Argyll and Bute Council

Customer Services: Education

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT: MARCH 2019

Review of Education Provision

Ashfield Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

Proposal for the closure of Ashfield Primary School

SUMMARY PROPOSAL

It is proposed that education provision at Ashfield Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019.

Pupils of Ashfield Primary School will continue to be educate at Tayvallich Primary School.

The catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ashfield School.

Reasons for this Proposal

This is the best option to address the reasons for the proposals which are;

- Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for two years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £5,785

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. After repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school, the school was then mothballed. The local and national staffing challenge has not improved. In October 2018 there were significant vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers

- Whilst Ashfield Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate during mothballing with limited budgets for maintenance.

This document has been issued by Argyll and Bute Council in regard to a proposal in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. This document has been prepared by the Council's Education Service with input from other Council Services.

DISTRIBUTION

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https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning

A summary of this document will be provided to:

- The Parent Councils of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils and children at the affected schools

- Parents of children expected to attend an affected school within 2 years of the date of publication of this Proposal Document
- The pupils at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff, at the affected schools
- The trade unions representatives of the above staff
- Argyll and Bute Councillors
- The Community Councils
- Community Planning Partnership
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- The Constituency MSP
- List MSPs for the area
- The Constituency MP
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland
- Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Chief Executive Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Area Commander, Fire Scotland
- Education Scotland

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Public libraries in the vicinities of the schools affected
- Local area offices in the vicinities of the schools affected
- The schools affected by the proposal

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यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यक्ता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

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یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

1 Introduction

1.1 On 10th March 2016, the Community Services Committee of Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Ashfield Primary School. The Council agreed that in the event there are no registered pupils by the commencement of session 2017/18, the school be considered for formal closure through the statutory process.

Ashfield Primary School – Mothballing Decision:-
https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7014&Ver=4

1.2 On 14th December 2017, the Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an options appraisal for Ashfield Primary School. The Community Services Committee received a report on 15th March 2018 presenting and outlining details of a potential formal consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended) and a broad timeline of this process.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7671&Ver=4

1.3 The statutory process for the closure of a rural school is laid out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Act, as amended, introduced a presumption against closure of a rural school and details specific requirements which the education authority is required to follow if they are formulating a proposal to close a rural school. This includes the introduction of a preliminary consultation process.

1.4 In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a new right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. This may be something that the Community wish to consider as part of or as a consequence of this process. Public bodies including Councils must make a decision within six months of receiving a valid request.

1.5 Ashfield Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since elected members approved the mothballing.

1.6 There is a requirement to have special regard to rural schools factors prior to formulating a proposal to close a rural school. In particular it is necessary to consider any reasonable alternatives before considering closure. It is also necessary to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. These factors have been considered in the preliminary requirements which were undertaken prior to this proposal being written.

1.7 The Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan identifies Argyll and Bute as an area of Scotland with outstanding places, people and potential for a prosperous future for everyone. Our Council, along with our Community Planning Partners, is

committed to ensuring that Argyll and Bute's Economic Success is built on a Growing Population.

1.8 Over the next five years, our agreed priorities are to ensure that:

- The education we provide meets the needs of all our young people and their families
- We make the most of our assets to build the local economy
- We support individual and community wellbeing
- We strengthen and empower our communities
- We ensure there are homes for all, we tackle poverty and build opportunity
- We have greener and cleaner communities
- We are an employer of choice
- We manage our finances prudently

1.9 Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in "Our Children, Their Future" which is the Education Vision and Strategy for Argyll and Bute Council.

2 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that education provision at Ashfield Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ashfield Primary School will continue to be educated at Tayvallich Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ashfield Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

2.2 This is the best option to adress the reasons for the proposal. These reasons are;

- Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for two years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £5,785,

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. After repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school, the school was then mothballed. The local and national staffing challenge has not improved. In October 2018 there were significant vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers,

- Whilst Ashfield Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate during mothballing with limited budgets for maintenance.

Additional Considerations

- The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services;

- This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable in the future;

- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;

- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect educational attainment of pupils;

- There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present position is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate;

- This proposal contains the Educational Benefits Statement.

3 Preliminary requirements

3.1 The Council is required to consider the future of Ashfield Primary School, as it has been mothballed for two years. The Council have considered the reasons for making this proposal, and have also considered other viable alternatives, the likely effect on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a consequence of this proposal. Financial implications were also considered. Some of these figures have been recalculated since the initial pre-appraisal took place.

3.2 The Council considered how the implementation of this proposal would impact on the education of the children affected. The Council also considered the impact on the children who currently live in the catchment area but attend other schools, as well as children who may potentially live in the catchment area in the future.

3.3 The place of the school in the community was also considered in terms of the impact this proposal would have on the sustainability of the community itself. When the school was mothballed, the community continued to have use of the facilities and this was also taken into consideration as part of the pre-consultation process.

3.4 Impact on the environment was taken into account during the initial pre-consultation process. This included a consideration of the transport implications if this proposal was to be implemented, as children would have to continue to travel by bus to Tayvallich Primary School.

3.5 Four options were presented to the local community by the Council for consideration during the pre-consultation phase of this proposal, as required by section 12A of the 2010 Act.

3.6 Of the four options which were considered by the community and the Council, D is the favoured proposal by the Council;

a) Re-open Ashfield Primary School
b) Continued Mothballing of Ashfield Primary with the pupils zoned to Tayvallich Primary School;
c) Re-open Ashfield Primary School and realign the catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School; and
d) Close Ashfield Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tayvallich Primary School (the proposal).

3.7 Following from an initial options appraisal which was presented to Council on 11th December 2018, it was agreed that the preliminary requirements were satisfied enabling the draft proposal to proceed.

3.8 There were a range of viewpoints on the future of Ashfield Primary School, from parents, young people and members of the community.

3.9 The community reflected that Ashfield Primary School had been an integral part of the community, and there were contrasting views on the proposals for the future of Ashfield Primary School. However there is a will that the school be retained for community use and not be allowed to fall into disrepair.

3.10 The current travel arrangements for children and staff have been in place for two years. Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel from the current arrangement. There would be no alteration to the current environmental impact.

Alternatives to the Proposal

3.11 The community engagement process prior to the drafting of this proposal considered the views of members of the community who also considered any other alternatives to the closure of Ashfield Primary School. Full details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, including the alternatives to the Proposal are attached as appendix 5 and are also available to read here:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=8098&Ver=4

3.12 In conclusion, after the preconsultation with the community, the Council feels that the proposal to close Ashfield Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tayvallich Primary School is reasonable and further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact below.

4 Educational Benefits Statement

4.1 It is proposed that education provision at Ashfield Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ashfield Primary School will continue to be educated at Tayvallich Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ashfield Primary School.

4.2 Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for two years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £5,785.

4.3 Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. After repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school, the school was then mothballed. The local and national staffing challenge has not improved. At the time of writing, there are 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head teachers in Argyll and Bute.

4.4 The school roll has been significantly below its capacity for the last twelve years, and this is not predicted to increase in the foreseeable future. Whilst the school has been mothballed its condition continues to deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance.

4.5 The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services.

4.6 This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable in the future,

4.7 The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high,

4.8 Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect educational attainment of pupils,

4.9 There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present position is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

4.10 As part of the preliminary requirements in the drafting of this proposal, the Council considered four other alternative options. Of the four options which were considered by the community and the Council; D is the favoured proposal by the Council.

a) Re-open Ashfield Primary School;
b) Continued Mothballing of Ashfield Primary with the pupils zoned to Tayvallich Primary School;

c) Re-open Ashfield Primary School and realign the catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School;
d) Close Ashfield Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tayvallich Primary School (the proposal).

