

ANGUS COUNCIL**EDUCATION COMMITTEE****2 JUNE 2011****ARBROATH SCHOOLS PROJECT (PHASE 1)
CONSULTATION REPORT****REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION****ABSTRACT:**

This report provides feedback on the consultation exercise recently undertaken in relation to the proposal to provide a new primary school in the West of Arbroath and presents the Consultation Report which has been prepared in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (i) note the procedural requirements specified in this report to comply with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (the "2010 Act");
- (ii) note that the Consultation Report, which is provided in Appendix 1 to this report, has now been published in accordance with the 2010 Act;
- (iii) endorse the contents of the Consultation Report;
- (iv) note that a package of comprehensive information (which includes a copy of all written comments/representations received during the statutory consultation exercise) is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge;
- (v) note the concluded view of HMIE that the proposal to build a new school adjacent to Hospitalfield House:
 - "should have a positive impact on children's educational experiences"; and that
 - "building a new school in West Arbroath is a sensible and positive solution to the Council's phased plans to improve the school estate and manage falling rolls efficiently and effectively"; and
- (vi) note that the Council's decision, in terms of the 2010 Act, will be taken at the full Council meeting on 22 June 2011.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Reference is made to reports 133/11 and 134/11 which were approved by the full Council at its meeting on 10 February 2011.

2.2 The Director of Education was authorised to undertake formal consultation, in terms of the 2010 Act, about the proposal to:

- discontinue education provision at the existing Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools;
- establish a new primary school located at a new site adjacent to Hospitalfield House;
- combine the existing catchment areas of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools to create a new catchment area serving the new primary school; and
- implement the above changes from 13 August 2013, or as soon as possible thereafter.

- 2.3 The Council was required to prepare a proposal paper, including all relevant information in relation to the proposal, together with an educational benefits statement (hereinafter referred to as the "Proposal Document"). The Proposal Document was included as Appendix 2 to report 133/11.
- 2.4 The Proposal Document was issued to all relevant consultees. Relevant consultees, in terms of the 2010 Act, do not include local residents or members of the public. It was, however, also available on the "have your say" section of the Council's Website and available from the reception point at key Council buildings in Arbroath and Angus House, Forfar.
- 2.5 Adverts providing notice of the proposal and associated consultation were placed in The Courier and Arbroath Herald. In accordance with the 2010 Act, these adverts specified the time and venue for the public meeting event.
- 2.6 The consultation commenced on Wednesday 16 February 2011 and concluded on Friday 1 April 2011 (hereinafter referred to as the "Consultation Period"). The Consultation Period exceeded the minimum 6 week requirement and included 30 school days during school term time.
- 2.7 All relevant consultees were invited to submit comments/representations by using either the "have your say" section of the Council's website or by writing directly to me at Angus House. The public meeting was held in Arbroath High School on Tuesday 8 March 2011, and the oral comments/representations made at that meeting were noted. The majority of parties who attended that meeting were not parents of pupils currently attending either Muirfield or Timmergreens Primary Schools.

3. NEXT STEPS IN THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 3.1 The Consultation Period concluded on Friday 1 April 2011. The next stage in the consultation process required Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal under consideration. This was required to be prepared within three weeks of HMIE receiving all the relevant information from the Council.
- 3.2 Once the Council receives HMIE's report, it is required to review the Proposal, taking account of (i) all the written comments/representations received during the Consultation Period; (ii) oral comments/representations which were noted at the public meeting; and (iii) the HMIE report.
- 3.3 The Council is then obliged to prepare the formal Consultation Report.
- 3.4 That Consultation Report has been prepared and is included as Appendix 1 to this report. The Report has been structured, for ease of reference, to include the following:
- **Section 1: Introduction;**
 - **Section 2: The Proposal;**
 - **Section 3: The Consultation Process;**
 - **Section 4: Purpose of the Consultation Report;**
 - **Section 5: Summary of Written Comments/Representations (with the Council's responses);**
 - **Section 6: Summary of Oral Comments/Representations (noted at the Public Meeting, whether made by relevant consultees or others in attendance);**
 - **Section 7: Response to HMIE's Report;**
 - **Section 8: Review of the Proposal following the Consultation Period;**
 - **Section 9: Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies;**
 - **Section 10: Opportunity for making Representations to Scottish Ministers;**
 - **Annex 1: Summary of 'Issues' from the Consultation Feedback;**
 - **Annex 2: Note of Public Meeting (with the Council's responses); and**
 - **Annex 3: HMIE Report**
 - **Annex 4: Briefing Note in response to issues raised by Muirfield Action Group.**
- 3.5 Members should note that the procedural aspects of the consultation process are addressed in the main section of this report. All the relevant information relating to the feedback received by the Council during the Consultation Period, together with the Council's response to these issues, is included in the Consultation Report (Appendix 1 refers).

4. HMIE REPORT

- 4.1 As noted in section 3.1 above, under the 2010 Act, HMIE is required to prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal under consideration.
- 4.2 The Council is required to provide HMIE with a copy of its Proposal Document, together with a copy of any relevant written comments/representations received during the Consultation Period, a summary of any oral representations made at the public meeting; and a copy of any other relevant documentation.
- 4.3 A package of information was collated at the end of the Consultation Period and submitted to HMIE. Comments/representations from parties or correspondents who are not relevant consultees, in terms of the 2010 Act, were also included in that package, a copy of which is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge.
- 4.4 HMIE's report was submitted to the Council and is included as Annex 3 to the Consultation Report (refer to section 5 below).

5. CONSULTATION REPORT

- 5.1 As indicated in paragraph 3.3 above, the Council has reviewed the Proposal and prepared a Consultation Report in terms of the 2010 Act (Appendix 1 refers).
- 5.2 Arrangements have been made to publish the Consultation Report in accordance with the terms of the 2010 Act. A summary document has also been issued to all relevant consultees, and to all other persons who made written representations during the Consultation Period including those persons who provided contact details on the public meeting sederunt. The full version of the Consultation Report is available on Angus Council's Website at www.angus.gov.uk/arbroathschoolsproject and is available from reception points at the following Council buildings:
- Muirfield Primary School, School Road, Arbroath DD11 2LU;
 - Timmergreens Primary School, Emislaw Drive, Arbroath DD11 2HJ;
 - Arbroath Library, Hill Terrace, Arbroath DD11 1AH;
 - Arbroath Access Office, Old Parish Church, Kirk Square, Arbroath DD11 1DX; and
 - Angus House, Orchardbank Business Park, Orchardbank, Forfar DD8 1AX.
- 5.3 The 2010 Act requires the Consultation Report to be available 3 weeks in advance of the Council decision. That decision is scheduled to be taken at the full Council meeting on Wednesday 22 June 2011.
- 5.4 The Consultation Report was formally published on Monday 30 May 2011. Its publication was timed to follow the issue of the Education Committee meeting papers and the information published on the Council's Website.
- 5.5 A public notice to advertise the availability of the Consultation Report has also been placed in the Arbroath Herald and The Courier. The same notice is now displayed on the reception area notice boards in the above noted Council buildings.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The financial implications are unchanged from those indicated in reports 133/11 and 134/11 which were presented to the full Council meeting on 10 February 2011.
- 6.2 The issues raised through the consultation process will not impact on the ability of the Council to deliver this project within the £8m of funding available.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An [equalities impact assessment](#) is not required.

9. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Single Outcome Agreement:

- Young people and adults in Angus maximise their potential through learning opportunities (National Outcome 3);
- Children and young people in Angus will have access to positive learning environments and opportunities to develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem to the fullest potential (National Outcome 4);
- The Angus built environment is protected and enhanced (National Outcome 12);
- The Carbon and ecological footprints of Angus are reduced (National Outcome 14); and
- A good quality of life is enjoyed by all in Angus (National Outcome 15).

10. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance, Head of Law and Administration and Director of Infrastructure Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**NEIL LOGUE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

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 a material extent in preparing the above report.



EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

**CONSULTATION REPORT
FOR
ARBROATH SCHOOLS PROJECT (PHASE 1)**

The following schools are affected by this Consultation Report:

MUIRFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL; and

TIMMERGREENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

**This document has been issued by Angus Council in terms of the Schools (Consultation)
(Scotland) Act 2010**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 10 February 2011, Angus Council authorised the Director of Education to undertake **formal consultation** in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 in relation to the Proposal specified in section 2 below (report 133/11 refers).

2. The Proposal

- 2.1 Angus Council is proposing to:

- discontinue education provision at the existing Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools;
- establish a new primary school located at a new site adjacent to Hospitalfield House;
- combine the existing catchment areas of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools to create a new catchment area serving the new primary school; and
- implement the above changes from 13 August 2013, or as soon as possible thereafter.

3. The Consultation Process

- 3.1 The consultation process is set out in section 7 of the Proposal Document. In summary, the consultation formally commenced on Tuesday 16 February 2011 and concluded on Friday 1 April 2011.
- 3.2 During the consultation period, the Council received a number of written comments/representations **and** oral comments/representations at the public meeting held at Arbroath High School on Tuesday 8 March 2011. Written and oral comments included those comments from parties who are not relevant consultees. However, all comments received have been summarised in sections 5 and 6 of this report.
- 3.3 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) has also submitted a report to the Council relating to the educational aspects of the Proposal.

4. Purpose of the Consultation Report

- 4.1 All the relevant and other written comments/representations, received by the Council, oral comments/representations noted at the public meeting, and the HMIE report have been reviewed by the Council.
- 4.2 This Consultation Report has subsequently been prepared to provide:
- a summary of the written comments/representations in relation to the Proposal received during the consultation period, together with the Council's responses;
 - a summary of the oral comments/representations made at the public meeting, together with the Council's responses;
 - a copy of HMIE's report, together with the Council's response;
 - the Council's review of the Proposal following the consultation period;
 - a note regarding any alleged omissions or inaccuracies in the proposal document; and
 - notification of the opportunity which exists to make relevant representations to Scottish Ministers, within 3 weeks of the Council's decision.

5. Summary of Written Comments/Representations

- 5.1 A total of 57 written comments/representations were received by the Council during the consultation period. A summary of the issues emerging from these written comments/representations is provided in Annex 1.
- 5.2 Annex 1 also contains a summary of the issues that emerged during staff, pupil and other communications during the formal statutory consultation period.

