ABSTRACT
This report provides an account of a consultation exercise recently undertaken. The report outlines the arguments in favour of the closure of Eassie Primary School and the arguments against closure. Two options are set out for consideration.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS
It is recommended that the Education Committee should note the contents of this report and recommend that the Council should:

(a) note carefully the responses to the recent consultation exercise;
(b) note the various arguments in favour of closing Eassie Primary School and also the various arguments against closure;
(c) agree to adopt one of the two undernoted options:

Option 1
Adopt the proposal on which formal consultation has recently been undertaken, namely that:

Eassie Primary School should close, with pupils transferring to Newtyle Primary School, and the delineated area of Eassie Primary School should merge with the delineated of Newtyle Primary School, to form the new delineated area of the merged school.

or

Option 2
Resolve that Eassie Primary School should remain open, that the provision of PE for pupils there should be kept under review in the context of plans to construct a new Village Hall, and that the building’s fitness for purpose generally should continue to be considered within the context of keeping the School Estate under review.
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Reference is made to the meeting of the Education Committee on 24 April 2008 and to the Special Meeting of Angus Council, also held on 24 April 2008. At that time, the Council authorized a formal consultation exercise on a proposal that:

_Eassie Primary School should close, with pupils transferring to Newtyle Primary School, and the delineated area of Eassie Primary School should merge with the delineated area of Newtyle Primary School, to form the new delineated area of the merged school._

2.2 Members will recall that the background to the decision to embark on the consultation exercise included:

- the very small pupil roll of Eassie Primary School (13 pupils at the September 2007 census) which compares unfavourably with the ideal minimum primary pupil roll adopted by the Council in 2005, and which poses some educational concerns particularly for pupils in very small year groups (each of 3 year groups in September 2007 had precisely one pupil in it).
- the school building’s poor rating in terms of its fitness for purpose to provide education in the 21st Century
- specifically the lack of PE facilities on site, coupled with a recent survey of the condition of the Village Hall which has deemed it to be unsuitable for use by pupils
- the availability of alternative educational facilities less than 4 miles away in the brand new Newtyle Primary School

2.3 The arguments in favour of closure are also summarised in Appendix 1.

2.4 Invitations to make written submissions were sent to individual parents with children in attendance at Eassie Primary School, and also to individual parents of whose existence the Education Authority is aware who are scheduled to send their children to Eassie Primary School in the near future. The Parent Council of Eassie Primary School was also invited to make a written submission as was the Newtyle & Eassie Community Council.

2.5 An advertisement was placed in The Courier inviting written representations.

2.6 A public meeting was arranged in Eassie Primary School on 7 May 2008 to which all individual parents, the Parent Council and the Community Council were formally invited.

2.7 A meeting was held involving representatives of the Eassie Primary School Parent Council and senior officers of Angus Council, including the Chief Executive, the Director of Education and the Director of Corporate Services.

3 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION EXERCISE

3.1 The public meeting held on 7 May 2008 in Eassie Primary School was very well attended. A summary of the various questions asked and issues raised at that meeting is attached (Appendix 4).

3.2 Written submissions were received from a total of 34 individuals and bodies, specifically:

- 14 sets of parents (some with pre-school children)
- Eassie School’s Parent Council (Appendix 5 to this report)
• Newtyle and Eassie Community Council (Appendix 6 to this report)
• John Swinney MSP
• 14 individuals – some grandparents, some members of the local community, some members of other communities
• Eassie and Nevay WRI
• Glamis and Area Community Council (jointly with Glamis School’s Parent Council
• Scottish Rural Schools Network.

Copies of all these submissions are available in the Members’ Lounge.

3.3 All the responses express implacable opposition to the proposal.

4 COMMENTARY ON RESPONSES

4.1 With no exceptions, all the responses have indicated strong opposition to the proposal that Eassie Primary School should close.