4.11 Having considered these other alternatives the Council has made a decision that these are not viable alternatives to the closure proposal, and will proceed with the option to consult on the proposal to close Ashfield Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tayvallich Primary School.

4.12 The Council has undertaken an appraisal on impact if this proposal was to be implemented.

4.13 This includes an assessment of;

- The school roll and predicted school roll;
- Teacher numbers; and
- The condition of the building.

4.14 The Council has also undertaken an assessment of likely educational benefits or effects which this proposal may have if implemented on:

- The pupils of any affected school;
- Any other users of the school's facilities;
- Any children who would (in the future but for implementation) be likely to become pupils of the school; and
- The pupils of any other schools in the Council area.

4.15 The Council has also taken special regard to the following factors if this proposal was to be implemented, as Ashfield Primary School is classified as a rural school.

- Likely effect on the local community to be assessed by reference to:
    - The sustainability of the community
    - Availability of the school's premises and other facilities for use by the school community;
- Likely effect caused by different travelling arrangements by reference to the effect caused by such arrangements on:
    - Environmental impact; and
    - The schools pupils and staff and other users of the schools facilities.
- Financial Impact.

4.16 In addition, the Council has also considered how to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the implementation of this proposal.

5 School roll

5.1 The information in relation to the school roll is drawn from the yearly pupil census, which takes place in September each year. School rolls by their very nature may fluctuate slightly on an ongoing basis due to changes in pupil numbers as a result of pupils moving to and from the catchment area.

5.2 The rolls of the schools included in this proposal have remained static or seen a decline in each school over recent years as the table below demonstrates. This shows the historic and current pupil numbers for both Ashfield and Tayvallich primaries.

School Roll	Ashfield PS	Tayvallich PS
Capacity	38	33
	Roll	Roll
2005-06	9	28
2006-07	10	23
2007-08	8	26
2008-09	6	21
2009-10	4	28
2010-11	8	28
2011-12	11	25
2012-13	13	20
2013-14	10	21
2014-15	6	21
2015-16	0	24
2016-17	0	23
2017-18	0	20
2018-19	0	21

Predicted Roll

Predicted Roll	Ashfield PS Without placing requests	Ashfield PS taking placing requests in to account	Tayvallich PS
Capacity	38		33
2019-2020	10	6	21*
2020-2021	-		24*

5.2 In total there are ten pupils who live in the Ashfield Primary School catchment area. There are eight pupils who live in the Ashfield Primary School catchment area who currently attend Tayvallich Primary School. These children are all in receipt of Council transport to go to school.

6 Teacher numbers

6.1 Teacher numbers are improving nationally, with a 6.86% increase in the number of teachers nationally from 2013 - 2017. However in Argyll and Bute there has been a 1.28% reduction in the number of teachers from 2013 - 2017.

6.2 As the school has been mothballed for the last two years, the issue of recruitment of staff has not improved. At the time of writing this report there are 14 vacancies for class teachers in Argyll and Bute and 2 head teacher vacancies. Despite a sustained effort to secure permanent staff, there is no reason to think that staffing would not continue to be a considerable challenge for Ashfield Primary School.

6.3 At the current time, if the proposal was to be accepted, there would be no impact on staffing levels at Tayvallich Primary School.

7 Condition of the Building

7.1 Argyll and Bute Council's School Estate Management Planning process identified in 2013 that the school was in satisfactory condition, and that there were no areas of significant concern at that time.

7.2 As part of the consultation process the Council would be open to discussion with the community in regard to the future of the building. This might involve the transfer of the building to a recognised community group through the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Sc) Act 2015 or some other agreed mechanism. This may provide the community with an opportunity to utilise the building as a driver for community benefit and potential regeneration that could also enhance the sustainability of the community.

8 Assessment of likely educational benefits on pupils

8.1 If this proposal is implemented, the Council believes that there will be considerable educational benefits arising from this. These centre around;

- Learning and teaching;
- Meeting learners needs;
- Broadening the range of opportunities; and
- The environment for learning.

8.2 This statement focusses on Tayvallich Primary School, which is the school the majority of the Ashfield pupils have been attending since August 2016.

8.3 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the

school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children, however the closure of the school and continued attendance of pupils at other schools allows children to experience a curriculum which is matched to their needs.

8.4 Both Ashfield Primary School and Tayvallich Primary School are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Ashfield Primary School area, attending Tayvallich Primary School continue to benefit from education in a locality familiar to them, and still relatively close to home.

8.5 The co-location of the Early Learning Centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Tayvallich Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and school and includes joint early level learning every week.

9 Learning and Teaching

9.1 The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

9.2 Tayvallich Primary School offers a learning environment that encourages sound levels of achievement and provides a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The school ethos is very positive and conducive to helping pupils succeed.

9.3 There is a continual challenge for all schools to deliver a school improvement agenda and deliver effectively the principles and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The National Improvement Framework priorities include raising attainment for all, and closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.

9.4 The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. At Tayvallich Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with a range of colleagues.

9.5 Tayvallich Primary School is part of the Mid Argyll Cluster, which means that staff can be supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Tayvallich Primary School is part of a shared headship which means that staff can be supported together in a clearly defined way and staff work closely as a team.

9.6 There is a planned programme of development activities and opportunities for quality professional dialogue on an ongoing basis at Tayvallich Primary School. All teachers have been actively involved in key developments. In a

recent curriculum review, curricular frameworks have been improved for Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and Numeracy, Science and Social Studies.

9.7 The shared headship approach allows staff to work together, not only as two schools but also as part of the area cluster towards improving policy and practice. The head teacher is experienced and in previous roles led initiatives at a national level. The principal teacher at Tayvallich Primary School is part of part of Argyll and Bute's Leadership Network to support school self-evaluation and has taken the lead on specific areas of school improvement. The shared headship model supports a distributive leadership approach and provides staff with opportunities to lead aspects of the curriculum and make day to day management decisions.

9.8 In recent years children at Tayvallich Primary School have been taught in two classes composed of a number of children from more than one year group. They benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group. They are able to interact and socialise with groups of children their own age and gender, take part in team activities and move with their peers to secondary school. Pupils are close to one another and have formed strong social bonds. Former pupils of Tayvallich Primary School continue the friendships they made in primary school through their continuous education in high school and beyond.

10 Meeting learners needs

10.1 Through the Getting it Right for Every Child, (GIRFEC) practice model, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work. Planning for Progress meetings are being further strengthened. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning.

10.2 Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met. In the primary classes, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Most children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy.

10.3 A 'Respect Me' policy is built into class lessons and permeates the whole school ethos through assemblies and class work on rights and responsibilities.

11 Broadening the Range of Opportunities

11.1 Children are offered a range of active, planned experiences which help them develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes

which they need for their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future. In the Early Learning Centre (ELC) children enjoy a range of experiences. Staff know the children well and are sensitive to their individual needs.

11.2 There is a strong transition process in place between the ELC and school at Tayvallich Primary School and includes joint early level learning every week. Pupils from Pre-5 to P7 have taken on responsibilities which enhance the development of a positive ethos across the school.

11.3 Children are provided with a variety of experiences to develop their sense of responsibility, independence, confidence and enterprising attitude. Tayvallich Primary School have had community and parental support input in outdoor education, science, health and well-being and circus skills over the past two sessions.