- 5.3 There has been a varied response to the consultation with a number of responses in support of the Proposal and others which are clearly opposed. It would appear that only a minority of parents/carers have responded to the consultation. A large number of responses both for and against the Proposal have identified the proximity of the Westway and associated road safety concerns as an issue which the Council will require to address in further detail. In addition to these views, there are also a number of other issues that have been raised. The following sub-sections summarise the key issues, with the Council response provided thereafter in *italics*.

5.3.1 Background to the choice of the Hospitalfield site and site selection process.

Feedback from the consultation has sought clarification on why the Council selected the Hospitalfield site as its preferred site.

The informal consultation exercise, carried out by the Council in December 2009/January 2010, did not identify a clear site preference. A full appraisal of the four identified sites, namely the existing Muirfield and Timmergreens sites, a new site adjacent to Hospitalfield House and a new site adjacent to Arbirlot Road West, was therefore carried out. The decision to progress with this site appraisal process in relation to the four identified sites was approved by the Education Committee at its meeting on 3 June 2010 (report 427/10 refers).

14 criteria were established at the outset of the site appraisal process to consider relevant educational, legal, planning and technical issues. Specialist advice from a variety of professionals was obtained to help inform the assessment of the sites against each criterion. Key aspects of this exercise included the production of indicative site layouts for each site option and an examination of the roads infrastructure, together with pedestrian travel arrangements.

The conclusion of that process was that there were advantages and disadvantages with each of the sites. However, taking all the factors into consideration, the site adjacent to Hospitalfield House was identified as being the most suitable.

With specific reference to the concerns raised about the safety of pupils crossing the Westway, this is an issue which was considered as part of the site appraisal process and which applied to all four sites. Potential pupil access routes were examined for each of the sites (in consultation with both Parent Councils). It is believed that the Hospitalfield site, while situated closest to the Westway, will support pupil walking routes, which will be easier to manage effectively compared to walking routes to the other sites. This belief is based on the location of the Hospitalfield site, which is in the most central location within the new combined catchment area (in comparison to the other three site options).

Detailed information relating to the site appraisal process is included in report 133/11, approved by Angus Council at its meeting on 10 February 2011. This report is publicly available on the Council's website.

5.3.2 Rationale for the merger of the two schools, in comparison to the refurbishment of existing schools.

Feedback from the consultation has suggested an alternative approach of retaining and utilising the £8m funding to refurbish both schools. Alternatively, it has been suggested that Angus Council spreads the £8m funding across all the schools in Arbroath.

Section 3.7 of the Proposal document sets out the key reasons for providing a new primary school in the West of Arbroath as (i) the deteriorating condition/suitability assessment of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools (being C/C and B/C respectively); (ii) the combined roll of these two schools being 62% of capacity (during school year 2009/10) and projected to decline to below 55% of capacity in future years; (iii) the physical location of these two schools which are in close proximity in comparison to other schools in and around Arbroath; and (iv) the opportunity to provide a new school building which would enhance the learning and teaching environment and which would also offer improved facilities for the wider community.

While the above points summarise the Council's position, the principle of refurbishing the two existing schools has also been assessed. The combined area for refurbishment would be 5,337m² (in comparison to 3,500m² proposed for a new build combining both schools). The

refurbishment costs would be in excess of the £8m funding available. There would be significant technical difficulties upgrading the existing buildings to meet current regulatory standards. Moreover, the designs of the existing schools could not be significantly improved to support new opportunities in learning and teaching, particularly in the context of Curriculum for Excellence. The combined refurbished area of both schools, amounting to 5,337m², would be 1,837m² greater than the 3,500m² area proposed for the new school, and would result in significantly higher revenue costs (e.g. heating, lighting). Refurbishing schools, projected to have a maximum occupancy of 55%, would not provide value for money.

With respect to the suggestion that the £8m provided be spread across all 10 Arbroath schools, while this would support some improvements to individual elements of buildings where difficulties are being experienced in terms of condition, it is unlikely there would be any improvement to the suitability ratings of any of the schools. As noted in section 4.2.1 of report 427/10, approved by the Education Committee at its meeting on 3 June 2010, making investment decisions in this way would almost certainly involve “throwing good money after bad”. Any major changes/improvements to other school buildings in Arbroath need to be considered in the strategic context of the School Estate Management Plans for each building. Therefore, spending circa £800k on each school, to address specific issues in isolation, would be counter productive in the medium term, when a more fundamental overhaul is clearly required.

In summary, the option to refurbish both existing schools is not considered to be a viable economic alternative and is an approach which would not represent Best Value for the Council. Similarly, making a range of specific improvements to **all** schools in Arbroath, without doing so as part of a strategic review, would not represent Best Value.

5.3.3 Requirement to provide safe routes to the new school including a safe method of pupils crossing the Westway.

This issue has generated the highest number of responses from the consultation, including caveated responses from those who are clearly in favour of the Proposal. It also appears to be the key issue for those who are in opposition to the Proposal.

As noted in section 5.3.1 above, the site appraisal process had regard to road safety considerations which are applicable to all four of the site options, since there would be a requirement for some pupils to cross the Westway no matter what site is selected. That appraisal concluded that the Hospitalfield site, with its central location within the new combined catchment area, provides the opportunity to manage Westway pupil crossing arrangements more effectively than would be the case for the other sites.

This assessment has also indicated that between 40 to 80 primary-aged pupils, who have enrolled at either Muirfield or Timmergreens as a result of successful placing requests, currently cross the Westway on a daily basis, by using the existing School Crossing Patroller located at the Arbirlot Road/Arbirlot Road West/Westway crossroads, or the existing underpass provision or some other means. Following the construction of the proposed new school, this number would increase to about 150 pupils. It should also be noted that pupils attending Arbroath High School also cross the Westway on a daily basis.

In recognition of the understandable focus on this issue, a section was specifically included within the Proposal Document (section 5.3 of the Proposal Document refers) which set out the principles of a draft School Travel Plan relating to the Hospitalfield site. This was also noted as being subject to further development work, including inputs from parents/carers and Angus Council's Roads Division to examine road safety measures, including a reduced speed limit, light controlled crossing, safety barriers and new signage.

The consultation feedback has shown that there is considerable anxiety within the community regarding this issue. Officers of the Council are committed to working with parents to address road safety concerns and making the necessary resources available to address this issue. Related commitments will include:

- specialist professional advice from a roads transport consultant (the Council have already appointed the firm 'Steer Davies Gleave') to examine the most likely mode of transport used by pupils/staff going to and returning from school and develop recommendations specifically relating to the Hospitalfield site which will contain three key elements, including (i) a Transport Assessment which will analyse traffic flow and

junctions relating to the surrounding roads infrastructure and consider other committed development in the area; (ii) a Pedestrian Access Strategy which will investigate and assess the most likely pupil travel routes when walking to and from school in conjunction with preferred safe routes to schools, with associated infrastructure improvements, appropriate locations of school crossing patrollers, assessment of any requirements for a light-controlled crossing point or other alternative suitable form of pedestrian crossing point and any other additional safety requirements to support active and sustainable travel to the new site, together with internal parking and circulation arrangements within the site,; and (iii) the development of a detailed School Travel Plan which will be a 'live' document for the school, after it is commissioned, to take ownership to meet the specific needs of pupils;

- *the establishment of a joint working group to explore all the issues in detail and which would include: parent/carer representatives from both schools, existing School Crossing Patroller representatives, Council officers and school staff (the group would be able to draw on specialist advice from the above noted consultant and from officers from the Council's Roads Division and Tayside Police); and*
- *In addition to all other safety measures, measures to improve the existing underpass as a joint school/community 'project', which could involve pupils in developing a 'themed' concept for the underpass, to encourage its use for the benefit of both the school and the wider community (NB - a School Crossing Patroller would be assigned to the underpass prior to the commencement of and at the end of the school day).*

With respect to the upgrading of the underpass, it should be noted that parental anxiety in relation to primary-aged pupils utilising this is fully acknowledged from previous consultation feedback. However, upgrading this facility and having the facilities manned during key times of the pupil day would provide a safe and appropriate pedestrian route to school which would avoid the need to cross the Westway.

While the Council is fully committed to support the provision of safe routes to school, parents/carers should note the legal assumption that a child is accompanied on the journey to and from school by a responsible adult, who, in many instances, will be the child's parent. Education Authorities have responsibility for travel to school arrangements only for those pupils who are entitled to school transport. Otherwise, travel arrangements are the legal responsibility of the parent.

Once the detailed work has been carried out and the School Travel Plan has been finalised and moved forward into the operation of the new school, staff, pupils and the wider community will be encouraged to work in partnership to take ownership of its implementation and review it on a regular basis, with full support from Council officers.

5.3.4 Clarification for drop-off/pick-up arrangements in relation to the site.

There have been a number of responses seeking clarification about the implications of the drop-off/pick-up arrangements relating to the site.

The Council has included within its indicative proposals a staff car park, and a separate dedicated drop-off/pick-up area for parents/carers within the site area. The Hospitalfield site is the largest of the four site options available and has sufficient area to accommodate this dedicated facility.

An aspect of the work which will be undertaken by the Council's specialist roads transport consultant (as referred to in section 5.3.3 above) will be to advise on the appropriate size and design of this facility, together with its interface with the Pedestrian Access Strategy and the public roads/paths network adjacent to the site. This development will include appropriate measures to discourage cars from stopping on the Westway. The School Travel Plan will also support active and sustainable travel to the new site with a view to avoiding, as far as reasonably practicable, congestion and inconvenience in the surrounding area.

Traffic issues/concerns would undoubtedly be an issue for any of the four site options, albeit perhaps from different perspectives depending on the area affected. However, the traffic analysis, undertaken to inform the sites appraisal, indicates that the level of journeys associated with the proposed development can be accommodated on the local road network, with the Hospitalfield site predicted to have the least impact.

In keeping with existing practice, the school and the Education Authority will regularly advise parents not to bring their child to school by car, unless that option is absolutely necessary. Congestion in and around school sites is a common problem and often a source of inconvenience to pupils, parents and staff.

5.3.5 Concerns over the financial aspects of the Proposal and the impact on other schools in Arbroath.

A number of concerns have been raised about the merits of spending £8m on a new school in the current economic climate, and the possible impact this may have on other schools in Arbroath.

While it is acknowledged that the Council faces significant financial challenges, along with every other public sector organisation throughout Britain, the Council remains committed to delivering its key objectives and improving its performance.

Following earlier consultation, the West side of Arbroath has been identified as the first priority for the Council to invest in the Arbroath school estate.

