



**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
23 AUGUST 2017**

**SUBJECT: CONSULTATION TO MOTHBALL INVERAVON PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the intention to consult with parents on the proposal to mothball Inveravon Primary School from August 2017.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) 7 of the Council's Scheme of Administration to consider the closure of schools and other educational establishments under the control of the Council as Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee approves:

- (i) the plan to consult with parents on the proposal to mothball Inveravon Primary School from August 2017; and**
- (ii) Moray Council's process for mothballing a school as set out in APPENDIX 1.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Inveravon Primary School is a remote rural school which is part of the Speyside Associated Schools Group (ASG). It is paired with Knockando primary school, sharing the same Headteacher.
- 3.2 The term 'mothballing' is used, according to Scottish Government guidance, to refer to a temporary decision to close a school where the roll has fallen to zero. Mothballing, rather than closing a school, gives the opportunity for it to reopen should circumstances change. There is no legal process for mothballing.

- 3.3 The Scottish Government has issued statutory Guidance under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 which can be found at the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477028.pdf>. Paragraphs 62 to 64 of the Guidance (page 16) deals with the issue of mothballing as follows:-

Mothballing

62. In considering alternatives to closure, authorities may choose to consider “mothballing” a school (or a stage of education or a nursery class at a school). This is a temporary closure which does not lead to a consultation under the 2010 Act. It is only appropriate in very restricted circumstances. When a school roll falls very low, the authority and/or community may consider that the school is not presently viable but do not wish to close it immediately because there is a reasonable prospect that the possible school roll will increase such that it should be re-opened in the future.

63. It is vital that this flexibility to close a school for a temporary period is not used to undermine the requirements under the 2010 Act to consult on all school closure proposals. Mothballing is only appropriate for a temporary period and should be subject to regular review, at least annually, against the same requirements which led to the original decision to mothball the school (or stage of education). The maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote. The condition of the school building and cost of maintaining the mothballed provision will also be relevant.

64. A school can be mothballed where the school roll has fallen to zero and continues to be zero. It *may* also be appropriate where the roll or potential roll is very low and the authority considers the only other option to be closure. However, in circumstances where a school is mothballed rather than closed and some children and young people remain in the catchment area, this decision should be taken in consultation with the parents involved, and the possibility should be raised as early as possible, in order to ensure that families can understand the options open to them. Mothballing should not be a way of denying parents access to the statutory consultation process required under the 2010 Act and if the majority of parents oppose mothballing, it would be appropriate to move to statutory consultation on closure as soon as possible.

4. POSITION OVER SESSION 2016/17

- 4.1 At the start of session 2016/17 sixteen pupils were enrolled at the school. There was an Acting Headteacher for the pairing of Inveravon/Knockando. In addition to the paired Headteacher, there was a principal teacher, a pupil support assistant, a part-time administrator and two members of staff covering classroom assistant, pupil support and lunchtime supervisor hours.

- 4.2 By September 2016 the roll had dropped to thirteen with the children being enrolled in Moray and Highland schools. By the end of March 2017 the roll dropped again with a further three pupils leaving between December and March. A further two pupils left in May with the roll now standing at eight at the start of June 2017.
- 4.3 In May 2017, once informed of the dropping roll and in response to staff and pupil concerns about the future of the school, the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development and the Business Support Team Manager met with parents and staff of both schools to answer any concerns and to consider the future in relation to the permanent Headteacher position.
- 4.4 Discussions took place regarding options for the Headteacher position and parents were assured that as long as there were pupils on the roll at Inveravon there would be no decision to mothball or otherwise. It was clear at the meeting and through conversations that parents were anxious that more pupils were considering a move to Knockando Primary and that there was likely to be four pupils on the roll by August.
- 4.5 By the middle of June additional placing requests from Inveravon to Knockando were received. The Head of Schools and Curriculum Development and the Business Support Team Manager offered to meet again with remaining parents. This was declined with all parents making decisions to move their children either to Knockando or to other schools. This happened very quickly with the roll dropping to zero by the end of June 2017.
- 4.6 The Business Support Team Manager and a Human Resources Adviser quickly met with staff and made arrangements for redeployment from August 2017.
- 4.7 Local members were fully briefed and updated from when the roll dropped significantly to the point where it became zero.
- 4.8 All pre-school children zoned for Inveravon attend Knockando playgroup. There were no enrolments for Primary one for session 2017/18.

