

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
25 APRIL 2000

PERSONNEL AND PROPERTY SERVICES COMMITTEE
2 MAY 2000

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

JOINT REPORT BY THE DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION AND PROPERTY SERVICES

ABSTRACT

This report:

- seeks approval of a draft response to the School Infrastructure Inquiry being undertaken by the Scottish Parliament
- updates the Committees on progress to date in developing an Asset Management Plan for all school buildings in Angus
- highlights specific issues requiring to be addressed in St Vigeans Primary School and in Maisondieu Primary School

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee and the Personnel and Property Services Committee, each for its respective interests:

- a approves the contents of Appendix 1 as the Council's response to the School Infrastructure Inquiry being undertaken by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament
- b notes the analysis already undertaken on each of 10 Angus primary schools most of which currently make extensive use of temporary accommodation (a detailed Asset Management Plan for each of these 10 schools is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge)
- c notes the summary of the above 10 analyses contained within Appendix 1 (Annex B), including the provisional prioritisation contained within that summary - on the understanding that any given project will only be undertaken if adequate financial resources are available and formal Council approval has been given
- d notes in particular the circumstances of St Vigeans Primary School, and instructs the Director of Education to undertake a preliminary consultation exercise with staff and parents of St Vigeans Primary School on the possibility of closing that school in approximately 14 months from now (ie in June 2001)
- e notes also the high provisional priority accorded to Maisondieu Primary School, and instructs the Directors of Education and Property Services to bring forward a detailed report outlining a proposed project plan for upgrading Maisondieu Primary School.

2 SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

- 2.1 The Education, Culture and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament has launched a major inquiry into the current state of Scotland's school buildings and infrastructure. General comments, together with responses to specific questions, have been sought from Councils by 19 May 2000.
- 2.2 A draft response has been prepared, and is appended to this report (Appendix 1).

3 PREPARATION OF ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 3.1 Members will be aware of the high priority which this Council has accorded to improving school buildings since 1996. A summary of all major projects completed (/currently in train) is provided in Appendix 1 (Annex A), from which it can be seen that major improvements to 14 primary schools have taken place since 1996 (or are planned in the near future) - representing an investment of some £11 million.
- 3.2 In order to ensure that all school buildings provide an adequate environment for learning, continuing investment is required, necessitating a prudent approach to forward planning. In recognition of this, the Education Committee at its meeting on 20 April 1999 approved steps to ensure that progress could be made in developing an Asset Management Plan covering eventually all Angus schools (Article 7 of the minute of the meeting refers).
- 3.3 The Asset Management Plan which is being prepared is intended to describe the facilities provided by each school and to compare these with pre-determined criteria to identify how fit each school building is for the educational purposes it is now expected to serve. The Plan should also identify options which could be pursued in order to ensure each and every school is fully fit for purpose, and should be of significant assistance in allocating priorities to those projects which require to be undertaken.
- 3.4 Initially, development of the Asset Management Plan has concentrated on the ten undernoted primary schools:

Chapelpark Primary School
Edzell Primary School
Inverkeilor Primary School
Kinloch Primary School
Kirkriggs Primary School

Langlands Primary School
Maisondieu Primary School
St Vigeans Primary School
Southesk Primary School
Wellbrae Primary School

- 3.5 A detailed analysis of each of the buildings which comprise each of these ten schools has been compiled, and is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge.
- 3.6 Appendix 1 (Annex B) contains a summary of the ten analyses referred to above, together with a provisional prioritisation of the various projects which may be needed.

4 ST VIGEANS PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 4.1 Appendix 2 summarises the analysis of the St Vigeans Primary School buildings. A careful perusal of Appendix 2 will cause some anxiety. It seems clear that continuation of the status quo in St Vigeans for any longer than a short period is not a viable option.
- 4.2 The school has recently been inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI). Although HMI have no expertise in property matters, the concerns they express about the building's current fitness for purpose are very much in line with the analysis undertaken for the Asset Management Plan.

4.3 Of the four options identified in Appendix 2:

- Option 1 would not address the lack of PE facilities, nor the lack of teaching space. It would further reduce the play area. It would address the need to improve the toilet accommodation, and the lack of accommodation for staff and visitors.
Estimated cost £250,000
- Option 2 would significantly reduce the play area, but would bring all school activities under one roof, would address the lack of teaching space and the difficulties in ensuring ready circulation of pupils and staff throughout the building; it would also address the need to improve the toilet accommodation, and the lack of accommodation for staff and visitors.
Estimated cost £400,000
- Option 3 envisages a new school being built on a new site. This cannot be accomplished in the short term since no suitable site has been identified.
Estimated cost £800,000
- Option 4 envisages the closure of St Vigeans Primary School.