If the budget provision of £8m was not allocated towards this project, it would be allocated to other capital projects which have been identified as priorities to support and enhance the range of services that the Council delivers throughout Angus.

Addressing the key points:

(i) Funding and affordability

Provision has been made for the £8m to fund the project in the Council's 2010/2014 Financial Plan as approved at the special Council meeting on 10 February 2011.

The financial arrangements for this project are no different to those for any other such capital project to be undertaken by Angus Council.

These financial arrangements typically involve the Council borrowing money externally to finance the capital programme as a whole (after allowing for government grant, capital receipts, etc.) and then repaying the borrowing through budgeted loan payments over an appropriate term.

The loan payments arising from the Council's 2010/2014 Financial Plan are provided for through a corporate Council-wide budget rather than by individual departments. In light of this, there is no requirement for the Education department to generate any savings in order to meet the borrowing costs associated with this project.

The budget impact of the 2010/2014 Financial Plan was assessed as being affordable, prudent and sustainable in the "Long Term Affordability of the Financial Plan" report considered at the special Council meeting on 10 February 2011 (report 111/11 refers). This assessment included the £8m for the Arbroath Primary Schools (phase 1) project.

(ii) Impact on other Arbroath Schools

There will be no impact on the revenue budget of any school as a result of this project.

*As noted above, the "Long Term Affordability of the Financial Plan" report was considered at the special Council meeting on 10 February 2011. This noted that the level of capital spending over the next few years would mean "that there is no capacity to introduce significant **new** projects for the foreseeable future (the next 4-5 years) without existing projects being deleted or deferred..."*

This does not change the Council's commitment to making improvements to the entire Arbroath school estate on a phased basis.

It was also the conclusion of the report that the 2010/2014 Financial Plan was affordable, prudent and sustainable and thus all of the projects over this period could be funded.

The £8m currently allocated to phase 1 of the Arbroath Schools Project is available within the Council's Financial Plan. That plan also includes a provisional allowance of £2.6m for phase 2 of the project up to 2016.

The Council is currently awaiting the outcome of an application for additional funding from the Scottish Government, who have pledged ongoing commitment to invest in the existing school estate throughout Scotland, using the Scottish Futures Trust.

All the other schools in Arbroath, not included in the current phase of the project, will continue to be supported to deliver the best possible outcomes from existing facilities, in accordance with the Council's statutory duties. This commitment includes addressing specific school condition issues that have been identified through property maintenance works on an ongoing basis.

Not to progress with phase 1, by not using this current funding opportunity, would simply result in prolonging the time it could take to complete the full project.

Investment in a new build school serving the West side of Arbroath, through the amalgamation of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools, is a Best Value solution for the Council which will support strategic improvements in the Council's performance. Other Arbroath schools will be considered in due course for major capital investment, utilising Council finances and/or finances from Scottish Government sources.

5.3.6 Relationship between new facilities and improvements to educational provision, together with concerns in relation to a larger school and school capacity.

A view was expressed during the consultation exercise that the state of a school building matters less than the suitability of its staff, with the implication that there is therefore no need to invest in a new school. This issue is also linked to concerns that have been raised about the impact on pupils of a larger school compared to the schools which they attend at present.

In section 6 of the Proposal Document, the Council's Educational Benefits Statement describes how the facilities of a new purpose built school will provide a richer, more motivating and more supportive learning environment for pre-school pupils, primary-aged pupils and community users of the facilities.

It is understandable that the existing 'school communities' have a close affinity with their schools, and it is acknowledged that staff seek to deliver high quality educational standards even where the condition and suitability of the buildings is not satisfactory. While the professional skills of staff are crucial to the provision of high quality learning, there is no doubt that the learning and teaching process can be managed and supported more effectively in a physical environment designed specifically to take account of the demands of the new curriculum and of new pedagogical approaches which have a strong focus on the flexible use of space and on active learning approaches. That is the unambiguous perspective of teachers and pupils of recently built schools in Angus and of other new schools throughout Scotland.

It is also acknowledged that the process of amalgamating the two schools to create one new school community will bring certain challenges. However, the new school 'ethos' and 'community ownership' aspects can be confidently established with sound leadership and strong support from the Education Authority. Indeed these aspects will be enhanced through time, not least, due to the high quality facilities available in the new school. It is the Council's intention as the project progresses, to establish joint staff and pupil forums/events in order to ensure that the transition to the new school is as seamless as possible.

This approach to nurturing a new school community will ensure that the good practice that currently exists within both schools is taken forward and becomes an intrinsic part of the new school. The new school will also provide:

- *From a learning and teaching perspective:*
 - *Significantly enhanced pre-school facilities*
 - *Easier access to specialist staff/resources*

- Improved access to high quality ICT provision/infrastructure
- Closer integration of early years education, in particular, between pre-school and primary
- Better integrated progression in children's learning throughout the stages of the school
- Flexible learning and teaching spaces
- Easy to manage opportunities for establishing, where appropriate, learning groups across stages
- From a pupil entitlement perspective:
 - A wider range of extra-curricular activities/interests
 - Enhanced opportunities for social interaction and peer learning and peer support
 - Access to high quality tutorial support areas
 - More opportunity for recreational activities/team games/active schools facilities
 - Facilities which will better support the requirements of the health and wellbeing curriculum
 - A wider variety of options for pupil involvement in musical and performing arts activities
 - Better support for pupils with additional support needs in both the nursery and the primary school
 - Improved opportunities to support whole school initiatives, for example, 'Hungry for Success'
- From a local community perspective:
 - 'Wrap around' care benefits (including the 'out of school care' club)
 - Availability of facilities for community use purposes during the school day
 - Opportunity to develop the school campus as a learning community
- Other aspects which will add value to the status quo:
 - Closer interaction with the community and the opportunity for community groups to use facilities outwith and during the school day
 - Improved traffic management arrangements on campus
 - Opportunities for co-location and closer integration with other children's services, in line with the national GIRFEC ('Getting It Right For Every Child') approach
 - Vastly improved building condition and sustainability supporting modern, fit-for-purpose internal and external design features, which reflect the requirements and ambitions of the new curriculum

The above overview demonstrates the broad range of educational benefits to be derived from the new facilities. These benefits, together with appropriate staff levels, will provide a learning environment that can enhance learning experiences not just for pupils, but also for the wider community.

There appears to be some confusion in the community about the proposed size of the school. The school will be designed with a notional capacity of 500 primary-aged pupils. That capacity represents an increase of 50 to 60 pupils over the current capacity of Timmergreens Primary School which can accommodate around 444 pupils (the notional capacity of a standard 'two stream' primary school).

The roll of the new school at opening in August 2013, is projected to be 413 primary-aged pupils and is well within the notional capacity of a standard two stream primary school. The additional notional capacity of up to 500 has been included to 'future proof' the building in the event that there is new house building in the area and/or the roll rises as a result of successful placing requests.

5.3.7 View that residents who live adjacent to the new school had not been sufficiently informed regarding the proposals.

Some responses to the consultation, submitted by residents living in the vicinity of the Hospitalfield site, have raised concerns about a perceived lack of notification in relation to the proposals.

This consultation process is being managed in accordance with the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. That Act does not identify local residents as 'relevant consultees'. While the Council did not issue the Proposal Document to local residents, public

notices were placed in the local press and in various Council buildings throughout Arbroath. The information was, therefore, available to the wider community (section 7 of the Proposal Document refers). Copies of the Proposal Document were, of course, sent by post to every relevant consultee.

The Council has, however, considered **all** submissions from local residents and reviewed these as part of the consultation process. It should be noted that local residents will be included as part of the development control consultation to comply with planning legislation requirements. They will, therefore, have the opportunity to make comments on the proposal in a planning context at that time.

5.3.8 Input/clarification regarding specific design aspirations for the new school.

A number of responses received during the consultation period related to specific aspects of the design for the new school. Indeed, responses also included feedback from pupils.

These contributions will be fed into the design development process. At this stage, the design is being developed 'at risk' until the outcome of this consultation process has been concluded. However, progress with initial design is required in order to achieve the proposed school opening date of 13 August 2013, or as soon as possible thereafter.

As part of that initial design process, a staff workshop was held at each school to initiate some 'blue-sky thinking' and ideas/aspirations for the new school. A working group including staff from both schools, together with representatives from both Parent Councils and Council officers, has also been established to consider the requirements for the new school.

As each stage of the design process evolves, it is intended to hold further meetings/workshops with pupils, staff, Parent Councils and the wider parent body to inform all interested parties of the emerging design solution and also to obtain feedback and suggestions.

5.3.9 Clarification of staffing provision for the new school.

School staff have expressed some concerns about the staffing implications of merging the two existing schools. These were raised at the staff meeting held on 23 February 2011.

While this aspect of this new build project will need to be considered in detail, on the basis of previous experience, there will be sufficient time in advance of the new school opening to co-ordinate and sensitively manage this process. It is likely that there will be natural staff movement between now and the new school opening date, and that the majority of current staff will be deployed in the new school. Failing that, the Council is committed to re-deploying staff to other schools in Arbroath.

5.3.10 Clarification regarding the consultation undertaken by the Council.

Some feedback has sought clarity regarding the Council's consultation process.

The Council has recently concluded its 3rd and formal stage of consultation, in accordance with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

There have been a variety of consultation exercises since March 2009, including:

- Stage 1 informal consultation (relating to all Arbroath schools) was carried out in Spring 2009 to provide an overview of the current situation in Arbroath and explore a range of options.
- Stage 2 informal consultation (relating to all Arbroath schools) was carried out in Winter 2009/2010 to explore a more focussed range of options, including the potential for a new school in the West of Arbroath.
- Stage 3 formal and statutory consultation (relating to the specific proposal to provide a new school in the West of Arbroath) commenced on 16 February and concluded on 1 April earlier this year. The next steps in this process include Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education providing a report, the Council producing its Consultation

Report, taking its decision regarding the implementation or otherwise of the proposal and, thereafter, the Council's decision being reviewed by Scottish Ministers.

In addition to of the above consultation exercises, Council officers have been involved throughout the process in detailed discussions with representatives from the Parent Councils of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools.

*There appears to be a significant misconception about the status of the consultation exercise whereby multiple responses were submitted to a survey allegedly from one computer. For absolute clarity, **this issue related to Stage 2 of the consultation process, and NOT the current Stage 3 statutory consultation exercise.***

The multiple responses referred to above were summarily discounted when interpreting the feedback from the Stage 2 consultation exercise. That action was confirmed in report 427/10, which was approved by the Education Committee at its meeting on 3 June 2010.