5. **PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 We seek approval to consult with parents in September 2017 on our proposal to mothball Inveravon Primary School from August 2017 in line with our mothballing process set out in **APPENDIX 1**. We will seek to consult with all families living in the catchment area of Inveravon Primary School.
- 5.2 The decision to mothball will be reviewed in December 2017. This will include an analysis of any demand at the time that would necessitate the re-opening of Inveravon Primary School. In the meantime the delineated area for Inveravon Primary School will be temporarily re-aligned to Knockando Primary. All pupils enrolled at Knockando who were in the Inveravon zone have had transport provided.

- 5.3 A further report outlining the outcome of the consultation will be brought to this Committee by December 2017.
- 5.4 It is proposed that any school which is mothballed may be considered for re-opening with a viable roll of 10.

6. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Moray 2026: A Plan for the Future and Moray Corporate Plan 2015-2017**

The contents of this report relate to Priority 3 – ‘Ambitious and confident children’.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that statutory consultation take place for certain proposals. Mothballing a school, unlike school closure, does not require this statutory consultation. Nevertheless guidance suggests that consultation for mothballing proposals would be appropriate as set out within this report.

(c) **Financial implications**

Depending on where pupils live, there are likely cost implications in terms of transporting pupils to Knockando rather than Inveravon in the region of £18,000. This is being met from existing transport budgets. The cost of any weather and/or security protection to buildings will also be assessed and will be reported to a future meeting of this committee where they cannot be met from existing budgets. Travel expenses for redeployed staff are being met through existing budgets.

(d) **Risk implications**

There are no risks associated unless they become apparent through the consultation process.

(e) **Staffing implications**

All teaching staff have been redeployed. As the school is mothballed and there will be ongoing checks and reallocation of existing resources to schools within the ASG, the Acting Head Teacher remains Acting Head Teacher of the pairing. The remaining non-teaching staff have been temporarily relocated to Knockando Primary School until a decision is reached regarding mothballing Inveravon Primary School. If that decision is approved they will potentially be at risk of redundancy therefore a consultation exercise will be undertaken, the staff will be entered into Transform and every attempt will be made to find suitable alternative employment within the Council, failing which they will be

made redundant. There is a relief catering assistant working 7.5 hours per week, a cleaner working 10 hours per week and a janitor working 2 hours every fortnight.

(f) Property

There are no property issues arising directly from this report.

(g) Equalities

None arising directly from this report

(h) Consultations

Senior Officers in Education and Social Care, the Head of Direct Services, the Head of Housing and Property, Frances Garrow, Acting Joint Head of HR and ICT, Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant, the Legal Services Manager (Litigation and Licensing), the Democratic Services Manager, Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT) Union side joint chair, Speyside ASG Headteachers and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report as regards their respective responsibilities.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 That a consultation takes place to mothball Inveravon Primary School.

Author of Report: Vivienne Cross (Head of Schools and Curriculum Development)

Background Papers:

Ref:

APPENDIX 1

MORAY COUNCIL – EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE

PROCESS FOR MOTHBALLING A SCHOOL

- 1 Committee approval to consult:

Roll naturally falling to very low numbers/zero.

- 2 Consultation process including alternative schools, realignment to delineated areas (primary and secondary), transport requirements, commitment to honour existing placements. Maintaining integrity of school building and criteria to re-opening. Review period in less than one year.
- 3 Report back to Committee.
- 4 Scottish Government approval – not part of statutory process, only temporary.
- 5 Confirmation of Council approval.
- 6 Advertise notice to temporary mothball school locally.
- 7 Redeployment of staff – Business Support Team.
- 8 Inventory of resources to go elsewhere, retain or redeploy to schools.
- 9 Meeting with Property regarding security, weather protection, signage, interim community use. Ongoing maintenance inspection.
- 10 Water, rates, power, IT informed of change and re-change.