

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 11 AUGUST 2005

RESOURCES AND CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 1 SEPTEMBER 2005

MONTROSE ACADEMY – PROPOSED EXTENSION/IMPROVEMENTS

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**ABSTRACT**

This report outlines proposals to improve accommodation at Montrose Academy and relocate the existing car park. ([plan attached](#))

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Education Committee approve the planned improvements to Montrose Academy.

It is recommended that the Resources and Central Services Committee approve the change of use of part of Common Good land for car parking provision.

**2 REFERENCES**

At its meeting of 13 January 2005 the Education Committee approved Report 41/05 on the School Estate Strategy, which included details of how resources available through the Schools Fund would be utilised. This included proposals to rationalise existing accommodation at Montrose Academy. The project is included within the Education Department Capital Budget.

Reference is also made to Report 558/03 approved by the Education Committee at its meeting of 29 May 2003, which noted improvements were to be made to Montrose Academy playing fields and changing accommodation. The Education Committee of 26 May 2005 approved the promotion of a stopping up order under the Roads (Scotland) 1984 Act to prevent public access to the precinct which separates the two main buildings of the Academy (Report 531/05 refers).

**3 BACKGROUND**

**3.1 School Accommodation**

Montrose Academy currently has 1002 pupils (September 2004 census) with a school capacity of 1,270. In recent years the school roll has been gradually falling and it is expected this downward trend will continue for the medium term.

The school comprises two main buildings which are linked by an overhead corridor. The main problem with this arrangement is that the precinct between the two buildings is a public right of way, which is a major security concern. However plans have been prepared to restrict public access, which will significantly reduce this problem (Report 531/05 refers). The other building, known as the 'East Annex' (which is not linked to either building) was built in 1927. The school also uses the adjacent Sports Centre (which is also used by the general public) for PE provision. At present the school playing fields are located at Broomfield two miles from the school campus (although new playing fields adjacent to the school will be available in Autumn 2005).

The School Estate Management Plan has identified that, with the exception of the East Annex, which is in particularly poor condition, in the main the school buildings are of sound condition. However an analysis of these two main buildings has concluded that more effective use can be made of the floor area which is available.

### 3.2 Pupil Roll

The 2004 pupil roll as at September census and projected roll for August 2005 is outlined as follows:

2004		2005	
S1	205	S1	173
S2	197	S2	203
S3	210	S3	196
S4	168	S4	209
S5	147	S5	117
S6	75	S6	89
<b>Total</b>	<b>1002</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>987</b>

Overall within Scotland it is projected that secondary school rolls will fall by approximately 15% by 2018, and it is expected this trend will be similar in Montrose Academy.

Notwithstanding the projected reduction in pupil numbers it is also important to take cognisance of the Scottish Executive's "Programme for Partnership" which proposes a reduction in S1/S2 class sizes (to a maximum of 20 pupils) for Maths and English. There is also a growing demand on accommodation for support staff eg. Support Services Manager and other initiatives e.g. Integrated Community Schools. Developments in the integration of currently diverse elements of pupil support also have accommodation implications.

### 3.3 HMIE Inspection

A recent HMIE Inspection identified a number of problems with the school accommodation, particularly in respect of school security and the condition of the East Annex. The security issue is being taken forward (Report 531/05 refers) although there remains a requirement to resolve issues relating to the East Annex.

### 3.4 East Annex

At present this building (which is approximately 600m<sup>2</sup>) is used for Music and Drama. However, it was not designed for this purpose and while the floor area is extensive an inspection of the building has confirmed that the building is not fit for purpose, as illustrated by the following problems:

- the slate roof is in poor condition and is leaking in certain areas.
- the heating system is inadequate and requires replacing
- many of the windows do not open and a full window replacement is advised.
- dry rot is present in the building and one of the rooms is particularly affected.
- the flooring in one of the Drama classrooms is uneven and a new floor covering is required to ensure health and safety standards are met.
- the layout is not conducive to meeting needs of pupils and teachers; the building was initially built as a primary school and in some instances the rooms are too small and in others too large.
- the distance between the main school building and the East Annex could cause security problems.

The estimated costs to bring the condition of the East Annex to an acceptable (but still less than ideal) standard would be approximately £400k.

### 3.5 School Office/Security Consideration

At present the School Office/Foyer is located off the precinct which separates the two main buildings. Plans have been developed to improve security in this area, by preventing pedestrians having access through the precinct which will significantly improve security at the school. However it would be preferable if the security situation could be further improved. An important related issue is the location of visitors/staff car park. Currently Academy Square is utilised for this purpose, but concerns have been expressed that this is not an ideal situation as it is remote from the main entrance, and its continued use as a car park conflicts within the objectives of the 'Mid-Links' Restoration project.