11.4 Across the school children are engaged with learning and contribute well in lessons. Staff promote positive relationships at all levels and also through the Young Sports Leaders programme, the impact of this being that children enjoy good relationships with their peers, young leaders feel confident and entrusted to take these developments forward.

12 Environment for Learning

12.1 Tayvallich Primary School is a well- supported school situated in the village of Tayvallich.

12.2 There has been substantial investment in recent years. The teaching area for Early Learning Centre has been upgraded. A second teaching area is being developed at present with a target completion date of January 2019.

12.3 While outside space is limited, pupils benefit from access to a range of community facilities which are in close proximity to Tayvallich Primary School including the village hall, shop and local businesses.

12.4 The school makes good use of the local woodland for learning. Both Ashfield Primary School and Tayvallich Primary School are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification).

12.5 The children maintain links with friends who live in their own village as well as creating links with children from two other rural communities.

12.6 Any mitigating effects around the adverse weather and transport issues are outweighed by the benefits of this proposal.

12.7 In summary, there are a range of educational benefits for children if this proposal was to be implemented, as summarised in the paragraphs above. There are benefits for the development of social and emotional skills, as well as the educational benefits resultant from access to a more diverse curriculum. The learning environment in Tayvallich Primary School also offers

children the opportunity to participate in a wider range of active learning strategies.

13 Assessment of likely educational benefits on other users of the school's facilities

Implications for staff

13.1 If this proposal is implemented, there will be no new implications for the teaching and ancillary staff who are currently deployed in Tayvallich Primary School.

13.2 If this proposal is implemented, the Council does not envisage and adverse effects from the proposal. Should issues arise however, these will be mitigated through the Council Educational Management Team support structure.

Early Learning Centre – Pre Five Children

13.3 The co-location for the Early Learning Centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Tayvallich Primary School enables a strong transition process between the ELC and the school and includes joint early level learning every week.

Gaelic learners

13.4 Gaelic Language in the Primary School (GLPS) is not currently offered in any of the schools in this proposal so there would be no effect if the proposals were implemented.

14 Assessment of likely educational benefits on any children who would (in the future but for implementation) be likely to become pupils of the school.

Existing and future pupils

14.1 Children who may live in this catchment area in the future will benefit from the broad range of educational opportunities which are presented through this proposal, detailed above.

14.2 There would be positive educational benefits associated with this proposal. The management arrangements of the school would be strengthened and there would be opportunities for increasing the range of the curriculum and increasing the use of active pedagogies.

14.3 The proposal would increase the roll of Tayvallich Primary School and would thus extend the peer group for all pupils, present and future. The larger school should be able to support a wider range of social and extra-curricular activities.

14.4 Pupils who would otherwise have attended Ashfield Primary School would benefit from daily interaction in a larger peer group and from improved educational arrangements as described above. Pupils in the combined school will have more shared experiences and opportunity for friendships. This will enhance their confidence and make the transition to secondary easier. Larger year groups make the provision of specialist services more viable and provide enhanced opportunities for school trips. Tayvallich Primary School meets all the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1996.

15 Assessment of likely educational benefits on the pupils of any other schools in the Council area

15.1 The current mothballing of the school has had an indirect effect on other pupils in Argyll and Bute. The reduction in the running costs for the school means that this is a saving to the Council, which is not taken from elsewhere.

15.2 There are no other significant impacts from this proposal on other pupils in the authority or who attend other schools, in either a positive or a negative way.

Placing requests

15.3 This proposal will not affect the right of parents to request that their child attend a school of their choice rather than the designated school in whose catchment area the family lives as provided by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

16 Consideration of how to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the implementation of this proposal

16.1 The main adverse effect from this proposal would be the length of the journey to school for children who live in the Ashfield Primary School catchment area. However, children who live in this catchment area have been making this journey for the last two years, and families in the area do not feel this is a major consideration. Funded school transport would also be provided for pupils should this proposal be implemented.

17 Factors for rural school closures

17.1 The Council has taken special regard to the following factors in relation to this proposal as Ashfield Primary School is classified as a rural school.

The likely effect on the local community if this proposal is implemented

17.2 The Council has made an assessment on the sustainability of the community should this proposal be implemented and considers that this may have a positive impact.

17.3 The Scottish Government focuses on four key areas of importance to rural communities;

- a strong and diverse rural economy, harnessing traditional strengths and with an appetite for change,
- thriving rural communities where everyone can enjoy a decent quality of life, where the young are not forced to leave their communities to get on and where the vulnerable are no longer excluded,
- strong, community focused public services that are accessible, of the highest possible quality and with the greatest possible choice,
- a rural Scotland whose natural and cultural heritage flourishes in all its diversity

17.4 In rural communities, the challenges and opportunities are largely defined by the local area and can often best be met by a bottom-up, community-led response. Strong community leadership is vital to articulating local priorities and driving forward change and growth.

17.5 There is the potential if this proposal is implemented to capitalise on the existing will and drive in this community, with opportunities for local leaders to enable them to organise, motivate and inspire their neighbours. The opportunity for the local community to acquire this building could be key to helping to make this community an independent, resilient place to live. Management of assets such as Ashfield Primary School may be an important step in building community confidence, promoting growth and enabling communities to realise their aspirations.

17.6 Research has shown that when communities feel empowered, there is:

- greater participation in local democracy;
- increased confidence and skills among local people;
- more people volunteering in their communities; and
- greater satisfaction with quality of life in the neighbourhood.

17.7 It is important to recognise that a school's primary function is to provide pupils with the best possible educational experience. During initial consultation, there was some support from the community for closure of the school with the building and adjoining grounds being retained for community use.

17.8 It is considered that formal closure of this school could have a positive impact on the wider community, and may lead to an increase in other users of the facility.

17.9 Indeed, the school closure may help to empower the local community should the community wish to undertake an asset transfer process for the building. This could have a positive impact on community sustainability. Formal closure would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community who are already considering future uses for the building. This may enhance community life by giving a community focus for activities and events.

On the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community

17.10 During the pre-consultation phase, some members of the community supported closure of the school with the suggestion that the building and adjoining grounds could potentially be retained for community use. Most people who attended the pre-consultation meeting felt that the school building should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall in to further disrepair, as that would adversely impact on the community's access to the premises.

17.11 It is accepted that a school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, but a community hub could be an asset to the community. If the local plans for the building progress, this could have a positive impact on the sustainability of the community. Formal closure of the school would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community.

17.12 There have been some community lets in Ashfield Primary School in the last two years.

The likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements

17.13 There are no housing allocations or potential developments identified. The travel distance from Ashfield Primary School to Tayvallich Primary School is 8.58 miles. The travel distance from Ashfield Primary School to Lochgilphead Primary (Joint Campus) is 9.76. The travel time for this journey is approximately 20 minutes for both journeys. The current travel arrangements have been in place for two years. Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel. There would be no alteration to the current environmental impact.

17.14 This option would have no effect on the current travel arrangements of staff and pupils. The closure of Ardchattan Primary School, in terms of current travel arrangements would have a neutral effect on the environment. The current annual transport cost for pupils to travel to Tayvallich Primary School is £17,320.

17.15 It is anticipated that the effect on the travel arrangements of staff and other users of the facility would not differ materially from that of the pupils accessing the school.

17.16 Walking to school does provide children with many health benefits, and there are benefits from exercise on behaviour, and self-esteem. However, children travelling to school by bus can also have a positive impact on the development of social skills and relationship building.