It should be noted that Stage 2 consultation did not result in a clear site preference being identified. The Council subsequently carried out a full evaluation of each site option in order to identify the preferred site (section 5.3.1 above refers).

The Stage 3 statutory consultation exercise therefore took place on the basis that the Hospitalfield site was the preferred location for the new school.

6. Summary of Oral Comments/Representations (made at Public Meeting)

- 6.1 The note of the public meeting held in Arbroath High School on Tuesday 8 March 2011 is provided in Annex 2. That meeting was attended mainly by members of the public and local residents.
- 6.2 The note summarises the oral comments/representations made at the meeting, together with the Council's responses.

7. Response to HMIE's Report

- 7.1 The full report compiled by HMIE in relation to the educational aspects of the Proposal is provided in Annex 3.
- 7.2 Section 4 of that report concludes that the proposal to build a new school adjacent to Hospitalfield House "**should have a positive impact on children's educational experiences**" and "**building a new school in West Arbroath is a sensible and positive solution to the Council's phased plans to improve the school estate and manage falling rolls efficiently and effectively**".
- 7.3 HMIE state in their report that "there is significant opposition to the proposals from parents and carers of children attending Muirfield Primary School". While the Council acknowledges that some Muirfield parents hold anxieties about the need for the current Muirfield catchment area pupils to cross the Westway, it would appear that, overall, Muirfield parents are in support of the Proposal, subject to concerns about travel arrangements being addressed. The overwhelming majority of Muirfield parents neither attended the public meeting on 8 March 2011 nor made submissions to the Proposal Document issued to them by post on 14 February 2011. The opposition to which HMIE refers relates to a minority of parents. That position should perhaps have been captured in HMIE's report.
- 7.4 HMIE has indicated that the "Council has yet to explain sufficiently clearly how children's learning experiences will improve as a result of the Proposal, particularly in relation to the building design and the increase in the combined roll at the new school". Reference is made to the information detailed in section 6.2 of the Proposal Document, together with the additional information, offered in light of HMIE's comments, in section 5.3.6 above, in relation to the educational benefits of a high quality new build school environment.
- 7.5 In relation to the statement in the summary of their report that "parents and carers have understandable concerns about travel arrangements, particularly for children walking to school", it is pleasing to note that HMIE has also acknowledged the Council's clear commitment to take all due steps to respond to these concerns. In this regard, the specific approach to be adopted by the Council is explained in greater detail in section 5.3.3 above.

7.6 HMIE's report provides a fair commentary on the Proposal and the consultation feedback.

8. Review of the Proposal following the Consultation Period

8.1 A review of the Proposal has been carried out, taking account of all written comments/representations received during the consultation period, oral comments/representations made at the public meeting, and HMIE's report.

8.2 This review has concluded that the provision of a new build school to serve a new combined catchment area in the West of Arbroath, with the Hospitalfield site being the Council's preferred site choice for that new school, is considered to be the most appropriate and Best Value solution. This Proposal will provide a range of educational benefits compared to the present situation. The size of school being proposed will provide sufficient flexibility to take account of future pupil roll fluctuations.

8.3 The need to respond thoughtfully and reassuringly to parental concerns about arrangements to cross the Westway is absolutely understood. It is clear from the consultation feedback that the single most important issue for the Council to address is the development of a number of safe pupil routes – in partnership with parents, staff and pupils - and the provision of the necessary amenities. It is, however, important to re-iterate that any of the four sites available would have required pupils to cross the Westway. Taking account of related factors, the Hospitalfield site is considered to provide the best opportunity to manage those pupil movements safely and effectively.

8.4 The Council's commitments to the provision of safe and well supported pedestrian routes to the new school are detailed in section 5.3.3 above.

8.5 In view of the considerations addressed in this report, the Director of Education intends to recommend to the full Council, at its meeting on 22 June 2011, that the Council decision should be to implement the Proposal.

9. Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies

9.1 There were no omissions or inaccuracies in the Proposal Document notified to the Council during the consultation period.

10. Opportunity for making Representations to Scottish Ministers

10.1 This Consultation Report has been published more than 3 weeks prior to the date (22 June 2011) on which the Council will take its decision to implement or reject the Proposal.

10.2 If the Council's decision is to implement the Proposal, the Council's Director of Education will be required to notify Scottish Ministers of that decision within a period of 6 working days starting with the day on which the decision is made.

10.3 Relevant representations can be made to Scottish Ministers (within 3 weeks of the date of the Council decision) to request Scottish Ministers to 'call-in' the Council's decision. This means that, if the Council's decision to implement the Proposal is taken on Wednesday 22 June 2011, representations can be made up to Wednesday 13 July 2011.

10.4 Angus Council can only implement the Council's decision 6 weeks after the date on which that decision is taken, or in the event of formal earlier notification from Scottish Ministers.

10.5 Angus Council cannot implement the Council's decision if 'called-in' by Scottish Ministers during the 6 week period after the Council's decision. In that event, Scottish Ministers will then adopt the position of making the decision to either implement or reject the Proposal.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Annex provides a summary of the issues that emerged from the written comments/representations received by the Council during the statutory consultation period.

2.0 Muirfield/Timmergreens Staff Feedback

- 2.1 While this aspect of the consultation was conducted in a meeting format, a written note of the meeting was produced to record the staff comments/representations conveyed during the course of the meeting. These included:

- Clarification relating to site access and staff parking arrangements planned for the new site.
- Query regarding the scope of the Additional Support Needs facility in the new school.
- Clarification sought regarding the approach to resolve staffing for the new school.
- Specific queries/comments relating to the design for the new school building.
- Clarification sought regarding the next steps if the Council does not progress with the new school following the consultation.

3.0 Pupil Consultation Feedback

- 3.1 The Council has a strong commitment to pupil engagement and to ensure the involvement of children and young people is meaningful and purposeful. The approach to this aspect of the consultation therefore sought to ensure that pupils were fully engaged in the consultation process through the use of age appropriate methodologies designed to maximise their input and feedback. This approach generated high quality feedback which included:

- Desire for outdoor learning and play options with sports pitches and wildlife/garden areas, together with quiet/private spaces.
- Identification of areas within the existing schools that were dim and dark and desire for light/bright spaces in the new school.
- Identification of parts of the existing schools that were often stuffy or stale with fresh air being a priority for the new school.
- Observations regarding existing furniture including tables/chairs that were not the correct height and uncomfortable.
- Desire to have quiet, private and de-stimulating areas within indoor spaces where pupils could think, read, be alone, or work quietly with a partner.
- Aspiration to have separate spaces for gym and dining to maximise gym time and support sports clubs over the lunch break.
- Desire to have improved changing facilities rather than utilise classroom space for changing.
- Requirement for good social space which feels different to class space.
- Interaction between P7s and younger children being highly valued.

4.0 Parent Council Submissions

- 4.1 Timmergreens Parent Council submitted a letter with the main points being:

- Parents are generally in favour of the Proposal.
- Concern has been expressed about safe routes to school road safety and drop-off/pick-up arrangements.
- Concern about the proposed capacity of the new school which should allow for future expansion.
- Concern about the survey produced by 'Hospitalfield Independent School Survey (HISS)' which appears to be biased and misinformed.
- Noted disappointment the manner in which the public meeting developed on 8 March 2011 which became quite aggressive and intimidating for attendees to make oral representations.

- 4.2 Muirfield Parent Council did not submit a letter. However, there has been positive dialogue throughout the process with the Muirfield Parent Council representatives.

5.0 'On-line' Comments/Representations

5.1 During the course of the consultation, 44 written comments/representations were submitted through the 'have your say' section of the Council's website, with the main issues being:

- Some submissions have intimated support for having a new school, whilst others have noted they are opposed to the Proposal.
- Concerns at the choice of the Hospitalfield site and site selection process.
- Concerns regarding the merger of the two schools, with preference to refurbish existing schools.
- Concerns at pupils having to cross the Westway, requirement to have a safe method of crossing and associated safe routes.
- Concerns regarding the potential for cars stopping on the Westway; congestion in surrounding streets and for drop-off/pick-up arrangements.
- Concerns over financial aspects of the Proposal.
- Concerns over the impact on other schools in Arbroath.
- Views expressed there is no relationship between new facilities and improvements to educational attainment.
- Views that community members and residents who live adjacent to the new school had not been sufficiently informed regarding the Proposal.
- Views noting specific design aspirations for new school facility.
- Concerns in relation to the capacity of new school in terms of potential new housing and pupil numbers compared to the existing schools.
- Clarity sought regarding the consultation processes conducted by the Council.

6.0 Emails and Other Correspondence to the Director of Education

6.1 During the course of the consultation, 13 written comments/representations (including the Timmergreens Parent Council letter noted in section 4.1 above and the Hospitalfield 'Independent' School Survey noted in section 7 below) were made directly to the Director of Education. The main issues included within that correspondence mirror the issues raised via the 'have your say' section of the Council's website, as noted in section 5.1 above.

7.0 Hospitalfield 'Independent' School Survey

7.1 During the consultation period, a supposedly independent survey was carried out by two parents of pupils at Muirfield Primary School. The responses to this survey have been submitted to the Council and are included in the package of comprehensive information sent to HMIE and available in the Members' Lounge.

7.2 While it is helpful to receive views, it would have been preferable had the survey been undertaken by either or both Parent Councils. It is understood that the two organisers of this survey canvassed returns on a door-to-door basis. This 'petition' approach may have influenced how the questionnaires were completed and may have dissuaded relevant consultees from submitting representations/comments through the mechanisms provided by the Council. Indeed, since there are no names or addresses to verify the authenticity of the completed survey forms, there can be no certainty about the source of the responses or the identity of respondents, whether relevant consultees or not.

7.3 Notwithstanding those limitations, a review of that survey and related responses has been undertaken. The main issues in those responses echo the issues raised via the 'have your say' section of the Council's website, as noted in section 5.1 above.

7.4 Following the conclusion of the statutory consultation period, one of the organisers of this survey approached the department about the possibility of organising a meeting at which officers could provide parents with further information about the new build proposals. In light of that contact, arrangements were made by the Parent Council of Muirfield Primary School to hold a meeting on the evening of 10 May 2011.

7.5 That meeting was subsequently cancelled by the Parent Council as a result, it would appear, of growing unease with the campaign conducted by the organisers of the survey who had by now established a 'Muirfield Action Group'.

