

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

23 JANUARY 2014

Report by Director of Education

REPORT ON THE EXPLORATION OF A JOINT FAITH SCHOOL CAMPUS

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of the report is to apprise elected members of the results of the discussions with the Catholic and Jewish communities exploring the feasibility of a joint faith school campus and of the proposed next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Members are asked to:
- a. note the positive outcome of the informal consultative exercise which considered the feasibility of a joint faith school campus;
 - b. recognise that capital resources of £3.6m would need to be made available to take forward a new build Calderwood Lodge Primary School as part of a joint faith school campus with the new denominational (Catholic) primary school, already included in the Capital Plan;
 - c. note that the site of the proposed joint faith school campus at Waterfoot Road is a modification to the Proposed Local Development Plan and the planning process, including submission to the Reporter, will ultimately determine if the Waterfoot site is agreed as a school site and so able to accommodate the proposed joint faith school campus;
 - d. if funding is made available and the Waterfoot site is deemed suitable for a school site, instruct the Director of Education to proceed with an education statutory consultation exercise in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the proposal to establish the joint faith school campus.

BACKGROUND

3. There is pressing need for an additional denominational (Catholic) primary school in the Newton Mearns area and provision for a site is included in the proposed Local Development Plan (LDP).

4. During the modification process of the proposed LDP, an alternative site for a school at Waterfoot Road school was put forward. In addition to building the required new Catholic primary school, this site affords the possibility of relocating Calderwood Lodge Primary School and the establishment a joint faith school campus. The campus approach can only be considered at this site.

5. In addition to seeking the views of both communities, additional capital resources would be required to take forward a joint faith school campus, should the Waterfoot site ultimately be agreed suitable as a school site.

6. In October 2013, Education Committee approved that the Director of Education proceed with an informal consultative exercise to explore the possibility and affordability of a joint faith school campus with key groups / leaders of the Catholic and Jewish communities.

7. It should be noted that in considering a joint faith school campus, Calderwood Lodge pupils would still be associated with Mearns Castle High School and catchment pupils at the additional Catholic primary school with St Ninian's High School.

REPORT

8. It was reported at the October 2013 Education Committee that initial discussions with key groups of the Jewish and Catholic faiths to sound out each community on the principles and affordability of a joint faith school campus at the Waterfoot site were very positive.

9. Following the October committee, the Director of Education was invited and attended a meeting of Calderwood Lodge Parent Forum and St Cadoc's Primary School Parent Council to hear views and help answer questions. However it was stressed that the purpose was to ascertain the views of both faith communities and what in principle would be the negotiable and non-negotiable elements in the design and working practices should such a school campus be established.

10. Key leaders of each faith and the Parent Councils of both Calderwood Lodge and St Cadoc's primary schools have discussed the matter with their communities including arranged meetings in their respective churches.

11. The Parent Council of Calderwood Lodge surveyed their parent forum. Having had a high percentage of participation from families in such, the Parent Council reported very positive views from the majority of the respondees.

12. Formal and informal feedback from bodies such as the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council and the Catholic Church have also been very positive.

13. The Parent Councils of both schools also met together and reported a lot of common ground.

14. During the last week of the school term in December, the Director of Education also arranged a joint meeting of the chaplains of both schools and representatives from their Parent Councils to hear final deliberations.

15. Feedback from both communities welcomes the opportunity and is in favour of the proposal to establish the joint faith school campus. Both communities agreed the preservation of the religious context of faith schools very important and a strong desire and their right to practise their faith at school.

16. It was understood that Calderwood Lodge followed a different school calendar and different timetable with early closure for Shabbat in winter months, which would of course be respected and preserved.

17. The need for each school to continue with its own identity and ethos is of utmost importance to both communities. The display of religious symbolism in a shared campus was considered and it was agreed that there could be some general common areas where no such symbolism was on display, but that each faith would be able to display their own religious symbolisms in their own respective parts of the campus such as their classrooms.

18. Whilst accepting the prospect of a single building for the campus, it was important to each community to maintain separate schools within the campus and pay particular attention to school entrance.

