

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
31 AUGUST 2011**

SUBJECT: SCHOOL ESTATE

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTORS – (EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE
AND CORPORATE SERVICES)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Committee with information in relation to the Council's School Estate to enable further progress to be made to complete a School Estate Management Plan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D1 of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to all the functions of the Council as Education Authority within the terms of relevant legislation with regard to nursery, primary, secondary, further, community education and lifelong learning.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

(a) Considers the contents of the report;

(b) Provides direction on priorities for addressing condition and suitability issues in Moray Schools;

(c) Makes recommendations to the Council regarding the arrangements to identify future investment requirements in the School Estate and consultation arrangements in relation to finalising a School Estate Management Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A report on the most recent review of the Council's Financial Plan was provided to the Council on 10 February 2011(para 2 of the minute refers). The report referred to an estimate of the investment currently required in respect of the Council's School Estate. The current estimate is that £51million (excluding Elgin Academy and Keith Primary) would require to be spent to bring the existing estate to condition level B (satisfactory) and at this stage no estimate has been made in respect of suitability issues. In the medium term (around 5 years), this level of investment would be unaffordable without a major impact on Council service provision. However, based on current levels of investment the condition of the School Estate will deteriorate further during the next 5 years.
- 3.2 Due to the significance of this matter, a seminar was arranged for Councillors on 28 March 2011. The seminar highlighted that there are many factors that need to be considered in terms of providing school buildings that are fit for purpose in the years ahead and that, due to the scale of investment required

at a time of severe austerity for public finances, the Council faces some very tough decisions about the future of Educational Services. As with all investment decisions in the Council, the decisions have a direct impact on all other Council services. Given the complexity of the task faced, it was recommended that a cross party working group be established to consider the factors affecting the School Estate in much greater detail. In response, Members indicated that they wished to continue with meetings being arranged for all Councillors for the time being in recognition of the importance of decisions relating to the School Estate.

- 3.3 A further seminar was held on 17 May 2011 at which a report outlining a draft two stage review process was presented to Members. The presentation prompted a lot of discussion from which officers have prepared a number of revised proposals, actions and changes to the draft two stage review process that are all referred to in the remainder of this report.

4. **PROPOSED REVIEW PROCESS**

- 4.1 A revised draft process is attached as **Appendix A** to this report. Based on the process outlined in **Appendix A** the Council is at Point 2 of Stage 1 in the process and accordingly further information is provided in respect of the condition and suitability of Moray Schools.
- 4.2 **Appendix B1** provides a summary of the condition surveys for Moray Schools together with the estimates of costs to achieve condition category B. Definitions of the relevant categories are provided below.

National condition categories:

A: Good – Performing well and operating efficiently

B: Satisfactory – Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration

C: Showing major defects and/or not operating adequately

D: Economic life expired and/or risk of failure

In addition to the summary information on condition, further contextual information is provided in **Appendix B2** for 6 sample schools to give an idea of the level of information from which the cost estimates have been prepared and also to assist with debate regarding the future condition category of schools which the Council intends to target.

- 4.3 **Appendix C** provides a summary of current levels of suitability of Moray Schools. Suitability categories are defined as follows.

National suitability categories

A: Good – Performing well and operating efficiently (the schools buildings support the delivery of services to children and communities)

B: Satisfactory – Performing well but with minor problems (the school buildings generally support the delivery of services to children and communities)

C: Poor – Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (the school buildings impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)

D: Bad – Does not support the delivery of services to children and communities (the school buildings seriously impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)

Suitability surveys were undertaken in 2010 using the agreed national process. Head teachers and/or their nominated representatives undertook the surveys at their own schools. The results were then moderated against previous surveys in order to ensure consistency.

Members will note that with the completion of the PPP projects at Elgin and Keith, only 4 schools will be rated as less than B (satisfactory); the most notable of these being Elgin High School. **Appendix D** provides further information on the guidance and process used to assess suitability and **Appendix E** illustrates the range of results across and within categories through the use of 6 sample schools.

- 4.5 The condition issues are extensive and, as indicated in Para 3.1 and **Appendix B1**, result in a very large backlog maintenance figure currently estimated to be in the order of £51m. In the absence of a plan to address the extent of this problem, work has not been commissioned to prepare cost estimates for addressing suitability issues across the estate. However, in the case of individual schools such as Elgin High preparatory work has been undertaken and indications are that costs will be substantial.
- 4.6 One of the revisions made to the proposed review process is to establish target conditions for individual schools or elements within schools based on a detailed review of the information available, rather than establishing an overall Council policy on the target condition for all schools. In this case, the target condition for some schools could be B whilst for other schools C would be acceptable. Alternatively, the target condition for certain critical elements within schools (eg heating, roofs, windows) could be B whilst for other less critical elements (eg decoration, external areas) could be C. If this is the preferred method, then arrangements will need to be agreed for completing the detailed review.
- 4.7 Once targets for condition and suitability have been agreed and estimates to achieve those have been established for all schools, Stage 1 of the draft process recognises the need to consider the affordability of the works required. At Point 4 of Stage 1 it may be appropriate to communicate and consult widely with the public on the level of investment required. It may also be appropriate to incorporate this as part of a wider consultation on the overall financial position of the Council at that time.

- 4.8 If the Council does decide to move to Stage 2 of the process, an additional step has been added again based on input from Council Members, that consultation be undertaken with the public to enable wider ranging views to contribute to the potential list of factors to be used in establishing the future of the Moray School Estate.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan

All of the outcomes in the smarter theme of the single outcome agreement are relevant to the future of school estate.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council has a legal duty to exercise all the functions of the Education Authority within the terms of the relevant legislation with regard to nursery, primary, secondary, further, community education and lifelong learning.

The Council has a legal duty to demonstrate Best Value.

The cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning wrote to all local authorities on 31 May 2011 requesting the imposition of a moratorium on proposals for rural school closures until the 20 June 2012. The Moray Council, along with all other councils, is required to complete its School Estate Management Plan and determining the process by which the estate would be reviewed is not considered to be a breach of the moratorium.

(c) Financial implications

The investment required in the school estate was noted as a matter of the highest priority for the Council to deal with in the Financial Plan Review reported to the Council on 10 February 2011.

(d) Risk Implications

The main risks of not establishing a plan to deal with the school estate are the impacts on the provision of education and the impact on the funding available for other Council Services.

(e) Staffing Implications

No direct staffing implications.

(f) Property

Property is the subject of this report.

(g) Equalities

Accessibility will be one of the factors to consider as part of the review. An equalities impact assessment will also be required in respect of my other changes.

(h) Consultations

Consultations have been undertaken with all Members, Head of Educational Resources, Acting Chief Executive, Head of Direct Services, Head of Housing and Property and Head of Development Services. Where comments have been received, they have been included in the report.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report provides the Children and Young People's Services Committee with a draft two stage process for reviewing the School Estate for consideration. Guidance is sought from Members regarding the arrangements to be made for completing a detailed assessment of School Condition Surveys.

6.2 Given the implications for all other Council services from a future School Estate Investment Programme, this Committee is asked to make recommendations to the Moray Council for consideration.

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Background Papers:

Ref: SR/AS/Children and Young People's Services Committee/31
August 2011/School Estate