4.4 St Vigeans Primary School currently has a notional capacity of 50 pupils (which assumes two full classes of 25 pupils). There are currently 42 pupils on the roll - 28 of whom are enrolled from outwith the school's delineated area as a result of parental placing requests.

4.5 Generally, although some primary schools in Arbroath are experiencing some pressure on accommodation (principally Inverbrothock, Ladyloan and St Thomas), overall the burgh of Arbroath has considerable spare capacity for pupils in its seven primary schools.

4.5.1 St Vigeans Primary School is approximately 0.6 miles from Warddykes Primary School, which has ample spare capacity to accommodate all the pupils currently in St Vigeans.

4.5.2 St Vigeans Primary School is approximately 0.9 miles from Inverbrothock Primary School, although Inverbrothock is operating very close to its current capacity and could only accommodate a proportion of all the pupils currently in St Vigeans.

4.5.3 The walking routes from St Vigeans to Warddykes or Inverbrothock are not ideal, and any arrangement which requires children to take either route may also require some form of transport to be provided.

4.6 Members will recall that in 1995 the Accounts Commission published "Room for Learning," followed in 1996 by "Managing Surplus Capacity in School Buildings." These documents urged new unitary Councils to take action to close or amalgamate schools, identified significant disposable surplus capacity in schools across Scotland, and went on to list the major benefits which can accrue to pupils, parents and the wider community by restructuring the existing pattern of school provision where there is scope to do so.

4.7 In all the circumstances it could be argued that the Council would be failing in its statutory duty to secure economy, effectiveness and efficiency if it did not consider the possibility of closing St Vigeans Primary School. In adopting this approach, however, it is important to stress that:

- a no firm decision is being proposed as to future closure; and
- b the consideration of closure comes about as a result of shortcomings in the school buildings, the difficulty likely to be faced in any attempt to rectify these shortcomings, and the ready availability of alternative school accommodation relatively near at hand, and is not in any sense a reflection of the quality of education currently provided (which is of a high standard).

5 MAISONDIEU PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 5.1 Maisondieu Primary School has been provisionally accorded a high priority rating in the emerging Asset Management Plan.
- 5.2 It is proposed that a project to improve Maisondieu should be given priority consideration, subject to adequate financial resources being available, and that a further report should be prepared for Committee, outlining the details of the proposed project.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The preparation of the Asset Management Plan will be utilised to inform the preparation of future financial plans.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Administration.

Jim Anderson
Director of Education

Mike Lunny
Director of Property Services

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

APPENDICES

JAA/CJ

DESCRIPTION

Originally St Vigeans Public School and built in 1875, this school is constructed in stone with timber windows and slate roof. There is a separate stone built toilet block with stores immediately adjacent but not linked to the main school building.

SUMMARY

The main building while in acceptable condition lacks the floor area required by modern schools. The continued existence of a separate toilet block is no longer acceptable. There is a problem with restricted access to and from the school both in terms of the lack of sight lines at the vehicular entrance and the lack of a permanent footpath to the entrance from the southern boundary. All gym activities take place in a local hall approximately half a mile from the school. There is a lack of hardstanding playground which would be difficult to add to given the sloping nature of the majority of the site.

FITNESS FOR PURPOSE STUDY

TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

The floor areas of both classrooms and the GP/Dining room fall short of that required for today's schools. To add to this problem there is little storage provision for teachers or indeed generally. The result is a cramped, cluttered teaching environment with little or no scope for adaptation or variation. There are no wet areas dedicated in either classroom, nor is there any room dedicated for staff meetings, visiting parents or extra curricular activities. The cloakroom area in the West lobby is too small to cater adequately for children's belongings.

ACOUSTICS

There are problems of sound transmission between classrooms, particularly during music sessions or when audio-visual presentations are being held.

CIRCULATION

There are doors to each of the two classrooms from the lobbies and also a door between them through the part glazed partition. The movement of pupils to and from the West classroom has to be through the GP/Dining room to avoid interruption/disruption of the classes in the other classrooms.