4.2 The consultation responses can be categorised under the 5 main headings below:

• quality of education currently available
• the key role of Eassie Primary School in the community
• issues relating to the current school building and the Village Hall
• roll projections
• financial implications

4.3 Quality of Education Currently Available

Respondents have all been at pains to highlight the very high quality of education they firmly believe is provided by Eassie Primary School. The published HMIe report on Eassie Primary School of 2005 is cited, legitimately, as objective evidence of this, although it is important to acknowledge that, for example, Newtyle Primary School received an equally positive HMIe report (in 2006).

There is absolutely no disagreement on this point, but there is a concern that maintaining the current high quality of education may be difficult in the future as natural staff turnover occurs. It can prove difficult to attract and retain the very high calibre of staff needed to sustain quality of education in the small school setting, particularly given the heavy reliance which is placed on what are often the exceptional skills, abilities and commitment of possibly only one teacher. It was partly with these concerns very much in mind that the Council decided, in 2005, to adopt a position whereby the ideal minimum primary pupil roll for a non-remote school should be 30 pupils.

4.4 The Key Role of Eassie Primary School in the Community

The basic premise that “children are the foundation of a community” was well made at the consultation meeting. Eassie Primary School has enjoyed considerable success in recent years as it has promoted a wide range of community activities, all with the school at their heart. The argument that a school can be the principal force for community cohesion is a strong one, and one which no-one wishes to refute. The Eassie community is a widespread one and we need to ask how effectively that community would be sustained if Eassie School were to close. This issue needs to be weighed very carefully in the balance before any firm decision is reached.
4.5 **Issues Relating to the Current School Building and to the Village Hall**

The condition of the building was categorised as 'C', taking into account the very poor condition of the Village Hall which was used on a regular basis by the school for PE. With the current Village Hall no longer available, for Health and Safety reasons, the condition of the school could legitimately be re-categorised as 'B'. Some maintenance work is required – work which would, in the fullness of time, be scheduled as part of the Council’s routine approach to property maintenance.

The building’s fitness for purpose is, however, more of a cause for concern. The rating given is ‘D’ which takes into account the lack of any provision for PE within the current building. The removal of the Village Hall from consideration at present does not help this position (i.e. with the Village Hall out of action, the building’s fitness for purpose remains firmly in the ‘D’ category). If the school were to remain open, a significant investment would be required at some point in the future to address the fitness for purpose issues. Until the efforts to build a new Village Hall are completed it would perhaps be unwise to push ahead with any plans: if a new Village Hall is built and the Community Association are willing to let it to the Council for the school’s use for PE then that would influence any future decision about whether to refurbish the school in ways which would include the creation of a purpose built gymnasium. The best estimates available for a major refurbishment are either £300k - £350k (without gymnasium) or approximately £700k (with gymnasium).

4.6 **Roll Projections**

Several representations have included reference to a belief that the roll of Eassie Primary School will grow over the next few years. It is acknowledged that this is possible, and Appendix 1 contains historical information which shows how the roll has fluctuated over the last 20 years.

Across Angus, primary rolls have fallen in recent years – from 9420 pupils in 1996 to 9216 pupils in 2003 (a 2.1% fall over 7 years), then from 9216 pupils in 2003 to 8741 pupils in 2007 (5.2% over 4 years). Further small falls are projected mainly as a result of falling numbers of live births in Angus between 1996 (most babies born in 1996 are only now leaving primary school) and 2002 (babies born in 2002 still have several years to attend primary school). From 2002 to 2006 the numbers of live births increased slowly but in 2006 the total number (1110) was still 9% below the 1996 number (1219). The most recent (2006 based) projections of birth suggest a very gradual continuing fall in Angus. However, the smaller the area being looked at the greater the potential percentage error there is in any projection: it is certainly possible that the Eassie roll could rise to 25 or more pupils, but it is also very possible that it will stay well below 20 pupils.

4.7 **Financial Implications**

A full analysis of the financial implications is included in Appendix 3, and summarised in Section 7 below.