Environmental impact

17.17 Pupils will continue to travel by school transport to Tayvallich Primary School and through placing requests to Lochgilphead Primary School.

17.18 If this proposal was to be implemented there would be little or no impact.

Financial Impact

17.19 The full breakdown of the financial analysis is detailed in Appendix 4. Some of these figures have been recalculated since the initial pre-appraisal took place. This information gives details on the cost if Ashfield Primary School was still to be an occupied and operational establishment. However, as Ashfield Primary School is currently mothballed, the cost for the mothballing is £5,785. Should the school be reopened, occupied and operational, the running costs per year would be £141,071.

17.20 The main elements included within a school budget are teacher employment costs (i.e. basic salary costs plus related employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions plus any relevant individual allowances); Local Government employee costs and an allocation for discretionary expenditure incurred by the school (i.e. educational equipment, materials, staff travel, etc.). Teacher staffing budgets are calculated on an annual basis and within the Primary sector are determined, taking cognisance of the SNCT class size maxima, by the number of classes required to provide for the specific number and age of the pupils in each school. When a school ceases to be operational the teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), per entitlement information from Education HR, with the staffing budget resulting in a nil value.

17.21 In line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers, the Education Service operates on the basis that supernumerary teachers are redeployed and therefore their salary costs still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget. On top of this there is estimated to be an increase to Tayvallich Primary School's teacher entitlement to 0.83 FTE at a cost of £41,785. This methodology also applies to the school's discretionary budget which again is formula based. The discretionary budget of the receiving school will have increased by £221. In the attached breakdown some of the costs noted in column 3 will not directly impact on Tayvallich Primary school but they will be a cost to the Authority as a whole, for example school transport, and the costs of the teachers employed in Tayvallich Primary School.

17.22 The annual running costs during the mothballing of Ashfield Primary School are £5,785. This includes non-domestic rates, utility costs, insurances, etc. If the school was to be formally closed, this would allow the Council to take steps towards selling the school to a third party or local community. Transport costs for pupils to attend Tayvallich Primary School are £17,320. Costs per pupil per year to attend Ashfield Primary School if it were to be reopened are £14,107 per year. Costs per pupil per year to attend Tayvallich Primary School are £9,111 per year.

17.23 When a school ceases to be operational the teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), per entitlement information from Education HR, with the staffing budget resulting in a nil value. As a result of the

authority's policy for no teacher redundancies it is presumed that the staff are deployed elsewhere within the authority and therefore their salary costs still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget. This is also in line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers. This methodology also applies to the school's discretionary budget which again is formula based.

17.24 Table 2 contains the notional 30 year lifecycle costs that would arise based on the GIA of the various schools irrespective of the number of pupils accommodated. Lifecycle costs are representative of the cost needed to keep the building in a good state of repair. The cost over the next thirty years therefore to maintain Ashfield Primary School is £255,192, and for Tayvallich Primary School this is £352,947.

17.25 Through the Scottish Government formula for the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) process, the council would have no change to their settlement.

Summary of educational benefit assessment and statement

17.26 Educational benefits of this proposal, such as the ability for children to participate in a broad range of experiences, the development of the strategic leadership of the head teacher in taking forward improvements in learning and teaching, and the ability to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of the children are significant benefits to this proposal. During the pre-consultation phase, these benefits were explored in detail and details from the community engagement and the findings from the preliminary requirements, to include the alternative proposals and the authorities assessment of other likely effects of the proposal and the reasons for that assessment are attached as appendix 5.

17.27 Whilst the positive educational benefits are numerous, there are also some negative aspects which arise from the children attending Tayvallich Primary School. These negative aspects are principally around the fact that children have to travel by either bus or car to school. However it is considered that the positive aspects of this proposal outweigh the negative aspect of some travelling for children.

18 Equality and Socio Economic Impact

The Council as a public authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, the Fairer Scotland Duty (Part one of the Equality Act) and the Island (Scotland) Act (2018) to have due regard to their provisions when making strategic financial decisions. This is done through assessing the potential impact of the decision on equality through Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIAs).

The Council will undertake the process of assessment during the consultation process in respect of this proposal to ensure that due regard is given to such matters in the decision making process.

19 Consultation arrangements

19.1 Prior to formulating a rural school closure proposal under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010 (the 2010 Act), as amended, the Education Authority must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act. The Authority has previously identified its reasons for formulating a possible proposal, considered whether there were any reasonable alternatives to the possible proposal as a response to those reasons, and assessed each of the options in accordance with Section 12A(2)(c) of the 2010 Act. After considering a paper addressing these preliminary requirements, the Education Authority decided on 11th December 2018 that, having specific regard to the reasons for formulating a prospective closure proposal, the option to close Ashfield Primary School and redraw its catchment area to Tayvallich Primary School is the most appropriate response to the specific reasons for the potential proposal.

19.2 This document was considered by the Education Authority on 14 March when it was agreed that it should be adopted as a "relevant Proposal" and issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in this paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.

19.3 A summary of this document will be issued free of charge to all of the consultees listed on page 2 of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning

19.4 As part of a consultation process, the Education Authority must publish the proposal paper, advertise it and notify Education Scotland and all of the relevant consultees as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the 2010 Act, inviting them to make representations on the proposal and also The consultation period will be from 18th March 2019 until the close of business on 17th May 2019 which lasts for a minimum of 6 weeks and includes at least 30 school days.

19.5 A public meeting will be held at 2.30pm on the 25th April 2019 in Ashfield Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate is welcome to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Education Authority and the Education Authority will present reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered. However, the Education Authority will also consider written comments which should be sent to Head of Education, Learning and Teaching, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ and should be received no later than 17th May 2019.

19.6 Written representations may be made on the proposal and the alternatives to the proposal. Written representations may also suggest other alternatives to the proposal.

19.7 Following the close of the consultation, the Education Authority will provide Education Scotland with copies of the written representations submitted, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting and any other relevant documentation. This will allow Education Scotland to prepare a report on the proposal within a period of 3 weeks.

19.8 After receiving Education Scotland's report, the Education Authority will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report in accordance with Sections 9 and 10 of the 2010 Act. The Education Authority will thereafter make its final decision on whether to implement the proposal. The decision will be published a minimum of 3 weeks after publication of the Consultation Report. If the Education Authority makes a closure decision, it shall notify the Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and why it has been satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.

19.9 The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of 8 weeks to call in any closure decision made by the Education Authority in certain circumstances. This 8 week timeframe would consist of an initial 3 weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the ministers, and a further 5 weeks for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period the Education Authority will not proceed to implement any closure decision.

19.10 If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within 7 days for determination. The Education Authority may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within 8 weeks of the Panel being constituted.

19.11 If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report the Education Authority decides not to implement the closure proposal, the Education Authority cannot publish a further closure proposal in relation to the school for 5 years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

20 Conclusion

20.1 It is proposed that education provision at Ashfield Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ashfield Primary School will continue to be educated at Tayvallich Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ashfield Primary School.

20.2 This is the best option to adress the reasons for the proposal. These reasons are:

- Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for two years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £5,785;

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. After repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school, the school was then mothballed. The local and national staffing challenge has not improved. At the time of writing, there are 14 vacancies for teachers and 2 vacancies for head teachers in Argyll and Bute; and

- The school roll has been significantly below its capacity for the last twelve years, and this is not predicted to increase in the foreseeable future. Whilst the school has been mothballed its condition continues to deteriorate with limited budgets for maintenance.