GYMNASIUM

There are no gym facilities on site and pupils have to walk approximately half a mile to the local church hall for gym lessons.

DINING FACILITIES

Stainless steel dining equipment is stored in a corner of the dining/GP room. This room is extremely cramped and there is daily upheaval when furniture and resources are moved around to make way for the lunchtime meal sitting.

HEATING

Heating at the entrance and staff toilet is lacking.

LIGHTING

Each classroom has strip fluorescent lighting suspended from the high ceilings. There is not VDU lighting provision. Large windows and the external walls have been fitted with blinds in order to reduce the glare of the sun.

COLOUR

As in most schools is partly enhanced by teachers displays. The decoration is satisfactory.

ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION

The office/staff accommodation has been extended recently. This multi-purpose space is used for private meetings, nurse, educational psychologist, staffroom, secretary's base, and storage of all files, manuals and other documents. There are many activities being undertaken in this small space which does not lend itself to ensuring privacy, confidentiality, or freedom from clutter or disruption.

There is no separate area for the secretary, head teacher or for case conferences.

NURSERY ACCOMMODATION

There is no nursery provision at this school.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

There are no temporary accommodation units at this school.

TOILET FACILITIES

There are no toilets for pupils within the main building. Presently both boys and girls have to leave the main building unaccompanied by an adult to the external toilet block situated adjacent to the main East entrance gate. This is an unsatisfactory situation given the potential security risks to the children and the barely adequate condition of the facilities themselves.

FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED

There are no facilities for the disabled.

ACCESS

The vehicular access to and from the school is hazardous as the sight lines are restricted by the proximity of the hedge, the bend in the road and the embankments due to the gradient of the road. In addition the position of the speed limit signs obscures the view up the hill causing a potential blind spot.

SECURITY

The provision of security measures is made difficult by:

The split site

Toilet provision for pupils being separate from the main school building

The lack of facilities to receive and accommodate visitors to the school

CONCLUSIONS

The present accommodation and its configuration falls short of the ideal standards expected for today's schools.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

OPTION 1 (Estimated cost £250,000)

Demolish existing toilet block and existing staff accommodation.
Construct new extension with toilet facilities, disabled toilet/staff toilet and increased office/staffroom.
Retain the use of the local church hall for gym classes.
Form new car park and permanent path to south of site.

Advantages

Addresses the problem of the existing toilet accommodation separate from the main building and removes the associated health and safety and security risks.
Improves accommodation for staff and provides a facility for the reception of visitors.

Disadvantages

Does not address the lack of teaching space and poor circulation with the associated problems in the G.P. / dining room.
By increasing the size of the school building the area of hardstanding playing surface is greatly reduced.
Gym classes remaining at the church hall do not make for an ideal situation for health and safety and security reasons.

OPTION 2 (Estimated cost £400,000)

Demolish existing toilet block and construct two new classrooms, additional toilet facilities, disabled toilet/staff toilet, changing rooms, meeting room, stores.
Take down part glazed partition between existing classrooms to form new multi purpose hall.
Form servery from existing cupboard and section off back of the present GP/Dining room. This leaves space for storage of gymnasium equipment and frees up another room for office for staff.
Form new car park and permanent path to south of site.

Advantages

Brings all school activities under the one roof.
Addresses the lack of teaching space and poor circulation.
Addresses the problem of the existing toilet accommodation separate from the main building and removes the associated health and safety and security risks.
Improves accommodation for staff and provides a facility for the reception of visitors.

Disadvantages

High cost - particularly in terms of cost per pupil.
By increasing the size of the school building the area of hardstanding playing surface is greatly reduced.

OPTION 3 (Estimated cost £800,000 minimum)

Dispose of existing school and build new facility on a site within the school's current delineated area.

Advantages

A new school better placed within the delineated area would provide up to date facilities, which are economic to run and with more predictable running and maintenance costs.

Disadvantages

Acquisition of a new site in the right area may be difficult to achieve within a reasonable time scale.

Transport implications (although several children attend the school as a result of parental placing requests and are transported to and from school by their parents).

OPTION 4

Closure of St Vigeans Primary School and Incorporation of its Delineated Area into the Delineated Area(s) of one or more Neighbouring Schools

Advantages

Children can all be educated within good quality buildings

Significant savings in both revenue costs and future capital costs

Disadvantages

Disruption to the education of children currently attending St Vigeans