4.8 The arguments against closure are summarised in Appendix 2.

5 **KEY ISSUES**

5.1 In a consultation paper issued by the Scottish Government on 1 May 2008, four matters are proposed to which authorities should have regard when considering the closure of a rural school. Comments are offered below under each of the four proposed headings.

5.2 **Alternatives to the Closure of the School**

The alternative to closure is to keep the school open. If this option were to be pursued, children would continue to be educated in a physical environment which is not believed to be fully fit for purpose, until such time as significant capital investment could be allocated. Children would also continue to be educated in a non-remote school the roll of which is likely to be significantly less than the ideal minimum (of 30 primary pupils) adopted by the Council in 2005.
A number of respondents to the consultation exercise have suggested that the delineated area of Eassie and Glamis could be re-drawn so that there would be less chance that Glamis School would become overcrowded. A proposal of this type would have to be the subject of a formal consultation exercise. For the moment, there is no clear indication that this approach would necessarily have the support of those families living in the re-drawn area. This would be a legitimate matter for consideration if Eassie were to remain open but Glamis Primary School is already operating with a significant proportion of its pupils (20 out of 66 in 2007/08) attending from outwith its area, and is therefore well able to cater for all the pupils in its current delineated area – even allowing for some future population growth.

5.3 **Likely Overall Impact of the School’s Closure on the Communities which it Serves**

This is an important issue – as already highlighted in paragraph 4.4 above.

There is a genuine fear within the community that closure of the school will result in a significant diminution of the community ethos which currently exists. It is difficult to assess or measure this aspect of the matter. Although the community is not a remote one, and although the distances to the 3 closest schools (Newtyle (3.7 miles), Airlie (5 miles) and Glamis (4 miles)) are not great, there are undoubted community links with Eassie Primary School which could not be replaced overnight.

The key questions are whether the community would sustain itself without the existence of Eassie Primary School, and whether a different pattern of school provision (without Eassie Primary School) would offer alternative and equally meaningful school/community links.

5.4 **The Likely Impact of Closure Specifically on the Community’s Subsequent Use of the School’s Buildings, Facilities and Grounds**

If the decision is taken to close Eassie School, it would be prudent to take some time to consider what possible uses could be made of the school building – either by the Council or possibly by the Community. These deliberations would presumably take into account progress with the construction of the new Village Hall; for example, it may be that the school building could serve as a temporary Village Hall until the new Hall is built and it may be possible for the Council to enter into an arrangement with the community which would allow this.

5.5 **The Likely Impact that New Travel to School Patterns Would Have on Pupils and Other School Users and on the Environment**

At present 8 of the pupils in Eassie Primary School are transported to and from school on vehicles provided by Angus Council. The average home-to-school journey for these pupils at present is 1.9 miles. If the school were to close and all pupils were to transfer to Newtyle, it is estimated that 15 pupils would all be transported to and from Newtyle every day – an average home-to-school journey of 4 miles. The average journey time at present is approximately 11 minutes and this would increase to approximately 18 minutes.

6 **NEXT STEPS – OPTIONS**

6.1 It is important that the Council takes as clear a decision as possible on this matter, and that it does so as soon as possible. In the current circumstances, there are only two broad options: either Eassie Primary School is closed, or it is not.

6.2 If Eassie Primary School is to close, then the most appropriate time would be at the end of the current school session – on 27 June 2008. In order to take this option forward, parents would have to indicate within the next two or three weeks their preferred school. The proposal on which consultation took place would mean that pupils would be assigned to Newtyle Primary School unless their parents made parental placing requests for some other school. In terms of neighbouring schools, there is ample accommodation in Airlie Primary School for any Eassie pupils whose parents wish them to attend there. It may be possible to accommodate one or two pupils in Glamis Primary School, but the occupancy rate at Glamis is currently very high and it is unlikely that Glamis could reasonably be asked to accommodate any more than, literally, one or two pupils (possibly more if they are at the P7 stage).
In all the circumstances it would be appropriate to provide assistance with home-to-school transport for any affected families who make successful placing requests to either Airlie Primary School or Glamis Primary School.

