centre and library. The second phase would include a new swimming pool as the foundation of a potential community hub on the current site of the St Thomas' Primary School.

8. The first phases are well developed with potential design development about to start on the learning campus. The learning campus will retain the unique identities of both schools, with each having its own Head Teacher and Parent Councils and will be designed in full consultation with pupils, parents, staff, the Catholic Church and other local stakeholders to ensure it best meet the needs of children, staff, parents and the community of Neilston now and in the future.

9. Analysis of socioeconomic inequalities resulted in the Council recognising Neilston as a locality planning area, as part of its duties under the Community Empowerment Act. This translates into a commitment to enhanced working with community groups/organisations to articulate local needs and aspirations, and to working together as equal partners in the design and delivery of improvements. Neilston locality planning process benefits from an existing steering group with community partners and has identified the following priority themes for regeneration which align well with our ambitions:

- Lifelong learning, skills and rights
- Enhancing pride in the built and natural environment
- Accessible leisure and wellbeing activities
- Reducing social isolation and disconnect between parts of the local community.

10. Neilston locality plan will be presented to the community planning partnership in spring therefore the emerging Learning and Leisure programme presents a timely and significant opportunity for the Council and Trust to respond to these priorities. The locality planning steering group is also an available conduit for wider and targeted community involvement, particularly around the library/communities spaces.

11. This design development will be an extensive exercise to provide a thorough understanding of the specific requirements for all the users of the facilities with groups of children and young people, staff, parents, partners and community users all involved in informing the design of the new facilities. It will comprise workshops to explore vision, values and ideas; charrettes to discuss and develop the concept for campus designs; and presentations and exhibitions to review the preferred design to deliver the best local solution.

12. It is expected that the detail of the design consultation process will be announced shortly. The working expectation is that the new schools and family centre will open for August 2022 school session. The second phase would be implemented following the demolition of St Thomas' primary school with design proposals worked up and agreed well beforehand.

13. Building upon the Learning and Leisure campus approach is an emerging vision for a wider Neilston Village Regeneration Masterplan supporting the ambition for regenerating and investing in the village.

14. Harnessing the local interest in the locality planning approach and tying in with the aspirations that have been articulated in the locality planning conversations will be an important feature of Learning and Leisure in Neilston. Extensive community learning and development work has been ongoing in the village and so a partnership approach will facilitate broad and effective community involvement as phases 1 and 2 progress.

15. The Council is keen to ensure that opportunities and benefits from the Learning and Leisure development are maximised creating an improved urban environment in Neilston for generations to come. The campus development can be the catalyst for localised public sector estate rationalisation within Neilston while offering the potential for the longer term strategic development of the village and its environment.

16. Neilston benefits from a number of high quality historic buildings spread throughout its centre which bring positive contributions to the townscape and which could provide the basis for a development strategy for the centre.

17. In summary the main strengths of the village are:

- Strong local community
- Strong history and heritage
- Council and residents committed to the long term sustainability of the village

18. A small number of weaknesses could be argued to be present:

- Poor public realm
- Existing retail offering could be improved
- Potential for an enhanced urban environment - ie building and air quality, traffic, pedestrian connections
- Lighting & Parking

19. As noted above it is proposed to develop a campus approach over two sites, with a Community Hub on the St.Thomas' PS site focused around a new swimming pool, and the Learning Hub on the Neilston PS site with the two schools, family centre and library. The linked campus approach offers connectivity between two active destinations improving the urban fabric and stimulating further opportunities within the village. Wellbeing would be at the core of the community hub.

20. The Community (and Wellbeing) Hub would be accessible from the village centre and located close to existing facilities and infrastructure leading to increased footfall to support local shops and businesses. It would create an environment that will support the vitality and viability of the village centre.

21. Strong links are envisaged between the Community (and Wellbeing) Hub and the new Learning Campus from a refreshed village centre that connects these two valuable community assets.

22. The proposal introduces well-connected and accessible infrastructure providing a reduced carbon footprint for the village by encouraging active travel and ease of movement. More accessible and fit for purpose facilities located in the village of Neilston to support a growing and ageing population, means less reliance on adjacent settlements for amenities. Having less reliance on the need to travel stimulates the modal shift to walking and cycling. Improved accessibility contributes to greater inclusion and access for more vulnerable residents.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

23. Provision of £30.4m has been made within the Council's Capital Plan to support the delivery of the Learning and Leisure Campus. The further regeneration of Neilston is likely to be the subject of future reports to the Cabinet. The Council will receive revenue funding associated with the new school facilities once these are completed for this project as part of the first phase of a £1billion Scottish Government investment programme. This is still under discussion with the Scottish Futures Trust. Therefore it is not possible to state at this date whether the provision of £30.4M will be sufficient for the aspirations articulated in this report. However, it is likely that additional funding will be required depending upon the specification of the various projects.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

24. The Learning and Leisure Campus proposal with regard to the 2 schools and the family centre has been subject to wide statutory consultation with all stakeholders and interested parties in accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended and has received approval by the Council to proceed as and when sufficient financial resources become available.

25. As noted within this Cabinet report the design stage of the new Learning campus will soon be taken forward and this will involve extensive consultation as described.

26. Consultation on later phases of the developments in Neilston will be undertaken as and when appropriate with the first stage about the new swimming pool and community and wellbeing hub.

27. The Council's partners in East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust have and will continue to be engaged in developments.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

28. There are no equalities, IT or staffing implications associated with this report.

CONCLUSIONS

29. The proposals contained within this paper provide an excellent opportunity to improve learning provision within Neilston, to improve the leisure facilities and to contribute to a substantial regeneration of the Neilston Village centre. The proposals are ambitious and will have further funding implications but are realistic and will enhance the quality of life for the residents of the Neilston village.

RECOMMENDATIONS

30. The Council is asked to:

- (a) proceed to design stage for the learning campus subject to final agreement on funding from Scottish Futures Trust;
- (b) note the timescales; and
- (c) note that further work will be done to develop proposals for the leisure campus taking into consideration the opportunity to regenerate Neilston.

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws Head of Environment (Strategic Services) on 0141 577 3186.

February 2020