### 3.6 Space Utilisation/Subject Adjacencies

While the floor area within the school is relatively large the utilisation of specific areas is relatively poor. This is partly due to the limitation of the building but it is undoubtedly the case better use can be made of the available floor area. In particular some classroom accommodation in Technical, Home Economics, Art, Social Subjects, PE and Computing is under utilised and/or not fit for purpose and could potentially be improved.

The new management structure in secondary schools has resulted in the establishment of curricular groups. In the case of Montrose Academy for example one Principal Teacher is responsible for Business Studies and Computing, another for Social Subjects (History, Geography and RME) etc. It is important therefore wherever possible to carefully consider 'adjacencies' to enhance opportunities for curricular integration, staff development and effective use of resources.

### 3.7 Support for Learning

The facilities for pupils within Additional Support Needs is generally good, but there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to have access to an external environment. In addition, at present the Support for Learning base is some distance from the two classrooms.

## 4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

In view of the issues identified above the objectives from the proposed extension/improvements project can be outlined as follows:-

- the main aim is to make the current internal configuration of the school more effective, and to have all classrooms and facilities (with the exception of the Sport Centre) within one of the two main buildings. This will require the demolition of the East Annex and relocation of Music and Drama to one of the main buildings:
  - Provision of 2 Music rooms (60m<sup>2</sup>) together with practice rooms (in total approximately 180m<sup>2</sup> – 200m<sup>2</sup>. Ideally there should also be access to ICT provision.
  - Drama Studio (an area of approximately 90m<sup>2</sup> will be required). In addition there is a requirement for storage and on an occasional basis, another 'practical' drama area, will be required, within a 'shared area' of the school.
- improve accessibility for pupils, staff and visitors; in particular the school car park should be located close to the main entrance to the school
- provide appropriate facilities for support staff, ICS Team and pupil care and support
- use the area created by demolishing the current East Annex to enhance external PE facilities
- wherever possible, realign the location of subject department classrooms in accordance with new management structures
- ensure value for money is achieved by maximising use of current floor area ie any extension to the two main buildings should be kept to an absolute minimum

## 5 OPTION APPRAISAL

There are a number of options to meet the broad objectives outlined above. A detailed Option Appraisal has been undertaken and the various options considered can be summarised as follows:

### 5.1 Option (i)

Relocate Music and Drama to the front ie historic entrance of the school with the addition of a small extension within the courtyard for Music storage etc; relocate Computing classrooms to existing entrance foyer; relocate some Maths, English facilities. The accommodation at the North West corner of the existing precinct would be reconfigured to provide a new visitor entrance with associated administration facilities. A new car park would be created on land adjacent to the school.

The estimated cost of Option (i) is £1,200,000

While this option has some advantages, not least the relocation of Music/Drama, there are also a number of problems associated with this option. In particular the need to relocate some Maths and Computing classrooms and associated facilities would not improve adjacencies of subject department in accordance with new management structures. Furthermore the attractive foyer area would be lost; the cost of relocating Computing to this area is relatively high; and there is no improvement for SFL/SEN.

## 5.2 Option (ii)

Relocate the main office/entrance within a small single storey new built extension (approx 100m<sup>2</sup>) adjacent to the North West corner of the existing building (adjacent to the precinct). In addition the existing SFL/SEN Base and reprographics room would be used to create accommodation for support staff. Refurbish and reconfigure the existing entrance foyer to accommodate Music classrooms, rehearsal rooms etc. The main Drama classroom would be accommodated within an existing Home Economics classroom. In addition one of the gymnasias would be altered to allow joint use of Drama/PE. Some facilities e.g. SFL/SEN base will need to be relocated to another area within the school. A new car park would be created on land adjacent to the school.

The estimated cost of Option (ii) is £1,150,000.

While a new office location has some attractions, there are fundamental problems associated with this option. In particular it does not improve the alignment of subjects in accordance with new management structures; facilities for Music and Drama, while an improvement on current situation would be less than ideal, (due to size and volume of space available); no improvements for SFL/SEN, or pupil care and support.

## 5.3 Option (iii)

The entrance and office accommodation would be moved to the rear of the hall, utilising the valuable historic entrance to the school, and be an obvious point of entry for visitors to the school. A small extension within the quadrangle would be required to accommodate office staff (approximately 80m<sup>2</sup>). The existing office area/foyer would then be converted to Music classrooms. By providing a new floor within one of the existing gyms the floor space can be doubled. This will enable one floor to be utilised for drama, and the other to continue to be used for PE, albeit for activities not requiring double volume height. In effect the utilisation of this gym will reduce with the other gym and sports centre being used more extensively.