- 7.6 Two representatives of that action group contacted officers with a view to exploring alternative arrangements for a public meeting. That meeting, which Muirfield Parent Council were no longer willing to host, took place at Muirfield Primary School on 17 May 2011. Prior to the meeting, the Muirfield Action Group, one of whose members was given the opportunity to address the meeting, issued a detailed leaflet which contained, in the view of officers, inaccurate information in relation to a range of issues relating to the new build proposals. Officers prepared a briefing note responding issue by issue to the terms of the Muirfield Action Group's leaflet. That briefing note, which was issued to all parents of pupils currently attending Muirfield Primary School and Timmergreens Primary School and to all those who attended the meeting, is attached as Annex 4 to this Consultation Report.

ARBROATH SCHOOLS PROJECT (PHASE 1)

PUBLIC MEETING

Note of Public Meeting held In Arbroath High School
on Tuesday 8 March 2011¹

(Note: This is not a verbatim record of the meeting but reflects the issues that were raised at the meeting together with responses provided).

Peter Nield, Convener of Angus Council's Education Committee, chaired the meeting and introduced the Council officers in attendance as follows:

- Neil Logue, Director of Education;
- Craig Clement, Senior Education Manager (Education Department); and
- Gordon Cargill, Project Manager (Education Department).

It is estimated that around 70 members of the public attended the meeting, with 41 noting their attendance on the sederunt.

Large scale (A1) size drawings of each of the Annexes within the Proposal Document were displayed at the rear of the meeting venue for attendees to examine before and after the meeting if desired. Spare copies of the Proposal Document were also available for attendees to uplift at the meeting (in addition to those mailed directly to relevant consultees).

Neil Logue, Craig Clement and Gordon Cargill gave a short presentation, which outlined:

- the Proposal;
- background to the Proposal;
- the current position;
- the proposed new Primary School;
- the educational benefits; and
- the consultation process,

and this was followed by an open forum discussion.

The following is a summary of the main comments/issues raised, together with responses (*in italics below the comment/issue*) provided during the open forum.

- Is the new primary school due for opening in August 2013? Or is there to be a further stage of consultation?
 - *This consultation is the formal stage of consultation (in accordance with legislation) and the Council is now consulting on a firm proposal.*
- The impression has been given that this meeting is the first of a number of public meetings?
 - *Clarified this public meeting was a legislative requirement of the Council in terms of the Schools Consultation Act.*
- Reference made to a Council report submitted to the Education Committee on 3 June 2010 where reservations were noted about the Hospitalfield site and request made for rationale behind change from this position and associated meeting minutes.
 - *Clarified that Officers had not changed their position, but rather had followed due process in objectively assessing each of the potential sites which has resulted in the Hospitalfield site being identified as the preferred site.*

¹ This note was issued on 26 April 2011 to all attendees who provided contact details on the meeting sederunt.

- Reservation noted about crossing the Westway and desire to incorporate a pedestrian fly-over with greater detail required in relation to this issue.
- Observation made that indicative maps provided were relatively poor quality and to bear this in mind for future presentations.
- Concern raised that members of the public were not given the opportunity to examine the other sites to examine what they also had to offer and there was no information on why these other sites had been ruled out.
 - *Noted that all four sites had been included in the previous consultation exercise initiated towards the end of 2009.*
 - *The outcome of the previous consultation exercise identified that an assessment of each of the sites would require to be undertaken to establish the preferred site overall. 14 criteria were established to measure the relative merits of each site and the Hospitalfield site was identified as being, on balance, the most appropriate. The criteria included an assessment of relevant legal, technical, educational and other issues including decant arrangements.*
 - *This was reported to the Education Committee at its meeting on 10 February 2011, including the details of how each site had been assessed in relation to each criterion.*
 - *Consultation at this stage must be based on a specific proposal to meet legal requirements. Careful consideration was given to assess all four sites before concluding that the Hospitalfield site is the preferred site.*
- Observation noting that, if enough people say this won't happen, then it won't happen.
 - *You are being given every opportunity to have your say through this consultation process.*
- Statement made that Parent Councils do not necessarily represent the views of parents.
 - *Reference should be made to paragraph 7.3 of the Proposal Document which is unambiguous in terms of who the Council is consulting and who can make their views known. We are happy to listen to these views and report back to elected members who will make the Council's decision.*
 - *Schools can be successfully built and safely managed next to busy roads and the Council is happy to listen to ideas which will assist in addressing these concerns.*
- There has been no mention of working with parents.
 - *The Council is committed to including and working with parents in the development of the new school and will engage in more detailed discussion in due course.*
- Concern noted over Westway crossing not being appropriate and about the impact of large vehicles using the road.
 - *We have taken these concerns on board and will look to include appropriate crossing arrangements including traffic lights and other safety measures which will be based on professional advice from roads transport engineers.*
- Noted view that the new school will likely add to the problems of the Westway – will there be barriers up to these lights and speed bumps?
 - *The Council will be working with professional road safety experts to include all relevant and necessary safety measures as the project is developed in detail, including appropriate locations for barriers and signage. The Hospitalfield site has been assessed along with the other site options and, while it is situated closest to the Westway, it is considered that it will minimise, and provide a greater opportunity to manage, the overall exposure to pedestrians walking on the Westway, in comparison to the likely pedestrian routes available to other site options. The Council is also committed to continue working with parents to address road safety concerns and find appropriate solutions.*

- My daughter will be walking from the zone 3 along the path network which can be a dark area to expect 5 to 12 year old children to walk through. Another parent noted that her children will no longer be allowed to walk to school, losing their independence. Concern also noted over potential lack of volunteers to support a 'walking bus'.
 - *The walking routes being proposed are just a starting point to identify walking routes in principle, and will be subject to detailed investigation of issues including the need to improve lighting.*
 - *Confirmed that the profound anxieties about pupils crossing the Westway were being noted and would be taken on board, including through working with parents to overcome these concerns.*
 - *Noted that all of the site options would involve pupils crossing the Westway.*
- Comment that people will just use cars in lieu of walking; noted preference for a walk-over and concern regarding potential for pupils to run out of the school gate directly on to the Westway.
 - *Noted this would be regrettable and that a walkover would not be feasible on Westway.*
 - *We shall endeavour to work together to resolve the issues of concern. Other schools have been built in similar situations and operate daily without incident. Suitable safety measures will be put in place to avoid pupils running onto the Westway, including school crossing patrollers being located at strategic crossing points.*
 - *Confirmation that the Council is absolutely committed to finding and implementing appropriate safety solutions by working with the police and road safety specialists.*
- Noted that house is near the Cricket ground – nearest Newbigging Drive - and there is nothing being proposed to help my child travel along the Westway.
 - *The walking routes, including potential walking bus, identified in the Proposal Document are just indicative meantime to give an idea of potential routes. These will be developed in further detail taking on board comments from parents.*
- Query regarding Council ownership of the potential new site at Arbirlot Road West.
 - *Confirmed that the Council did not own the potential new site at Arbirlot Road West or the potential new site at Hospitalfield and that all 4 potential sites were objectively assessed on their relative merits.*
- Query regarding the position with the Hospitalfield site and if the Hospitalfield Trust has been offered money for the site – has it been accepted?
 - *Confirmed that Council officers had held discussions with representatives of the Hospitalfield Trust and have identified in principle the price to be paid for the site. However, the actual purchase will depend on the outcome of this consultation exercise, together with the satisfactory exchange of missives and the outcomes of the planning process.*
- Anecdotal observation regarding the general disregard that drivers in Arbroath appear to give to red lights at road crossings. Any crossings for the new school would have to be manned to ensure that cars stop to make it safe for pupils. Noted site preference as the new site at Arbirlot Road West.
- Comment that the walking route identified in the travel routes map, which includes The Steading, passes through an area prone to flooding followed by a car parking area.
 - *Confirmed that the routes were indicative only at this stage.*
- Noted that the Westway is one of busiest roads in Arbroath and that there has been a pedestrian fatality on this thoroughfare. Council are underestimating the culture of walking to school.
- Concern raised by local resident regarding the potential for pedestrian access to the site via Arbirlot Place, noting this may encourage too many cars to converge in a residential area.

- *Confirmed the Council were considering providing an entrance to the school playground from Arbirlot Place.*
 - *Noted that residents and neighbours to the site would have the opportunity to consider and comment on this aspect as part of the planning process consultation.*
- Query regarding the likely location of this potential pedestrian entrance.
 - *Confirmed it would be adjacent to the existing playpark in Arbirlot Place.*
- Noted that not against the proposal for a new school – but concerned about the manner in which the consultation has been undertaken having never been invited to attend the meeting which had not been well publicised.
 - *Confirmed the Council had taken all reasonable steps to advertise and publicise all public meeting events during the various stages of consultation.*
 - *Reference also made to section 7.3 of the Proposal Document which identified all relevant consultees to whom the Council had directly mailed information in relation to this new build proposal.*
- Extensive commentary noted regarding professional affinity with both Muirfield and Timmergreens, reflecting on these schools being showcase schools in their day and the pupil numbers each accommodated. Noted shock at the proposal to close both these schools, which had been specifically built on either side of the Westway, and build a new one in the current economic climate, although the proposals do look wonderful. Concern over what happens to the schools when they are closed and the sites become derelict.
- Query regarding what the existing sites will be used for in the future.
 - *Noted that no future use had yet been identified for the sites albeit they maybe used to accommodate housing.*
- Noted that these children will go to the new school and query if it will be big enough.
 - *Confirmed the school will have a notional capacity to accommodate up to 500 primary aged pupils. The combined **projected** roll at opening in August 2013 is 413.*
 - *In the event new housing was built in the new combined catchment area, there would be sufficient spare capacity to accommodate additional pupil numbers.*
 - *The building will also be designed as far as practicable to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate changing needs in the future.*
- Query if the public were consulted about merging the 2 schools.
 - *Confirmed this issue was included as part of the stage 2 consultation undertaken during December 2009/January 2010.*
- Concern noted over Angus Council policy on building on Greenfield site, together with other related development control and land use issues.
 - *Planning colleagues have been consulted regarding relevant planning policy applicable to the Hospitalfield and other sites.*
 - *Although not relevant to comment on planning policy at this meeting, confirmed that the development of the Hospitalfield site will be subject to the full development control process.*
- Query regarding the age of Hayshead Primary School and its fitness for purpose for 21st century education.
 - *Confirmed Hayshead was built circa 1950s and that the Council is looking to improve all Arbroath schools on a phased basis as part of the Arbroath Schools Project.*