6.3 The alternative option is not to close Eassie Primary School. If this option is followed, then at some point over the next few years the Council will have to address issues about the current school building. Improvements to the fabric of the current building ought to be relatively easy to effect and would be scheduled in accordance with the Council’s programme of maintenance across all its buildings. It would be more difficult to address issues about the current school building’s fitness for purpose: one of the outstanding issues here would be whether or not we should attempt to extend the school so that it has its own gymnasium. That consideration is one which would be best taken forward in partnership with the local community who have plans to re-build the Village Hall. With that in mind, it is likely that, if this option were to be pursued, no immediate plans to make major improvements to Eassie Primary School are likely to be brought forward. The main issue, however is that Newtyle Primary School has been purpose built for modern day teaching and learning approaches, whereas the Eassie building is significantly less suitable for today’s educational requirements.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This section summarises the financial implications provided in more detail in Appendix 3.

7.2 If the school closes, it is estimated that nett full year savings of £58,000 per annum would arise. There may be a detrimental impact on to the future levels of government grant received by the Council as a result of the closure of Eassie. However, such an impact cannot occur until 2011/12 as the Council has guaranteed government grant levels until this time. It is not possible to foresee what the impact will be in 2011/12 as this will be dependent upon changes in pupil numbers in Angus and Scotland over the intervening period. However, had the closure already occurred and influenced the 2007 Spending Review, and had all Eassie pupils transferred to Newtyle Primary School, it is estimated that the Council’s government grant would have been £118,000 lower.

7.3 If Eassie remains open, maintenance to the building costing £73,000 has been identified through the School Estate Management Plan, but no budget provision currently exists to address these maintenance items within the Education Department’s revenue budget. Similarly, capital works of up to £700,000 have been identified as necessary if the school is to be fully upgraded (including the creation of a gymnasium). No budget provision currently exists to address this within the Council’s Financial Plan.

8 CONSULTATION

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

9 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights provides that in the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, a Public Authority shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. It could conceivably be argued that the location of where education and teaching takes place was a matter of philosophical conviction.

Notwithstanding the above, the United Kingdom, by derogation, has accepted the above right only so far as it is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training, and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1  Arguments supporting the proposed closure of Eassie Primary School
Appendix 2  Arguments against the proposed closure of Eassie Primary School
Appendix 3  Financial arguments for and against closure
Appendix 4  Issues raised from Public Consultation Meeting
Appendix 5  Response from Eassie Parent Council
Appendix 6  Response from Newtyle & Eassie Community Council

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Note:  No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.
ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF EASSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

A1 CONCERNS ABOUT LOW PUPIL ROLL

A1.1 Council Policy and Previous Council Decisions

At its meeting on 11 August 2005, the Education Committee of Angus Council adopted a number of strategic parameters as the basis on which the Primary School Estate should be kept under review. One of these parameters was size of school roll and in August 2005, Angus Council endorsed report no 925/05 which recommended that, ideally, non-remote primary schools should have at least 30 primary pupils in them.

It is perhaps also important to acknowledge that Angus Council has closed a small number of schools with low pupil rolls since 1996. These decisions have been very heavily influenced by concerns about our ability to deliver and sustain a sufficiently high quality of education in non-remote schools with exceptionally small pupil numbers. Examples of closures of this type would be Padanaram Primary School (1996 – 11 pupils), Craigo Primary School (2000 – 15 pupils), Careston Primary School (2004 – 16 pupils), Dun Primary School (2005 - 20 pupils) and Pitkennedy Primary School (2005 - 26 pupils). (All the foregoing pupil rolls refer to the September Census prior to closure.)