The estimated cost of Option (iii) is £1, 830,000.

This option does have merit in that there will be improved security, as the need for visitors to enter the school via the precinct is eliminated and ensure greater utilisation of gymnasium.

However the structural work required to the gymnasium is relatively expensive. In addition the school will lose the flexibility of having two full height gyms within the main school, and a reduction in ceiling heights for PE. Furthermore car parking issues would not be resolved; there would be no improvement in alignment of subjects in accordance with new management structure and only limited improvements for SFL/SEN and Pupil Care and Support.

## 5.4 Option (iv)

Provide Music and Drama facilities as outlined in Option (i). However in this option the existing foyer, administrative area would be retained, but existing space would be utilised to meet the project objectives, as follows:

- relocate 2 Computing and 2 RME rooms
- make more effective use of classroom accommodation by creating 3 classrooms from 2 large existing RME classrooms for Maths/English/ICT
- relocate SFL/SEN classroom to Home Economics room (7A). In addition build small extension (50m<sup>2</sup>) into quadrangle.
- minor alterations to accommodation used for other subject departments, staff responsible for pupil care and support etc.
- when required, the Assembly Hall would be used as a second teaching space for Drama
- an area of ground adjacent to the school would be used for car parking.

The estimated cost of Option (iv) is £1,050,000.

This option has a number of advantages including the relocation of Music and Drama classrooms to appropriate accommodation and locating both subjects close to the Assembly Hall, enabling greater use to be made of this facility. Some classrooms eg Computing, RME, will be relocated in a way which will improve 'adjacencies' in the context of new management structures, and ensure a significant improvement in space utilisation and accessibility to the buildings. An excellent resource will be provided for Support for Learning, including access to quadrangle. This will provide a stimulating and varied educational experience for pupils and staff alike. This option will also permit flexibility to react to future curricular changes.

There are no major disadvantages associated with this option albeit security is not improved to the same extent as other options.

## 6 PREFERRED OPTION

In order to meet the project objectives and rationalise the accommodation a number of options are available. On balance, the preferred option is Option iv. This will ensure appropriate classroom accommodation, is available for both Music and Drama, together with improvements for other subjects in particular SEN/SFL. As all accommodation would be housed within the main school building, the net effect on the internal floor area is a reduction of approximately 500m<sup>2</sup>, which in turn will reduce revenue costs. External areas of the school will also be enhanced and relocating the car park will improve the operational effectiveness of the school. Option (iv) is the only option which enables a holistic approach to school/pupil requirements to be achieved.

In summary the improvements will enable the school to operate much more effectively and help create a positive ethos and learning environment for staff and pupils within the school.

## 7 CAR PARK PROVISION

The proposed location of the new car park is an area adjacent to the school on land held on the Montrose Common Good account, and leased to the Education Department. As the capital cost of creating the car park will be met from the Education Department Capital Budget (see [Appendix](#) for details), the current leasing arrangement will continue on the basis of a ground rent only. The local elected members have been consulted on this proposal. It should also be noted further consultation will take place on the detailed design of the car park.

## 8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

### Capital Costs & Funding

The cost of the preferred option is £1,050,000. Provision for this project in the 2004/2008 Education Financial Plan amounts to £900,000 leaving a shortfall of £150,000 to be identified. The phasing for the costs and current funding is shown in the table below:-

	<u>Proposed Expenditure</u>	<u>2004/2008 Financial Plan Provision</u>
Financial Year	<u>£000</u>	<u>£000</u>
2005/06	250	150
2006/07	600	720
2007/08	<u>200</u>	<u>30</u>
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>1050</u></b>	<b><u>900</u></b>

The phasing of other projects to be met from the Schools Fund within the Education Financial Plan will require to be adjusted to bring the funding provision for the Montrose Academy project into line with the cost of the preferred option. This adjustment will take place as part of the preparation of the 2005/06 Final Capital Budget Volume which will be submitted to the Resources & Central Services Committee in September 2005.

It is proposed to commence work to provide the car park and some enabling works in October 2005 subject to the necessary planning permission being obtained. The remaining works will commence 11 June 2006 and be completed in Spring 2007. The Director of Roads will arrange for procurement of the car park works while the Director of Property will procure the property related works.

## Revenue Implications

It is anticipated there will be revenue savings (excluding property maintenance) of £15,000 per annum as a result of the proposed improvement. The removal of the east annex will also remove a significant maintenance burden from the school estate. As the project is being funded through the Schools Fund, there will be no resulting loan charges.

## 9 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising directly from consideration of this report.

## 10 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Acting Director of Finance, Directors of Law & Administration, Property Services, Roads and Planning & Transport have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

JIM ANDERSON  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Note:** 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.