Other Considerations

- The Council needs to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services;

- This proposal will bring educational benefits and assist in ensuring that the Education budget is more sustainable in the future;

- The costs per pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high;

- Schools in the Council area are expensive to maintain and operate. Retaining unnecessary accommodation is a serious drain on the resources of the Council and diverts spending from areas that directly affect educational attainment of pupils; and

- There is no realistic possibility at present of the Council being able to bring its whole school estate up to a satisfactory condition. The present position is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the extent of the estate.

- This proposal contains the Educational Benefits Statement.

20.3 The Council as a public authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011, the Fairer Scotland Duty (Part one of the Equality Act) and the Island (Scotland) Act (2018) to have due regard to their provisions when making strategic financial decisions. This is done through assessing the potential impact of the decision on equality through Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIAs).

The Council will undertake the process of assessment during the consultation process in respect of this proposal to ensure that due regard is given to these matters in the decision making process.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director of Customer Services

Louise Connor
Head of Education: Learning & Teaching

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning

For further information contact:
Alison MacDonald
Education Manager
alison.macdonald@argyll-bute.gov.uk

February 2019

APPENDICES
Appendix 1 – Consultation letter
Appendix 2 – Response form
Appendix 3 – Map
Appendix 4 – Financial template
Appendix 5 – Options Appraisal

APPENDIX 1

Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

Customer Services
Executive Director: Douglas Hendry

Customer Services
Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA318RT
Telephone: **Fax:**
Our Ref: **Ref:**
If phoning or calling please ask for:
e-mail: @argyll-bute.gov.uk
Council Website: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Ashfield Primary School

Dear Consultee,

Review of Education Provision
Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Ashfield Primary School
Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010

Background

Argyll and Bute Council, through its Education Service, aims to realise ambition, excellence and equity for all.

The Council is consulting on a proposal to close Ashfield Primary School. This notice provides a summary of a proposal that you may have an interest in or are required to be notified of, giving you key information about the proposal.

The Council is conducting a public consultation process. This will commence on 18th March 2019 and will conclude on 17th May 2019. This is the period within which you will be able to make written representations to the Council in respect of the proposal. If you wish your view to be taken account of in the consultation exercise you must submit your written representation within this period. This notice and summary provides further information on where a full copy of the proposal may be obtained or referenced and also advises on how you can make written representations to the Council.

The Council will hold a meeting where officers will be able to provide information on the proposal. The details of the public meeting are contained in this notice and summary.

It is important that everyone we are consulting tells us what they think of the proposal. Please read this notice and summary and then consider the contents of the proposal document. You can then tell us what you think of the proposal by

making written representation and/or by attending the public meeting. This notice and summary tell you how to do that.

The Proposal

It is proposed that education provision at Ashfield Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ashfield Primary School will continue to be educated at Tayvallich Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Ashfield Primary School.

Reasons for this proposal

This is the best option to adress the reasons for the proposal. These reasons are;

- Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for two years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £5,591,

- Along with several other rural Councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. After repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school, the school was then mothballed. The local and national staffing challenge has not improved. In October 2018 there were significant vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers,

- Whilst Ashfield Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate during mothballing with limited budgets for maintenance.

The Council's education strategy
Our Children Their Future

Together we will realise ambition, excellence and equality for all.

- Raise educational attainment and achievement for all
- Use performance information to secure improvement for children and young people
- Ensure children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
- Equip young people to secure and sustain positive destinations and achieve success in life
- Ensure high quality partnership working and community engagement
- Strengthen leadership at all levels

Alternatives to the Proposal

The following alternatives to the proposal are set out in the proposal paper:

a) Re-open Ashfield Primary School,

b) Continued Mothballing of Ashfield Primary with the pupils zoned to Tayvallich Primary School,
c) Re-open Ashfield Primary School and realign the catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School,
d) Close Ashfield Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tayvallich Primary School (The possible Proposal).

Written Representations may be made on those alternatives as well as on the proposal.

Written representations on the proposal may suggest other alternatives to the proposal.

What will we do?

We will consult with people by:

- Providing a notice of the consultation and a summary of the proposal to the relevant consultees **this is that notice and summary**
- Placing an advert in the local press
- Putting information on our website website https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning
- Holding public meetings to explain the proposal
- Ask parents, carers, children, young people, teachers, support staff and others to tell us what they think of the proposals.

What to do now?

- Please read the full proposal document
- Please attend the Public Meeting which will be held on 25th April in Ashfield Primary School at 2.30pm.
- Let us know what you think by:

Letter to: Education Services
School Consultations
Argyll & Bute Council
Argyll House
Alexandra Parade
Dunoon
PA23 8AJ

Returning the attached response sheet by post or by;

Email to:
Via the website: https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning

What next?

Whilst the Council is engaging in a consultation process in relation to this proposal that does not mean that the proposal will go ahead. It does mean that the Council is engaging in a consultation process to seek your view on the proposal.

All the points raised during the consultation will be carefully considered and Elected Members will then decide if the plan should go ahead.

If the suggestion goes ahead the children and young people would continue to be educated in Tayvalilch Primary School.

Please note that this summary document is for convenience only. Full details of the consultation can be obtained from:

- Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Education Offices, Argyll House, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
- Public libraries in the vicinities of the schools affected
- Local area offices in the vicinities of the schools affected
- The schools affected by the proposal

Yours sincerely

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director of Customer Services

APPENDIX 2

Argyll and Bute Council
Customer Services: Education

RESPONSE FORM

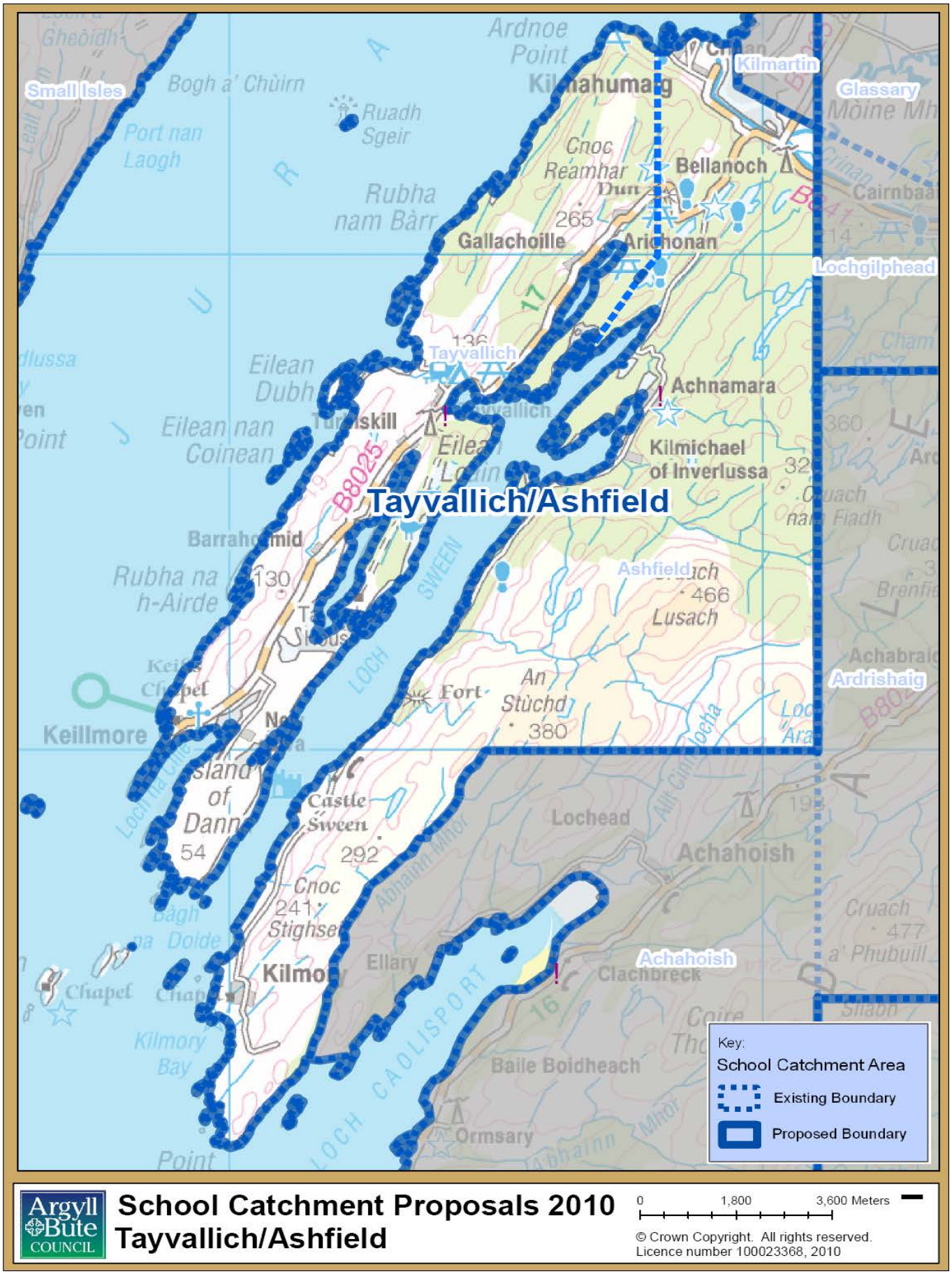
I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Elected Members and Council Officers of Argyll and Bute Council. ☐