A1.2 Possible Disadvantages to Pupils

At the September 2007 Census, the roll profile of Eassie Primary School was:

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<tr>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
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<th>P5</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
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As can be seen, in September 2007 there were a number of year stages in which only one pupil was enrolled, and other stages where the numbers of pupils in the year groups were extremely small. The lack of a peer group of the same age can make it difficult to ensure the effective social, personal and cognitive development of the individual pupils affected. Although it is acknowledged that very good work currently goes on in Eassie Primary School to ensure that individual pupils do make progress, socially and cognitively, the development of core skills such as teamwork has to be undertaken in different ways in the very small school environment. The most obvious example of this, of course, is the difficulty in arranging for team sports.

In the very small school, there is a need to rely very heavily on an extremely small staff team where expertise will inevitably be more limited than that of a larger staff team. This in turn means that, whilst at any given time there may be good evidence of meaningful and effective pupil development, there is always a risk that future changes to the staff team or to the pupil cohort may adversely affect the dynamics of the learning environment. It is particularly challenging for a small staff team to cope with the demands of significant curriculum change which results from a major national initiative such as Curriculum for Excellence.

In an ideal world, it would be preferable if every pupil had a peer group of at least three or four other pupils in the same year group. In the absence of even a small peer group it can be difficult to provide the type of learning experiences which primary schools are increasingly expected to offer pupils. (NB There are counter arguments to this position – outlined in Appendix 2 and in Appendix 5).
A1.3 Previous Pupils Rolls and Future Roll Projections

In common with all other schools, the pupil roll of Eassie Primary School has fluctuated over the years. The September Census figures for each year since 1988 are noted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Roll</th>
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<td>1988</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>13</td>
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Making future predictions about school rolls is not an exact science and the smaller the school the more difficult it is to predict the future roll with any accuracy. Our best predictions for Eassie Primary School suggest that the roll is likely to remain relatively low for the next few years – probably well below the 20 pupil mark. It is, however, important to acknowledge that there are two major variables which can have a big impact on this projection: the first relates to families moving out of and into the area – how many children will they have and how old will these children be? The second relates to Placing Requests, both in terms of families living within the area seeking to enrol their children in other schools, but also in terms of families outwith the area who seek to enrol their children in Eassie Primary School.

At present, the Council’s best estimate is that the pupil roll of Eassie Primary School will remain well below 20 pupils for the next five years.

A2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO BE EDUCATED IN MORE APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

A2.1 Facilities in Newtyle Primary School

A brand new primary school has very recently been completed in Newtyle, and it is this school to which Eassie pupils would be expected to transfer. The new Newtyle Primary School has excellent facilities in the school for PE, and in due course good play and sports area will be available on the campus. It has been specifically designed to cater for education in the 21st Century and provides a welcoming and stimulating environment for children and the local community.

A2.2 Fitness for Purpose of Eassie Primary School

The current Eassie Primary School building is in reasonable condition, although there are a small number of maintenance issues which will require to be addressed at some point over the next few years (e.g. replacement of windows, replacement of flat part of roof). The main building has been classified as a “B” for condition, although that grading was reduced to “C” because of the condition in the Village Hall – used until very recently as an intrinsic part of the delivery of the school’s curriculum.

A2.3 In terms of fitness for purpose, there is the obvious lack of a suitable area in which to undertake PE, there is no dedicated office for the Head Teacher, no facilities for staff or visitors to meet, and the school office is relatively remote from the main school entrance, thereby raising some security concerns. The development of a nursery on the site of Eassie Primary School has not been possible, due to a lack of suitable accommodation and also to site restrictions. Although the main entrance is ramped, none of the entrances has a level access, which could pose a problem for non-ambulant pupils, staff or parents. Due to restrictions on the site, car parking/dropping off for disabled pupils/visitors poses some difficulties. The lack of a separate access for vehicles and pedestrians could also pose a potential safety risk for pupils.