- Comment that, at the moment, new housing is being built at the other end of Arbroath and that end needs a new school more than this end.
 - *Confirmed the Council has had to prioritise the phasing of the project due to limited funding, and the West side of the town has been given top priority following earlier consultation. There are sufficient spaces in other Arbroath schools to deal with the impact of new housing developments in other parts of the burgh.*
- Comment that the Hospitalfield site is on dedicated greenbelt land with historic interest.
 - *Confirmed the development would be subject to the development control process which would include working with Historic Scotland in relation to the potential design of the new building.*
- Concern noted over quality of education of children at new school and class sizes. Children currently attend Muirfield and concerned that merging the schools will give less individual attention. At present the Head Teacher knows every individual child and therefore would like confirmation that children will get better education outcome at new school.
 - *Noted that Council has a legal responsibility regarding class sizes which are restricted to 25 pupils in primary 1, and the Council's aim is for lower class sizes for P1 – P3 (in accordance with Concordat Agreement).*
 - *While the quality of education at the current schools is acknowledged, it does not follow that a school with a roll projection of around 400 will have a negative impact on children's education. There are many educational benefits associated with the Proposal and these aspects, together with good teacher and support staff staffing levels, to which the Council is committed, will provide a learning environment that can enhance pupils' educational experience and opportunities.*
- Comment that it is teachers who are important and not the buildings.
 - *Noted that it is important to have good quality buildings to provide the learning and teaching environment needed to deliver a modern curriculum.*
- Noted the desire for pupils to be well known and supported in the school.
 - *Confirmed that if pupil numbers rise, then staff numbers will also rise to ensure an appropriate staff/pupil ratio.*
 - *Re-assurance that the Council will not compromise the current high standards of education, and noted that Angus Council has been to the fore in leading developments in relation to Curriculum for Excellence.*
- Concern raised over the design approach to new schools, which often appear to have a clinical appearance, small classrooms, and other difficulties with acoustics.
 - *The Council has developed a number of new school buildings and has learned a number of lessons from each project. These lessons will benefit this project and will help to provide a modern fit-for-purpose design solution. This will also involve inputs from pupils, staff and parent representatives. Some aspects of design will require careful planning and consideration to ensure the benefits of having natural daylight/appropriate natural ventilation to create a healthy and stimulating environment, while at the same time ensuring appropriate acoustic solutions are in place.*
- Query regarding the purchase of the Hospitalfield site, current ownership of the land and Cllr Peter Nield's position.
 - *Confirmed the Hospitalfield Trust are responsible for the Hospitalfield Estate and that Cllr Peter Nield is not a member of the Board.*
 - *Also noted that Council officers and the Board members of Hospitalfield Trust have identified in principle the price to be paid for the site. However, the actual purchase will*

depend on the outcome of this consultation exercise, together with the satisfactory exchange of missives and outcomes of the planning process.

- Comment that many people do not approve of the Hospitalfield site.
- Various comments noted regarding the previous consultation exercise including difficulties encountered through multiple responses being submitted from the same computer IP address, together with FOI requests in relation to same, and clarification requested on how the Council has dealt with this issue.
 - *Confirmed that feedback from the previous consultation was examined taking due cognisance of the computer IP address issue, with particular attention given to the comments clearly identifiable as being made by Muirfield and Timmergreens parents.*
 - *The Council has tried to engage positively with parents and the wider community throughout all stages of consultation to take account of comments and issues raised.*
 - *The Council has learnt lessons from the previous consultation exercise in terms of avoiding multiple responses from a single source and has responded to any FOI requests submitted.*
 - *In terms of the feedback from the previous consultation exercise, it was clear from feedback that there was no overall consensus about the choice of site. Therefore the full technical and professional assessment of each of the 4 site options required to be undertaken. The outcome of that site assessment has identified the Hospitalfield site as being the preferred site and the assessment is included in Council report 133/11 which is publicly available on the Council's website.*
- Comment that decant arrangements were noted earlier regarding re-developing the Timmergreens site, and if same criteria followed for the Montrose Pool project, then it would not be progressing.
- Comment that the recent report relating to the site selection went to the full Council and not the Education Committee which therefore did not include teacher representatives in the decision making process.
 - *The full Council is also an appropriate forum for the Council to make a decision on the report that was being considered. Teachers and teacher representatives have been involved in ongoing consultation throughout.*
- Query regarding the current statutory consultation process.
 - *The consultation process was explained in detail. It was confirmed that the current stage of the process will conclude on Friday 1 April 2011. This will be followed by the Council submitting all feedback from the consultation process to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education who will then prepare a report. The Director of Education will then prepare a Consultation Report which will be made public at least 3 weeks in advance of the Council's Decision on whether to proceed or not. Assuming the Council's Decision is to proceed with the Proposal, this will be intimated to Scottish Ministers who then have the opportunity to 'call-in' the Council's Decision.*
 - *The Consultation Report will be issued to all relevant consultees and if contact details are available as part of the attendance record for tonight's meeting, the Consultation Report will also be issued to attendees whose contact details are known.*
- Query regarding options available if feedback from this consultation is negative.
 - *Confirmed that all the feedback, positive and negative, will be submitted to HMIE and taken into consideration as part of the Consultation Report to inform the Council's Decision.*
 - *In the event that the outcome is not to progress this Proposal, the Council would have to give detailed consideration to the implications of that outcome.*

- Comment noted by a parent that it was disappointing that the tone of the meeting has been mainly negative when overall they were in favour of the new school which has a number of positive aspects.
 - *Confirmed the Consultation Report will provide a balanced reflection of the consultation, taking on board Westway road traffic concerns and the positive aspects of providing a 21st century school.*
- Comment re-affirming and supporting the above point and noting the Westway crossing issue would be applicable to any of the available sites.
- Comments noting that Westway may get busier if there is future investment in area and that the underpass should be manned or a new underpass constructed.
 - *Confirmed that this option would be considered.*
- Query regarding the longevity of the new school building.
 - *Confirmed that major building elements will generally have a lifespan of around 60 years assuming due care and maintenance.*

The meeting closed at approximately 9.30pm and the audience were thanked for their attendance and contributions.

Consultation proposal by Angus Council

Report by HM Inspectorate of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal to change provision of education in the West Arbroath area through the amalgamation of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools in a new site adjacent to Hospitalfield House.

Introduction

1.1 Angus Council proposes to:

- discontinue education provision at the existing Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools;
- establish a new primary school located at a new site adjacent to Hospitalfield House;
- combine the existing catchment areas of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools to create a catchment area serving the new primary school; and
- effect the above changes by 13 August 2013, or as soon as possible thereafter.

1.2 The report from HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HMIE in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 8 March 2011 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents, carers and others;
- consideration of further representations made directly to HMIE on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools, including discussion with representative groups of parents, staff and children. A few parents at Muirfield Primary School felt that the purpose of the meeting with parents at the school had not been communicated clearly.

1.4 HMIE considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal, including on residents in the local area;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and

- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Angus Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 The Parent Council of Timmergreens Primary School is generally in favour of the proposal. However, they have expressed a range of concerns in relation to traffic management and road safety.

2.3 There is significant opposition to the proposals from parents and carers of children attending Muirfield Primary School. Most of the comments submitted either at the public meeting, in writing as part of the consultation process, including directly to HMIE, or in response to a survey carried out independently by parents and carers outwith the Muirfield Parent Council relate to concerns about traffic management and road safety. In order to access the new school, most of the children within the existing Muirfield catchment area will have to cross a busy road which enables heavy traffic to bypass Arbroath town centre. Many parents and carers are concerned that the council's proposals for safe crossing or for traffic calming on this road are inadequate, particularly the proposal for an unmanned traffic light crossing on the Westway.

2.4 A small number of parents and carers from the Muirfield catchment area consider that the consultation process, including the initial consideration of options, relied too heavily on the views of the Muirfield Parent Council. They did not feel that there had been sufficient consultation and communication with all parents and carers at that stage of the process.

2.5 A small number of comments from parents and carers of both schools note concern at the large pupil roll within the proposed new school. In particular, they are concerned that their children will no longer enjoy the close sense of community within existing schools.

2.6 Staff at both schools have mixed views of the proposals. They acknowledge the benefits of working in a modern purpose-built school and welcome opportunities to work with new colleagues. However, they do not feel that the educational benefits of the proposal have been set out sufficiently clearly. Staff are aware of weaknesses in the accommodation within the existing schools but do not feel that these have an adverse impact on children's learning experiences. Many staff are also concerned that a school with a significantly larger combined roll will have a negative impact on school ethos. A few are concerned that the move will affect their employment conditions. Staff have also expressed concern that the council will not take full account of their views on the detail of classroom design.

2.7 Children have no clear overall preference for either remaining in the existing schools or moving to a new school. They have provided a range of imaginative and interesting views about what a new school should provide. This includes several aspects of current provision which they value, particularly access to spacious grounds for learning and play. Children from Muirfield Primary School also value whole-school support for nursery children with additional support needs. Overall, children felt they would cope with walking to the new school, including crossing the Westway. A small number were concerned about taking cycles across that road.

2.8 A number of local residents have expressed concern about increased traffic within the local area.

2.9 There have been a small number of comments from other residents in Arbroath. Many of these comments have been in relation to a perceived threat to future spending on other buildings in the Arbroath school estate, once the budget for this proposal has been allocated.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 Both Muirfield and Timmergreens Schools are located in buildings which date from the late 1960s or early 1970s. The council has rated both the condition and suitability of the building at Muirfield Primary School as category C (poor). The building condition of Timmergreens Primary School has been rated as category B (satisfactory) and its suitability as category C (poor). The physical state of both school buildings is such that though currently safe, they are in need of improvement. Furthermore, the council considers that repairing existing buildings is not a viable option, due to endemic problems with design, layout, heating and ventilation and building infrastructure. There are a number of factors which adversely affect the physical environment for both pupils and staff. Both buildings are subject to damage from the ingress of water. Temperature control is difficult and can result in discomfort in warm or cold weather. There are severe problems with condensation, particularly in areas of Timmergreens Primary School. Timmergreens Primary School is not compliant with current disability legislation. At both sites there are problems with safe access for traffic. The council's proposal will provide a modern and up-to-date environment for learning. However, the council has yet to set out sufficiently clearly how its proposed building design will result in specific improvements to learning for children. The council has given extensive consideration to a range of options, including using either of the existing sites for rebuild, before consulting on building a new school on the proposed site.

