

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

27 AUGUST 2002

EDZELL AND STRACATHRO PRIMARY SCHOOLS

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**ABSTRACT**

This report recommends preliminary consultation on a proposal to build a single replacement school for the current school buildings of Edzell and Stracathro Primary Schools.

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a authorises an informal consultation exercise on a proposal to build a single new school to replace the current buildings which house both Edzell Primary School and Stracathro Primary School;
- b instructs me to report back on the outcomes of that consultation just as soon as possible
- c authorises me (in consultation with the Directors of Finance, Law & Administration and Property Services) to continue discussions with a local developer aimed at preparation of a draft development agreement for future consideration by the Education Committee.

**2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Edzell Primary School

2.1.1 The Council's Financial Plan contains provision of £420k to enable improvements to be made to Edzell Primary School.

2.1.2 Edzell Primary School is situated at the North West edge of Edzell itself; its original stone building was erected in 1902, with HORSIA and Elliot temporary extensions being built in 1948 and 1972 respectively. The site of the main school building is built on land held in the ownership of Dalhousie Estates. The area of the playing field and temporary units is owned by Angus Council. This does not pose a problem while the school is still operational. However should the school be closed the site of the main school building would revert to Dalhousie Estates. The Director of Property Services is currently attempting to negotiate the acquisition of the relevant site from Dalhousie Estates. It is proposed that the site of the existing school and playing field be sold to the developer of the new school at a price to be agreed, thus reducing the total cost of the replacement school.

2.1.3 The proposed expenditure of £420k within the Financial Plan was provisionally earmarked to enable a permanent extension to be built to the current school, thereby reducing the need for the school to rely on all the temporary accommodation currently in use.

- 2.1.4 The roll of Edzell Primary School (September 2001 Census) was 71 primary pupils. The school also houses a nursery class catering for a maximum of 20 pupils (10 morning and 10 afternoon places).
- 2.1.5 Close investigation of the current school site has highlighted the difficulties which would be faced in attempting to build a permanent extension which is complementary to the main building. In addition some concerns have been expressed within the local community about the proposal to build a permanent extension to Edzell Primary School rather than to build a brand new school. Linked to these concerns, informal discussions have been taking place in recent months between officers of the Council and a local developer who has indicated a very strong interest in constructing a new school in Edzell on a green-field site within the village.
- 2.1.6 The local developer referred to in 2.1.5 above has land available within Edzell and has indicated that he would be willing to work with the Council to construct a new school. Informal discussions between this company and officers of the Council are ongoing, but it is already clear that the cost of a new building would be significantly in excess of funding available within the Financial Plan, even allowing for the potential sale of the existing school site.

## 2.2 Stracathro Primary School

- 2.2.1 Stracathro Primary School serves the parish of Stracathro and is located approximately half a mile to the South East of the village of Inchbare.
- 2.2.2 In common with all primary schools, an Asset Management Plan was prepared for Stracathro Primary School; that Plan highlights the existence of the Elliot toilet unit which is linked to the current school and which was added to the main building in 1974. This unit has lasted beyond its designated life span and ought to be programmed for replacement. In addition the school lacks dedicated PE facilities, with pupils walking from the school to a local community hall approximately half a mile distant. Although a footpath is planned, there are no pedestrian facilities at present between that hall and the school. In recent years, concerns have been expressed about Road Safety for pupils arriving at and leaving the school.
- 2.2.3 In broad terms, it seems reasonable to suggest that a sum of approximately £100k would be required to upgrade Stracathro Primary School (including the demolition and replacement of the existing temporary Elliot unit), although a full upgrade of the school would be likely to cost significantly in excess of this sum.
- 2.2.4 No provision has been made available within the current Financial Plan to undertake any significant upgrading work to Stracathro Primary School.
- 2.2.5 The roll of Stracathro Primary School (September 2001 Census) is 40 primary pupils. In addition, the school has a small nursery class with four children having been enrolled (5 half-days per week) during session 2001/2002.

## 2.3 Best Value

When considering investment of significant sums on projects of this type, it is important that all options are carefully considered, including rationalisation of school provision within a given area. This is particularly important when considered in the context of the high level of investment required to bring all Angus schools up to the standard now expected.

### **3 ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

#### **3.1 Educational Issues Relating to Cognitive and Affective Development**

3.1.1 The current respective rolls at the two schools do not pose any undue anxiety. However, improvements to the physical environment which pupils at each of these schools currently experience would be of real long-term benefit to current and future generations.

#### **3.2 Arrangements for Travelling to and from School**

3.2.1 The distance from Stracathro to Edzell is a little over three miles. It is anticipated that all children who live within the current delineated area of Stracathro Primary School would be entitled to school transport to a new school building in Edzell if that new school were to also serve as a replacement for Stracathro Primary School.

3.2.2 Approximately 83% of children currently attending Edzell Primary School live within the delineated area of Edzell Primary School. Approximately 60% of pupils currently attending Stracathro Primary School live within the delineated area of Stracathro Primary School.

#### **3.3 Financial Considerations**

3.3.1 Although only broad indicative figures have been considered, it is almost certain that some revenue savings would accrue were the two current school buildings to be replaced by a single new building – savings possibly in the order of approximately £70k per annum, although the precise figure would depend on a number of variables.

3.3.2 The nett capital cost of building a single new school in Edzell is likely to be of the order of approximately £900k - £1,000k and clearly if it is decided to proceed to build a single replacement school, then adjustments would be required to the Council's Financial Plan.

### **4 NEXT STEPS**

4.1 The opportunity to create a modern school building to meet the needs of current and future generations of pupils in both Edzell and Stracathro is one which deserves careful and sympathetic consideration. However, before coming to any decision, some informal consultation should take place with the school communities of both Stracathro Primary School and Edzell Primary School.

4.2 It is recommended that I should be authorised to write directly to the parents of all children currently enrolled in Edzell and Stracathro Primary Schools, to write also to the School Board of each school and to arrange to meet with each School Board and any parents who wish to attend such a meeting.

4.3 The purpose of this consultation should be two-fold:

- firstly, to establish what support there would be within the two school communities for the proposed new build, as well as identifying any concerns or anxieties
- secondly, to highlight any particular issues which would require to be addressed if the proposal were to go ahead - in order to alleviate whatever concerns there may be

- 4.4 If this preliminary consultation were to result in the Council wishing to continue to give active consideration to the creation of a single replacement school, then a formal consultation exercise would at that time be required, in terms of the existing legislation.
- 4.5 In the meantime, it is also recommended that informal discussions with the developer referred to in para 2.1.5 above should continue, on the understanding that any firm proposals coming forward from these discussions will be reported back to Committee for consideration.

## **5 HUMAN RIGHTS**

- 5.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising as a direct result of approval of the recommendations contained within this report.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Administration. The Director of Property Services has also been consulted.

Jim Anderson  
Director of Education

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

JAA/CJ