A2.4 It seems unarguable that the physical environment which would be available to pupils were they to enrol in Newtyle Primary School is significantly better and more fit for purpose than that which is currently available to these same pupils in the current Eassie building.

A2.5 At a time when there is a continuing push nationally to increase the weekly time allocated to PE for all pupils, the capacity to provide PE on the school premises is an important aspect of educational provision.
ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF EASSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

B1 PARENTAL SUPPORT FOR THE CURRENT SCHOOL

The consultation exercise undertaken in 2005, and the consultation exercise just completed have both demonstrated that parents of the 2005 and 2008 pupil cohorts are extremely supportive of the work of Eassie Primary School and are very happy with the way in which their children are progressing.

Although this is no guarantee of future levels of parental satisfaction, nor indeed of potential parental dissatisfaction with alternative provision were it to be made, it is clearly an important factor to weigh in the balance.

B2 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The local community has indicated strong support for the retention of Eassie Primary School. Although the community is not a remote one, it has worked hard over the years to establish its own identity and fears about the effect of the loss of Eassie Primary School on that identity are understandable.

Until very recently, Angus Council had been paying the Eassie & Nevay Community Association a rent to allow Eassie Primary School to make use of the Village Hall. That annual rent would cease if Eassie Primary School were to close. Although alternative sources of income for the new Village Hall (once it is completed) may be identified, it is accepted that the loss of this annual rental has to be borne in mind by the Community Association.

B3 QUALITY OF EDUCATION CURRENTLY PROVIDED

The school currently offers a very good standard of education. This is clearly a position which rightly influences parents and community members in their view about any possible changes to current arrangements.

Parents have also argued that small schools can provide a superior standard of education, and have identified research evidence which supports this position (see Appendix 5).
REPORT 551/08
APPENDIX 3

EASSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL: FINANCIAL ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST CLOSURE

C1 FUTURE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

In addition to maintenance items (estimated cost £73,000) the School Estate Management Plan identified two options to improve the current school. The estimated cost of upgrading the school is approximately £700,000 including a new gymnasium and approximately £350,000 if the gym is excluded. If it was decided to proceed with an extension then a more comprehensive exercise would be undertaken involving consultation with all stakeholders to develop a specification and thereafter detailed proposals and costing. Accordingly at this stage the estimated costs are for illustrative purposes. It is also important to refer back to the comments made in paragraph 6.3 of the main report, specifically that no major improvements to the school are considered until it is clear what future Village Hall provisions will be, and that any future improvements would take account of the facilities likely to be available in the Village Hall.

C2 REDUCTIONS IN REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Based on a school roll of 13 it is estimated nett revenue savings would be £58,000 per annum (in a full financial year). This figure takes into account additional transport costs of approximately £5,000 per annum, but does not take into account lifecycle maintenance costs.

C3 ADDITIONAL COSTS

It is estimated that additional home-to-school transport costs of approximately £5,000 per annum would be incurred if Eassie Primary School closed. This estimate has been taken into account in calculating likely nett reductions in revenue expenditure (see C2 above).

C4 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BLOCK GRANT

The level of government grant that Councils receive is based on the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) methodology which assesses each local authority’s relative spending requirement based on 96 assessments of service provision. These spending assessments distribute GAE to local authorities on the basis of primary and secondary indicators. In the case of the “Primary School Teaching Staff” spending assessment, the primary indicator is the total number of pupils in schools. A redistribution takes place through a secondary indicator to take account of the percentage of pupils in schools with fewer than 70 pupils (relative to the position in the rest of Scotland), with these known as “small schools”.

For 2008/09, the primary indicator (pupil numbers) provided Angus Council with a £20.866 million share of the £902.523 million national GAE total for Primary School Teaching Staff. This was increased by £0.953 million to £21.819 million through the redistributive impact of the secondary indicator i.e. relative to the Scottish average, Angus Council has more pupils in small schools.