19. Each faith recognised the need to respect each other and of opportunities to share the benefits of being educated in a faith school. Areas such as playground, dining and general-purpose spaces for example sports and music could be shared. Although it was generally felt that the dining facility could be shared, the need for a kosher kitchen was recognised. Both communities also considered possible joint activities and events such as sports teams, charity fundraising and after school clubs.

20. It was agreed that some of these were details for future discussion and a well-considered building design could accommodate the needs expressed by both communities at this stage.

21. At this time it is envisaged that there would be one building with shared internal facilities and separate classroom wings where each school would undertake their main learning and teaching. Separate pupil entrances to each wing would be desirable and acceptable to each community. The external grounds would also be shared.

22. There has been a positive response by both communities and well reasoned arguments for both separate and shared areas to respect each and both faiths. It is considered that it is possible to operate two separate faith schools in a joint campus with a well-designed building, which would include prefive provision. Based on discussions, it is estimated that the additional funding to deliver the campus approach would be £3.6m on top of the £10m as estimated as required in the Council's 8-year Capital Plan for the new Catholic primary school with prefive facilities.

23. It would be mutually beneficial and viable to be taken forward to the next stage provided the Waterfoot site is determined suitable and the requisite funding is available. The next stage would involve a formal education statutory consultation exercise in Spring 2014.

24. It should be noted that there are no plans to change admission arrangements, other than to establish the new Catholic primary school and alter the existing catchment at St Cadoc's Primary School, details of which would be part of the formal consultation exercise. Calderwood Lodge would still be associated with Mearns Castle High School and the new Catholic primary school would be associated with St Ninian's High School (as well as its existing 3 primary schools).

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

25. As indicated above, the Council has included provision for a denominational (Catholic) primary school and prefive facilities within its 8-year Capital Plan. The extra funding of £3.6m to deliver instead a joint faith school campus would require additional capital resources.

CONSULTATION

26. This paper reports on an informal consultative exercise carried out with the St. Cadoc's and Jewish communities of East Renfrewshire.

27. Should requisite funding be provided for the joint faith school campus and the Waterfoot site be deemed suitable for school provision, there would follow an education statutory consultation exercise in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

This would propose the relocation of Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class, change the catchment area of St Cadoc's Primary School, establish a new Catholic primary school and prefive provision all as part of a joint faith school campus.

28. Should it not however, ultimately gain approval to proceed, there would follow an education statutory consultation exercise to establish the additional Catholic primary school and prefive provision.

29. Such formal consultation would commence in Spring 2014 where interested parties would again have the option to express their views to the proposals set out.

30. It is also noted that any new school buildings and grounds would be designed in full consultation with stakeholders to ensure all facilities best meet the needs of children, staff, parents and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

31. Members are asked to:

- a. note the positive outcome of the informal consultative exercise which considered the feasibility of a joint faith school campus;
- b. recognise that capital resources of £3.6m would need to be made available to take forward a new build Calderwood Lodge Primary School as part of a joint faith school campus with the new denominational (Catholic) primary school, already included in the Capital Plan;
- c. note that the site of the proposed joint faith school campus at Waterfoot Road is a modification to the Proposed Local Development Plan and the planning process, including submission to the Reporter, will ultimately determine if the Waterfoot site is agreed as a school site and so able to accommodate the proposed joint faith school campus;
- d. if funding is made available and the Waterfoot site is deemed suitable for a school site, instruct the Director of Education to proceed with an education statutory consultation exercise in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the proposal to establish the joint faith school campus.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
23 January 2014

Convener Contact Details

Councillor E Green, Convener for Education and Equalities
Councillor P O'Kane, Vice Convener for Education and Equalities

Tel: Home 01505 850455
Tel: Mobile 07718 697115

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

Report Author

Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services
Tel: 0141 577 3229

Fiona.Morrison@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Background Papers

1. Exploration of a Joint Faith School Campus, Education Committee, 3 October 2013
2. Proposed Modifications to the Local Development Plan, East Renfrewshire Council, 11 September 2013

Key Words

This report relates to the outcome of the discussions about the exploration of a joint faith school campus with the Catholic and Jewish communities and of the proposed next steps.

Key Words include:

Joint faith school campus, Catholic and Jewish communities, Calderwood Lodge, St Cadoc's, Waterfoot Road