Proposal	
It is proposed that: Education provision at Ashfield Primary School be discontinued with effect from 21st October 2019. Pupils of Ashfield Primary School will continue to be educated at Tayvallich Primary School from 21st October 2019. The catchment area of Ashfield Primary School shall be extended to include the current catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School.	
This part of the form must be completed for a valid response:	
Name: (please print)	Address: Post Code:
I agree/do not agree (delete which does not apply) that my response can be made publicly available	
Signature:	Date:

YOUR INTEREST: (please tick)

Parent ☐	Child / Young Person ☐	Staff ☐	Other * ☐
Elected Member / MSP / MP ☐		Member of Community Council ☐	
***Other: (please specify)			
Please state your views on the proposal (continue overleaf if necessary)			

APPENDIX 3


Tayvallich/Ashfield
Small Isles
Kilmartin
Glassary
Bellanoch
Gallachoille
Arichonan
Lochgilphead
Tayvallich
Achnamara
Kilmichael of Inverlussa
Ashfield
Lusach
Barrahormid
Keillmore
Island of Dann
Castle Sween
Achahoish
Lochead
Ardrishaig
Achabraid
Cruach
Ellary
Clachbreck
Baile Boidheach
Ormsary
Key:
School Catchment Area
Existing Boundary
Proposed Boundary
School Catchment Proposals 2010
Tayvallich/Ashfield
0
1,800
3,600 Meters
© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved.
Licence number 100023368, 2010

APPENDIX 4 – FINANCIAL TEMPLATE

Table 1

Name of School Ashfield Primary	**Projected annual costs for full financial year 2019/20**	**Additional financial impact on receiving school** Tayvallich Primary	**Annual recurring savings** (column 2 minus column 3)
School costs			
Employee costs			
teaching staff	81,698	123,483	-41,785
support staff	12,819	2,676	10,143
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	0	0	0
support staff training	0	0	0
Supply costs	2,345	775	1,570
Building costs:			
property insurance	463	463	0
non domestic rates	2,526	0	2,526
water & sewerage charges	600	0	600
energy costs	7,517	0	7,517
cleaning (contract or in-house)	4,965	4,879	86
building repair & maintenance	3,759	0	3,759
grounds maintenance	1,254	0	1,254
facilities management costs	117	0	117
revenue costs arising from capital	0	0	0
other - refuse collection; telephones	562	0	562
School operational costs:			
learning materials	2,978	221	2,757
catering (contract or in-house)	23,025	3,548	19,477
SQA costs	0	0	0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	0		0
Transport costs:			
home to school	0	17,320	-17,320
other pupil transport costs			0
staff travel	0	0	0
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	**144,628**	**153,365**	**-8,737**

Income:			
Sale of meals	-3,557	-3,557	0
Lets	0	0	0
External care provider	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	**-3,557**	**-3,557**	**0**
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	**141,071**	**149,808**	**-8,737**

UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	**14,071**	**14,981**	**-874**

Table 2

Capital costs	**School proposed for closure** Ashfield Primary	**Receiving school** Tayvallich Primary
Capital Life Cycle cost	255,192	352,947
Third party contributions to capital costs	0	0

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	463
non domestic rates	2,273
water & sewerage charges	114
energy costs	2,365
cleaning (contract or in-house)	0
security costs	117
building repair & maintenance	
grounds maintenance	453
facilities management costs	
other	
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	**5,785**

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
	0
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	0

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
The Primary Indicator determining the GAE allocation for Primary School Teaching Staff is based on the number of primary school pupils with the Secondary Indicator being the percentage of pupils in small schools (roll < 70 pupils averaged over 2 years). The pupils from Ashfield are designated to attend Tayvallich which has a roll of < 70 pupils. The additional pupils from Ashfield does not increase the Tayvallich roll above the threshold so there will be no impact on this GAE indicator. There will be no impact on other GAE indicators.	0
GAE IMPACT	**0**

Appendix 5 – Options Appraisal

CUSTOMER SERVICES: EDUCATION

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

ASHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. INTRODUCTION

On 10 March 2016 the Community Services Committee of Argyll and Bute Council approved the mothballing of Ashfield Primary School. The Council agreed that if there were no registered pupils by the close of the registration period for session 2016/17 the Council would consult formally on the future of school provision at Ashfield.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7014&Ver=4

On 14th December 2017, the Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the required preliminary consultation and an options appraisal, for Ashfield Primary School. The Community Services Committee received a report on 15th March 2018 presenting and outlining details of a potential formal consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended) and a broad timeline of this process.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=548&MId=7671&Ver=4

The statutory process for the closure of a rural school is laid out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

The Act, as amended, introduced a presumption against closure of a rural school and details specific requirements which the education authority is required to follow if they are formulating a proposal to close a rural school. This includes the introduction of a preliminary consultation process.

In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a new right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. Public bodies including councils must consider such requests and respond within a reasonable timescale to them.

Ashfield Primary School has had zero pupils enrolled since elected members approved the mothballing.

On 14th December 2017, Community Services Committee agreed that the Education Service would undertake the preliminary requirements in relation to considering a rural school closure required and look at an options appraisal for Ashfield Primary School. This review will enable Community Services: Education to identify and consider the options put forward.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools that is in effect a presumption against their closure. There is a requirement to have special regard to the rural schools factors prior to formulating a proposal to close a rural school. In particular it is necessary to consider any reasonable alternatives before considering closure. It is also necessary to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. These factors have been considered in this options appraisal.

2. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

An authority that is formulating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act before starting to prepare its proposal paper.