At the 2007 census both Eassie (13 pupils) and Newtyle (64 pupils) were lower than 70 (there were, in total, 835 pupils in small Angus schools in 2007). Accordingly, the inclusion of these as small schools for Angus within the Primary School Teaching Staff GAE secondary indicator had an estimated positive GAE redistributive impact of £0.118 million from a total of £0.953 million.

Hypothetically, if Eassie had closed a year ago and all pupils transferred to Newtyle in time for the 2007 census, both schools would no longer have been considered small and Angus Council’s GAE assessment would have been £0.118 million lower. Government grant received by the council for 2008/09 would consequently have been £0.118 million lower. However, this is not what occurred and through the 2007 Spending Review the Council was provided with a three year guaranteed grant
settlement that cannot be impacted by such pupil movements. The first occasion on which such a change could adversely impact on the Council’s grant level would be 2011/12 following the next Spending Review.

Looking forward, in September 2010 the current estimate is that there would be a total of 69 pupils in Eassie (14 pupils) and Newtyle (55 pupils) i.e. these would remain small schools for GAE purposes. However, it is also possible that, should Eassie Primary School close, some Eassie parents may choose an alternative school resulting in a smaller roll at Newtyle – well below the 70 pupil mark.

Should the roll of Newtyle be 70 or more (for whatever reason) then the council’s GAE and thus government grant would likely be lower. However, the actual impact of this would depend on the roll of all other schools in Angus as well as Scotland as a whole. If the position in all other schools throughout Scotland and the manner in which the Scottish Government calculates the secondary indicator remains unchanged then the actual grant loss would be in the order of £118 000. There will, however, be changes in the relative level of small school numbers throughout Scotland over the intervening period and predicting the actual impact for Angus is not possible.

It should be noted that there are proposals for the current GAE methodology to be significantly simplified and discussions in this regard are currently underway between the Scottish Government and COSLA. This may result in a number of GAE indicators (including small school adjustment) being removed and in such circumstances a merger of Eassie and Newtyle schools would have absolutely no impact on GAE and thus government grant.

In summary there is a risk that government grant for 2011/12 onwards may be affected by a merger of the two schools. However this needs to be considered in the context of the wider review of local government finance, roll projections and the current and future costs of operating both schools. On balance the risk associated with losing grant is low and should not influence the decision on whether or not to retain Eassie Primary School.
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
HELD IN EASSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY 7 MAY 2008

Present
Mr John Duffy (Chair), member of the community
Mr Jim Anderson, Director of Education
Mr Craig Clement, Senior Education Manager
Councillor Peter Nield
Councillor Thomson
Councillor Myles
Councillor Rymer
Councillor Mackintosh
Councillor Andrews
Councillor Gaul
Councillor Salmond
Councillor Lumgair
60 members (approx) of the community

ISSUES RAISED
1. Why include the Village Hall in the Condition Survey?
   (Craig Clement: School Estate Management Plan rightly included the Hall. This gives an accurate overall impression of the facilities used by the school.)

2. The Hall is not owned by Angus Council and Angus Council therefore has no entitlement to assess it.

3. The new Newtyle School is too small and the ventilation doesn’t work properly.

4. If the criteria have been the same over the last few years why was no-one in touch previously about the Hall with the Eassie & Nevay Community Association?

5. If the C/D rating took the Hall into account 6 years ago, with the Hall out of action, perhaps it shouldn’t be taken into account now?

6. Glamis Primary School is operating near capacity (70 pupils in 2008/09 in a school with capacity for 75).

7. My daughter attends Newtyle and is in a class with 22 children yet we are seeking extra support and would like to transfer to Eassie.

8. The birth rate is increasing, and there is internal migration. The fall in school rolls should, therefore, soon be reversed.
a) If the Hall was an integral part of the school’s facilities, then surely we should now re-assess the school with the Hall out of action.

b) To develop “Responsible Citizens”, a small school set-up is ideal for promoting this and indeed all 4 capacities in a Curriculum for Excellence.