3.2 Both schools are operating well below capacity. This is predicted to fall to 55% of overall capacity across the two schools within a few years. There is a strong case to address the inefficiencies created by these projected low levels of occupation. However, the council has yet to make clear the benefits of learning and working within a school with a larger roll than those within either of the existing schools. In taking forward the proposal, it should provide reassurance to children, staff and parents and carers and ensure that it will build on the current strengths of both schools in bringing them together.

3.3 Many parents and carers have understandable concerns in relation to traffic management and road safety. The council has recognised this and is committed to addressing these concerns. The council has already taken positive steps to identify safe walking routes to the new school for children through its Draft Travel Plan. However, in taking forward the proposal the council needs to work even more closely with all parents and carers to identify and undertake traffic management measures which will reassure parents and carers and ensure the safety of their children. Some residents of the local area are concerned about increased traffic in both the Westway and in neighbouring streets. The council's technical report, undertaken in preparation for the proposal, has indicated that traffic and road safety issues are manageable. In taking forward the proposal, the council plans to work alongside local police and its road transport consultants to address and allay continuing concerns.

3.4 The proposed new school includes a purpose-built nursery and will include provision for those nursery children with additional support needs who currently attend Muirfield. This will enable high-quality purpose-built accommodation for young children and address deficiencies in layout with the existing provision at Muirfield. The proposal for a separate entrance for nursery children will improve traffic management and security. The plan to design accommodation which will enable better stage transition will provide better opportunities for collaborative working at all stages, but will be particularly helpful for children transferring from nursery to P1.

3.5 The council has plans to enhance community use of the new school, including the playgroup which is currently located at Muirfield. Its design for purpose-built catering and toilet areas for community use will improve the facility for general use.

3.6 The council has responded positively and openly to the many and sometimes conflicting views which have been submitted to date. It needs to work closely with all stakeholders so that, should the proposal go ahead, it will provide a high-quality environment

for learning for future generations of children. It has established a working party of staff and parent representatives to consider detailed aspects of building design and intends to continue to consult further with staff to address their requirements as far as is reasonably possible.

4. Summary

The proposal from Angus Council to discontinue education provision at Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary School and build a new school adjacent to Hospitalfield House should have a positive impact on children's educational experiences.

The current school buildings are in a declining physical state and opportunities to bring them up to an acceptable standard are not viable. Building a new school in West Arbroath is a sensible and positive solution to the council's phased plans to improve the school estate and manage falling school rolls efficiently and effectively. Purpose-built nursery accommodation will offer an improved resource for young children, while dedicated catering and toilet space for community users will encourage wider use of the premises with increased benefit to all. Overall, however, the council has yet to explain sufficiently clearly how children's learning experiences will improve as a result of the proposal, particularly in relation to the building design and the increase in the combined roll at the new school.

The council has taken appropriate steps to examine thoroughly a range of site options and has carried out a detailed analysis of travel-to-school issues. Its case for the proposal is based on a sound technical case. However, parents and carers have understandable concerns about travel arrangements, particularly for children walking to school. The council has made a clear commitment, at the public meeting and in subsequent correspondence, to take all due steps to respond to these concerns. In doing so, it needs to work in close partnership with all parents and carers, children and staff.

**HM Inspectorate of Education
May 2011**

Briefing Note in response to issues raised by Muirfield Action Group

Angus Council Response to Muirfield Action Group 'Issues'

Muirfield Action Group has recently issued an information leaflet throughout the Muirfield and Timmergreens communities in relation to Angus Council's proposal to provide a new build primary school on a site adjacent Hospitalfield House.

Angus Council has prepared a response to the issues raised to clarify a number of issues.

This response is identified in ***bold italics*** below each issue.

Finance

- Many people think Angus Council has set aside money for this new school. Not true. They plan to borrow £8 million and pay it back over 25 years.

The £8m to fund this project has been provided for in the Council's 2010/2014 Financial Plan as approved at the special Council meeting on 10 February 2011.

The financial arrangements for this project are no different to those for any other such capital project to be undertaken by Angus Council.

These financial arrangements typically involve the Council borrowing money externally to finance the capital programme as a whole (after allowing for government grant, capital receipts, etc.) and then repaying the borrowing through budgeted loan payments over an appropriate term.

If the budget provision of £8m was not allocated towards the Arbroath Primary Schools (phase 1) project, it would be allocated to other capital projects which have been identified as priorities to support and enhance the range of services that the Council delivers throughout Angus.

- Interest payments on the loan rise to £744,000 in peak years. The Council claim there will be a £205,000 per year saving on running costs. Even allowing for this incredibly ambitious target there is a £500,000 hole to fill that will impact on ALL schools budgets.

There is not a £500,000 hole to fill.

The loan payments arising from the Council's 2010/2014 Financial Plan are provided for through a corporate Council wide budget rather than by individual departments. In light of this, there is no requirement for the Education department to generate any savings in order to meet the borrowing costs associated with this project.

The £205,000 revenue savings will result from the efficiency of amalgamating the two schools and relate to a range of running costs and will be retained by the department for alternative use.

It is highlighted that the budget impact of the 2010/2014 Financial Plan was assessed as being affordable, prudent and sustainable in the "Long Term Affordability of the Financial Plan" report considered at the special Council meeting on 10 February 2011. This assessment included the £8m for the Arbroath Primary Schools (phase 1) project.

THERE WILL, THEREFORE, BE NO IMPACT ON THE REVENUE BUDGET OF ANY SCHOOL AS A RESULT OF THIS PROJECT.

- How can they run a new 500 capacity school annually on £1.75 million, yet Whitehills Primary – with 56 FEWER kids costs £2million? What costs are being cut on this new school.

NO COSTS ARE BEING CUT ON THIS NEW SCHOOL.

Whitehills Primary is one of the Council's new build Public Private Partnership (PPP) schools and was completed during 2008.

For accounting purposes only, the PPP payments made to the company which constructed the schools have to be included within the budgets of the PPP schools.

The annual budget for Whitehills Primary, after removing the PPP payments, would be broadly comparable to the £1.75 million budget projection for this new school.

- If the school is built, Angus Council's own finance director has warned there will be no significant money to make improvements to other schools for at least "four to five years".

The "Long Term Affordability of the Financial Plan" report was considered at the special Council meeting on 10 February 2011. This noted that the level of capital spending over the next few years would mean "that there is no capacity to introduce significant new projects for the foreseeable future (the next 4-5 years) without existing projects being deleted or deferred...."

THIS DOES NOT CHANGE THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ENTIRE ARBROATH SCHOOL ESTATE ON A PHASED BASIS.

It was also concluded in the report that the 2010/2014 Financial Plan was affordable, prudent and sustainable and thus all of the projects over this period could be funded.

The £8m currently allocated to phase 1 of the Arbroath Schools Project is available within the Council's Financial Plan which also includes a provisional allowance of £2.6m for phase 2 of the project up to 2016.

The Council is also currently awaiting the outcome of an application for additional funding from the Scottish Government, who have pledged ongoing commitment to invest in the existing school estate throughout Scotland, using the Scottish Futures Trust.

Therefore, not progressing with phase 1, by not using this current funding opportunity, would effectively only result in prolonging the time it could take to complete the full project.

- This could mean no new gym space in Inverbrothock. No extra classes at Hayshead and no money to upgrade heating and a faulty roof at Warddykes.

All the other schools in Arbroath, not included in the current phase of the project, will continue to be supported to deliver the best possible outcomes from existing facilities, in accordance with the Council's statutory duties.

This includes addressing specific school condition issues that have been identified through carrying out property maintenance works on an ongoing basis.

Any major changes/improvements to other school buildings in Arbroath need to be considered in the strategic context of the School Estate Management Plans for each building. Therefore addressing specific issues in isolation (e.g. Warddykes heating) may be counter productive in the medium term, where a more fundamental overhaul is actually required.

- No-one has provided evidence it will cost more than £8 million to refurb the existing schools.

The principle of refurbishing the two existing schools has been assessed by the Council.

The estimated cost of refurbishment is in excess of the £8m funding available. It is also likely there would be significant technical difficulties upgrading the existing buildings to current regulatory standards.

The physical designs of the existing schools could not be significantly improved to support new opportunities in learning and teaching, particularly in the context of a Curriculum for Excellence.

The combined refurbished area of both schools, amounting to 5,337m², would be greater than the 3,500m² area proposed for the new school, and would result in significantly higher revenue costs (e.g. heating, lighting)

Active Learning

- The new school will host 500 children. Only 115 more attended Arbroath Academy this year.

The projected roll of the new school at opening in August 2013 is 413 primary aged pupils.

This is similar in size to a number of Angus primary schools, including Hayshead and Inverbrothock which respectively have rolls of 412 and 394 in the current session.

The rolls of both Muirfield and Timmergreens mean that these schools are currently operating significantly below their capacity (the combined position currently being 62% of capacity, which is projected to decrease below 55% in future years).

- It has only 16 classrooms. Muirfield has 12 and 194 kids. Classrooms will be smaller yet class sizes will have to increase. This means less individual support for children.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN LESS INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN.

The pupil/staff ratios will be comparable to the ratios in the existing schools, which is the critical factor. The deployment of staff takes account of the number of pupils.

The size of classrooms, and associated activity areas, will ensure that there is excellent space for pupils and staff.

The new school will also provide purpose designed and fully inclusive facilities, including tutorial rooms, to support pupils' learning needs.

- The Hospitalfield plot is a mere 0.29 hectare bigger than Muirfield's site. This is equivalent to just a third of a football pitch. With two-and-a-half times as many kids, this is significantly less play space.

The existing Muirfield site is around 24,700m² and the new Hospitalfield site is around 27,600m².

The difference is around 2,900m² (or 0.29 hectares), which is a significant area equivalent to more than 14 primary school games halls (normally around 200m²).

The additional area at the Hospitalfield site will be used to maximise the facilities available for the school and community.

There will be sufficient play space to accommodate and support all pupils' play and recreational needs.

Consultation

- New school could become 'done deal' in two months and built by AUGUST 2013. Yet many parents know very little or worse still NOTHING about it.