The Authority's reasons for formulating a proposal are;

1. Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for two years. The school roll is low and not predicted to rise in the near future. The annual cost of the mothballing of the building is £5,591,
2. Along with several other rural councils, Argyll and Bute is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff. After repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school, the school was then mothballed. The local and national staffing challenge has not improved. In October 2018 there were significant vacancies for both Head Teachers and Teachers,
3. Whilst Ashfield Primary School is a sound building, it will deteriorate during mothballing with limited budgets for maintenance.

The Council is required to consider the future of Ashfield Primary School.

3. BACKGROUND

Argyll and Bute is an area of outstanding natural beauty sitting within an ancient landscape with a strong cultural identity. Today, the culture of Argyll and Bute is reflected in its traditional industries of fishing, farming and crofting, sports such as shinty and in its world class musicians and artists as well as its modern commercial industries such as wind turbine production and fish farming.

Argyll and Bute is geographically the second largest authority in Scotland. Education is delivered in a range of settings including schools, partnerships and youth services.

3.1 Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan

The Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan identifies Argyll and Bute as an area of Scotland with outstanding places, people and potential for a prosperous future for everyone. Our Council, along with our Community Planning Partners, is committed to ensuring that Argyll and Bute's Economic Success is built on a Growing Population.

This strategic approach embraces the vision for our area, our communities and our people as outlined in the Corporate Plan. Our key service priorities support the delivery of our commitments in the plans, helping to focus on local outcomes that will achieve meaningful improvements for the area, our local communities and our citizens.

Councils have a statutory responsibility in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to achieve best value. Our Community Services Asset Management Plan provides a review of the property assets used to deliver services. It incorporates the School Estate Management Plan which reflects the local implementation of Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future, the national school estate strategy developed by the Scottish Government in conjunction with local authorities.

The aspirations, guiding principles and objectives contained within Building Better Schools are reflected throughout Education and Children's Services Asset Management Plan (SAMP) for schools and public buildings, both in the management of the existing assets and in the design and construction of developments.

3.2 Our Children Their Future

Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in Our Children, Their Future: Education Vision and Strategy.

3.3 Ashfield Primary School and the local setting of Achnamara

Ashfield Primary School was built in the 1956 and is situated in the attractive village of Achnamara on the shore of Loch Sween in Mid Argyll. The village was formally used as a basis for work in relation to the Forestry Commission. The school is co-educational and non-

denominational and has a catchment area extending along Loch Sween and part of the Crinan Canal.

3.4 The School within the Community

Ashfield Primary School was viewed by many as the hub of the community and when open the community was very active within it. The local community supported many school events and the children used the local area for a number of studies.

The community has few public buildings. There is a hall within the village of Achnamara which is available for community use and the local church building is currently for sale.

There is some concern within the community that the closure of Ashfield school will contribute to a perceived decline in the community, already exacerbated by the closure of the local community shop.

3.5 Population

Argyll and Bute has an average population density of just 0.13 persons per hectare. This coupled with the changing demographic profile of the area presents one of our greatest challenges. The table below refers directly to the Ashfield area showing the changing population from census 2001 to census 2011.

Table 1: Population Information

Ashfield Area Census Ref : 60QD000059			
2001		2011	
Total Resident Population	160	Total Resident Population	119
% under 16	24.38	% under 16	10.1
% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	58.75	% 16 – 64 (pensionable age)	65.9
% pensionable age and over	16.88	% pensionable age and over	24.4

It is recognised that the census area and the catchment area of Ashfield School differ slightly.

3.6 Development and House Building

The current Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in March 2015. A new Local Development Plan (LDP2), which will set out planning and development proposals for the next 10 years from 2020

and a vision for 20 years, is currently being prepared. The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan provides the local planning framework for the majority of the Council area. The Plan is divided into the written statement and proposals maps. The written statement provides the general policy context against which planning applications for new development proposals should be assessed. This is supported by the proposals maps which show the range of development opportunities and constraints within the area, for example:

- the key development areas i.e. the allocations for housing, industry and business, community facilities and infrastructure;
- the potential areas for future development (Potential Development Areas);
- areas requiring actions such as environmental improvement or regeneration (Areas for Action);
- and environmental designations such as national Scenic Areas, Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas and Local Nature Conservation Sites.

Appendix 1 shows the Local Development Plan for Achnamara.
As a small settlement Achnamara is not identified for growth in the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan (2015). There are no 'housing allocations' or 'potential development areas' identified in the plan in connection with the settlement, so any development opportunities would be confined to 'windfall' sites within the settlement boundary identified in the plan.

Appendix 2 shows the Local Development Plan for Tayvallich which identifies six potential development areas. *Appendix 3* provides a key for the Local Development Plans.

There have been no planning permissions granted for dwellings within the settlement during the last three years, which is indicative of the lack of growth potential. There may be some isolated opportunities for dwellings in the countryside within reasonable travelling distance of the school site, but to satisfy settlement strategy policy these would need to be on appropriate sites within defined 'rural opportunity areas'. These are very limited in both distribution and extent and would not be likely to afford many credible opportunities within the wider area.

3.7 Ashfield Primary School

Ashfield Primary School was built in the 1956 and is situated in the attractive village of Achnamara on the shore of Loch Sween in Mid Argyll. The village was formerly used as a base for work in relation to the Forestry Commission. The school is co-educational and non-

denominational and has a catchment area extending along Loch Sween and part of the Crinan Canal.

Appendix 4 shows Ashfield Primary School Floor Plan.
Ashfield Primary School building is in good operational order. Before mothballing there was one Primary 1 to Primary 7 classroom. There is a large hall for PE, drama etc. It is set in considerable grounds, with a generous playground and has the advantage of substantial playing fields.

The Scottish Government's Rural School List 2016 classifies Ashfield Primary School as 'very remote rural'.[1] This is defined as an area with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more. Ashfield Primary is one of a group of 9 primaries associated with Lochgilphead High School.