If Angus children use the Hall, shouldn’t we inspect it to make sure it is safe for them?

Why was the Hall not inspected every year?

What Placing Requests for Glamis Primary School have been granted?

Charleston Pre-School Playgroup is a natural feeder for Eassie Primary School.

Why not spend money on Eassie?

Given the Housing developments in the area, how confident are we that if Eassie closes, the remaining schools can cope?

We should encourage children to go to their local school.

Newtyle Nursery already has 18 children enrolled.

Consider extending the Eassie delineated area to take some of the pressure off Glamis.

a) HMIe report in 2005 was very good.

b) Attempts to generate better teamwork in primary classes may just be a passing fad. For 7 year olds, working in teams is not important.

c) The Hall is being worked on and we should look to the future.

Where is the evidence that children can be disadvantaged by being in an exceptionally small peer group?

Previous report by inspectors was very good as was Angus Council’s follow-up report, published 9 months ago.

As citizens of Angus, we have chosen to live here, but you’re taking away our choice.

Is Estate Management being put before our children’s education? The Eassie building (as far as parents are concerned) is fit for purpose.

What is the connection between Estate Management and PE, and small groups of pupils?

Was anything wrong with the Hall in the past? Did anyone report faults?
Councillors are right to listen to the Director, but the tail doesn’t wag the dog! Councillors need to be the ones who take the decisions.

Lots of successful pupils have come out of Eassie over the years.

Mr Anderson, Mr Clement and Councillor Nield are being defensive in their responses.

HMIE think the school is excellent; parents think the school is excellent.

a) Fiona Hyslop spoke a few months ago about looking at “educational advantage” if schools had to be closed.

b) Eassie pupils receive more than 50% above average time on PE – 3 to 4 hours weekly.

c) There is no legal requirement for a school to have a gym on site.

d) There is no research evidence that small peer groups cause cognitive and/or social development problems.

e) Research in France suggests that small schools which stay open do better.

Recognition that the Angus education service has served its young people well. We should build on that success, put aside politics, and look at the possibility of doing something positive. Why not help to create 21st Century PE provision in a new Hall?

Farnell Primary School closed more than 20 years ago, and that destroyed the community.

a) We should reconsider the assertion that small schools do less well in HMIE reports.

b) It takes a long time to build a school up; but only a short time to destroy it. Fixing the infrastructure is not difficult. We should look more at education, and less at bricks and mortar.

Children are the foundations of the “community”.

In the 1970s, people were disappearing from local communities because parents had nowhere to send their children to school.

Why can’t the Education budget be used to address the relatively minor list of repairs/improvements needed to the current school building?

a) Effect of closure will be to ruin this community.

b) If the school closes, problems down the line will follow.

c) We should work together to solve the problem. If you get the numbers wrong, you get them wrong for several communities. Keep some capacity in the system.
The School Estate is being put up as a holy cow. Jack Gibb did it, Jack McConnell did it. Schools for the 21st Century should not just be about what happens in the school, it is about the whole community.

Lots of children in the Charleston Playgroup have big brothers and sisters in Glamis Primary School as Placing Requests.

a) The suggested P1-P3 maximum class size of 18 would reduce the capacity of schools.
b) The fall in rolls within the Kirrie Cluster schools is due to falls in burgh schools.
c) Although rolls have fallen, the birth rate + internal migration will increase the overall school rolls.

Rising birth rate.

Please listen to the community.

Why didn’t you listen to your own Education Committee?

Discussions about procedural arrangements involving the Education Committee and the special meeting of the Council.

In spite of closure threats, this school has excelled. Also the community is working hard to build a new Hall.

Have the Angus Council representatives genuinely been listening so that my granddaughter can attend this school in 2 years?

**Appendix 5** Response from Eassie Parent Council

**Appendix 6** Response from Newtyle & Eassie Community Council