The Council has recently concluded its 3rd stage of consultation. There have been a variety of consultation exercises since March 2009, including:

- ***Stage 1 consultation (relating to all Arbroath schools) was carried out in Spring 2009 to provide an overview of the current situation in Arbroath and explore a range of options.***
- ***Stage 2 consultation (relating to all Arbroath schools) was carried out in Winter 2009/2010 to explore a more focussed range of options, including the potential for a new school in the West of Arbroath.***
- ***Stage 3 consultation (relating to the specific proposal to provide a new school in the West of Arbroath) commenced on 16 February and concluded on 1 April earlier this year. The next steps in this process include Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education providing a report, the Council producing its Consultation Report, taking its decision regarding the implementation or otherwise of the proposal and, thereafter, the Council's decision being reviewed by Scottish Ministers.***

In addition to those formal aspects of consultation, Council officers have been involved throughout the process in detailed discussions with representatives from the Parent Councils of Muirfield and Timmergreens Primary Schools.

- Angus Council had 634 responses out of a total of 877 from ONE COMPUTER in their first online consultation, yet refused to redo it.

This issue relates to Stage 2 of the consultation process and NOT the current Stage 3 consultation. Those responses were discounted when interpreting the feedback from the Stage 2 consultation exercise and that action was confirmed in report 427/10, which was approved by the Education Committee at its meeting on 3 June 2010.

- When these responses are taken out, it's clear people don't want a new school at Hospitalfield.

The Stage 2 consultation did not result in a clear site preference being identified. The Council subsequently carried out a full technical evaluation of each site option in order to identify the preferred site.

- Even kept in, less than one percent – 8 votes out of 877- were in favour of Hospitalfield, yet Angus Council made this the preferred site.

As noted above, the multiple responses (which favoured the potential new site at Arbirlot Road West) were discounted when interpreting the feedback from the Stage 2 consultation exercise.

The Council carried out a full technical appraisal of each of the 4 site options. That appraisal included 14 relevant educational, legal, planning and technical related issues. Specialist advice from a variety of professionals was obtained to help inform the assessment of the sites against each criterion.

The conclusion of that process was that there were advantages and disadvantages with each of the sites. However, taking all factors into consideration, the site adjacent to Hospitalfield House was identified as being the most suitable.

Teaching

- One gym hall for 500 pupils means that it will be virtually impossible for the children to receive two hours of PE each week as recommended by the Scottish Executive.

There is no basis for this view.

Sports facilities integrated within the new school will include a large Games Hall, an external netball court and a grass 7-a-side football pitch/running track.

In addition, there will be other general purpose areas within the school which can be used for physical activity.

There will also be dedicated boys and girls changing accommodation, together with accommodation to provide a base for the Active Schools Co-ordinator.

Feedback through consultation with pupils, staff and parent representatives from both schools has highlighted a preference for the Games Hall to be available over the lunch break and at the end of the school day to support and encourage extra curricular activities/sports clubs.

The new school is likely to generate a greater range of extra curricular activities/interests (including sports activities) and, accordingly, more opportunity for pupil engagement with sports activities.

The new facilities and the amalgamation of the two schools, will offer significantly more opportunities to deliver the Scottish Government's target of each pupil achieving 2 hours of PE each week.

- Just one computer suite shared between 500 children. This is worrying in a society where computers are so widely used.

The design of the new school will include a Library/ICT resource area which will have the capability of hosting a full suite of computers for class teaching if desired.

In addition, it is intended to provide the new school with mobile devices (laptop/netbooks) and Wi-Fi technology to enhance access to ICT. This will allow for flexible access within each classroom space and/or activity space, depending on the requirements of the teacher and needs of the pupils.

This range of options will provide pupils and staff the opportunity to embed technology in pupils' early learning, along with reading, writing and other critical skills.

The actual provision of computers will take due account of the school roll which is projected to be significantly less than 500.

- Team teaching is likely in the early years due to a shortage of classrooms. This means putting two classes together in one room with more than one teacher.

As noted previously, the pupil/staff ratios will be comparable to the existing schools, which is the critical factor. There will not be a shortage of classrooms or learning and teaching spaces.

The new school will be designed with 16 classroom spaces and adjacent large activity areas to provide a flexible approach and support implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. Direct access from classrooms will also be provided to external teaching space, in line with current best practice.

This approach will offer flexible options to provide suitable spaces for staff and pupils, and will foster better teamwork at and across the pre-school and the 7 primary stages.

Team teaching is not new. It is currently used in most, if not all, Angus schools. It is positively encouraged, where helpful and practical.

- Muirfield and Timmergreens will be replaced by houses. More families in catchment with no room to expand. The school football pitch area is protected by Historic Scotland and can't be built on.

No decision has been made about the future use of vacated sites.

It is likely that the Council will place the existing school sites on the open market for sale once the new school is in operation and the old school buildings have been vacated.

Who the sites are sold to and what they are sold for will depend on the purchasers' intentions at that time. The future development of those sites will also be subject to the purchasers obtaining full planning permission for any re-development.

There is, however, potential that the sites could be used to support new housing, which could include sheltered, social, or private housing. The Council's Education Department would be a consultee in this planning process, and would be asked to offer views on the impact of new developments on the school.

As noted previously, the projected roll of the new school at opening in August 2013 is 413 primary aged pupils. The school will be designed with a notional capacity of up to 500 to future proof the building in the event that there is new house building in the area and/or the roll rises as a result of successful placing requests.

The design of the new school, including the playing fields, will be in consultation with Historic Scotland as part of the planning process. This will include the Council preparing a conservation statement reflecting the requirements of relevant planning policy for the site. This will be agreed with Historic Scotland in due course as the design evolves.

- Nursery numbers rise from 20 to 40 per class. Staffing will increase but there'll only be one qualified teacher. Will this give children the best start?

The Council's pre-school nursery provision at the new school will provide for 40 morning and 40 afternoon places.

Staffing levels for this pre-school provision will be in accordance with all necessary national care standards to ensure pupils are fully supported and afforded the same opportunities as any other pre-school pupil in Angus.

The staffing ratio of 1 member of staff to 10 pupils will be maintained and, through careful design, the pre-school provision will be an integral element of the new school.

- Will there be a dedicated space for a playgroup? Despite the need there are no assurances.

The Council has fully acknowledged the requirement to support and enhance community related aspects of the new school.

There have been discussions between Council officers and the Muirfield playgroup leader to examine the operational requirements for the playgroup.

The Council can therefore provide the assurance that the existing playgroup will continue to be supported by the Council and appropriate facilities will be integrated into the design of the new school.

Safety

- £50,000 is the budget to make the Westway safe. The schools were originally built away from this road four decades ago because it was dangerous to cross. Now, when there are more cars than ever, how can it be safe?

The Council included £50,000 for a new light controlled crossing within the Financial Implications section of the sites appraisal process. This sum was included for all 4 site options for comparability purposes only, subject to detailed development work relating to the preferred site.

The Council can confirm that it will continue to work with road safety experts to put in place all necessary safety measures as the project is developed in detail, including appropriate locations for barriers and signage.

FUNDING TO SUPPORT THESE SAFETY FEATURES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE.

The Hospitalfield site has been assessed along with the other site options. While it is situated closest to the Westway, it is considered that this site will support pupil walking routes, which will be easier to manage effectively compared to walking routes to the other sites.

This assessment has also indicated that between 40 to 80 primary aged pupils, who currently have placing requests at either Muirfield or Timmergreens, currently cross the Westway on a daily basis, by using the existing School Crossing Patroller located at the Arbirlot Road/Arbirlot Road West/Westway crossroads, the existing underpass provision or some other means. Following the construction of the proposed new school, this number would increase to about 150 pupils. It should also be noted that pupils attending Arbroath High School also cross the Westway on a daily basis.

THE COUNCIL IS FULLY COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH PARENTS TO ADDRESS ROAD SAFETY CONCERNS.

Parents/carers should also note the legal assumption that a child is accompanied on the journey to and from school by a responsible adult, who in many instances, will be the child's parent. Education authorities have responsibility for travel to school arrangements only for pupils who are entitled to school transport. Otherwise, travel arrangements are the legal responsibility of the parent.

- Crossing proposals currently include a puffin crossing. This system uses sensors to detect when last child has crossed the road to tell driver to go. What happens to the child who goes back to pick up a dropped schoolbag? Or on the day when the sensors break down?

The new light controlled crossing (most likely a 'puffin' style crossing) will be manned by the Council at the start and end of the school day to manage pupil movements at the crossing point.

In addition to all other safety measures, the Council is also developing proposals to improve the existing underpass as a joint school/community 'project' (which could involve pupils in developing a 'themed' concept for the underpass) to encourage its use for the benefit of both the school and the wider community. In addition, a School Crossing Patroller will be assigned to the underpass prior to the commencement and at the end of the school day.

THIS ARRANGEMENT WOULD PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE OPTION FOR PUPILS/PARENTS WHICH WOULD COMPLETELY AVOID CROSSING THE WESTWAY.

- The new school has provision for 20 cars in a 'drop-off' zone. Based on average Angus Council's walk to school figures there will be 105 cars a day. Where do the other 85 park?

The Council has included within its indicative proposals for a staff car park and a separate dedicated drop-off/pick-up area for parents/carers to utilise within the site area. While the detailed plans have yet to be agreed, it will be able to accommodate significantly more than 20 cars.

THE HOSPITALFIELD SITE IS THE LARGEST OF THE SITE OPTIONS AVAILABLE WITH SUFFICIENT AREA AVAILABLE TO ACCOMMODATE THIS DEDICATED FACILITY.

The Council's specialist roads transport consultant will advise on the appropriate size and design of this facility, together with its interface with the public roads/paths network adjacent the site. This will also include appropriate measures to discourage cars stopping on the Westway.

A School Travel Plan will also be developed to support active and sustainable travel to the new site with a view to avoiding, as far as reasonably practicable, congestion and inconvenience in the area around the site.

In keeping with existing arrangements, the school and the education authority will regularly advise parents not to bring their child to school by car, unless that option is absolutely necessary. Congestion in and around school sites is a common problem and often a source of inconvenience to pupils, parents and staff.

- Westway is the main route out of Arbroath for ambulances and other emergency vehicles. It is also the only route into town for lorries.

Traffic issues would undoubtedly be an issue for any of the site options. Indeed the requirement for some pupils to cross the Westway would prevail no matter what site is selected.

The Hospitalfield site, with its central location within the new combined catchment area, provides the opportunity to manage Westway pupil crossing arrangements more effectively than would be the case for the other sites.