3.8 Tayvallich Primary School

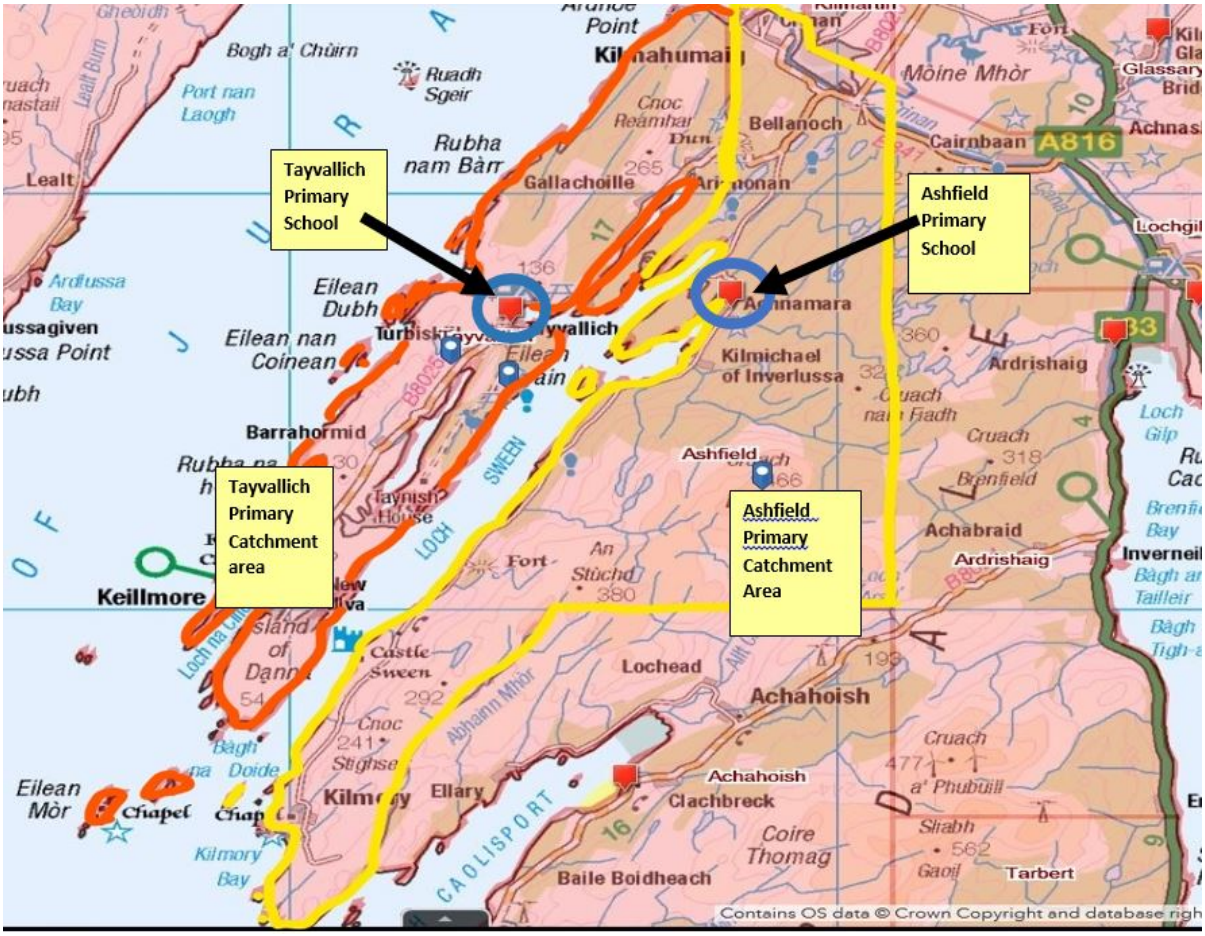
Tayvallich Primary School is a small school, built in 1894, on a hill overlooking a secluded bay surrounded by the picturesque and peaceful village of Tayvallich. There is a very strong community spirit and the school plays an integral part in the life of the village. While outside space is limited, the school comprises of one main stone-built classroom and a very recent, purpose built, spacious Pre-5 building. There are current plans in place for the adjoining cottage to be converted to a teaching area.

Appendix 5 shows Tayvallich Primary School Floor Plan.
The school is an important part of Tayvallich and the wider community.

The school regularly integrates the work of local groups into the curriculum and use local partnerships to enhance learning. The school works closely with Taynish Nature reserve, Scottish National Heritage, Historic Scotland and Kilmartin Museum to promote their work and enhance learning. Pupils have opportunities to take part in wider-curricular activities through Mid-Argyll's Active Schools Network.

The map below shows the Tayvallich and Ashfield Primary Schools' catchment areas:

[1] Scottish Government urban Rural Classification 2016, published March 2018



3.9 Pupil Numbers

Pupil projections, and data for 2017 - 2018 are based on data from the 2017 pupil census, a return prepared annually for the Scottish Government. Past pupil numbers are historic data from past pupil censuses. Pupil projections for future P1 intakes are from NHS data taken from children registered with GP practices in the area. This data is anonymised.

Table 2 shows the historic and current pupil numbers for both Ashfield and Tayvallich primary schools:

Table 2:	Ashfield PS	Tayvallich PS
	Roll	Roll
Capacity	38	33
2005-06	9	28
2006-07	10	23
2007-08	8	26
2008-09	6	21
2009-10	4	28
2010-11	8	28
2011-12	11	25

2012-13	13	20
2013-14	10	21
2014-15	6	28
2015-16	0	27
2016-17	0	22
2017-18	0	24
2018-19	-	21

Table 3 shows projected rolls for Tayvallich Primary School and estimated number of pupils for the Ashfield catchment area according to figures held by Argyll and Bute Council:

Table 3:	**Ashfield PS Without placing requests**	**Ashfield PS taking placing requests in to account**	**Tayvallich PS**
Capacity	38		33
2019-2020	10	6	21*
2020-2021	-		24*

*Prediction based on information available May 2018.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Meetings

Meetings were held in Ashfield Primary on Thursday 29th March 2018 (2pm – 7pm) and Monday 9th April 2018 (5pm-6pm) to seek the views of the community on the future of Ashfield Primary School. The meetings were attended by 30 people, including 5 pupils. The Council is grateful to the Community Council for assistance in the planning and publicity for these meetings. It also appreciates the additional information in relation to the Achnamara Village Survey, provided by the Community Council. There were also discussions with the 8 pupils within the Ashfield catchment area currently attending Tayvallich Primary School and Lochgilphead Joint Campus.

4.2 Content of Meetings

Attendees to the sessions were given an overview of information that the Council would be using in this options appraisal, including pupil projections, future development, local services and facilities.

The questions were as follows:

Over the past two years, what has been the effect of mothballing Ashfield Primary School to you, your family and community?

What do you think should happen next? Specifically, in your view what are the pros/cons of the following options?

- *Continue with mothballing*
- *Re-open the school (current catchment)*
- *Close the school*
- *Re-open the school but widen the catchment*

4.3 Feedback

The community consultations generated a range of viewpoints on the future of Ashfield Primary School, which can broadly be categorised into the following three main opinions offered by members of the community;

- Some families felt strongly that the school should reopen as a school with Pre-5 provision for local children.
- Some parents who felt that the current arrangement for their children attending Tayvallich was more than satisfactory and that the use of the school building should now be developed for the future.
- Members of the community felt that they would like to work with the authority should the school continue to be mothballed or closed to organise a purposeful use of the building that would be of benefit to the community.

There was strong opinion that the community did not want the school estate to fall into disrepair.

5.0 THE PROPOSAL AND REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSAL AS CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY ENGAGMENT

Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for two years. After repeated advertising, both locally nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint a Head Teacher or class teacher to the school. Consequently the school was mothballed. Since the mothballing of the school, there are still significant challenges in the appointment of teachers both locally in Argyll and Bute and nationally. In October 2018 there were significant vacancies for both Head Teachers and class teachers.

The school roll has been significantly below its capacity for the last 12 years, and this is not predicted to increase in the foreseeable future.

Whilst the school has been mothballed its condition continues to deteriorate.

The Council is required to consider the future of Ashfield Primary School. The options are explored within this paper;

- **A:** Re-open Ashfield Primary School,
- **B:** Continued Mothballing of Ashfield Primary with the pupils zoned to Tayvallich Primary School,
- **C:** Re-open Ashfield Primary School and realign the catchment area of Tayvallich Primary School,
- **D:** Close Ashfield Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tavyallich Primary School (The possible Proposal).

6. OPTION A: RE-OPEN ASHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

6.1 Community Feedback

There were a range of views on the future of Ashfield Primary School. Some of the people who attended the consultation meeting felt that the school should re-open;

'If there are children living locally, the school should open for them. The option should be there for a school – if parents want their children to be educated here, then it should open again. More families are moving here.'

'School should open again to local families – there are plenty of children who would attend. Fantastic facilities and outside grounds. Feels safe. Children love the playground and the space that other schools cannot provide. School at the heart of the community.'

'There are children who are living locally that would attend. One parent has identified that she has 3 children that she would register if the school was open.'

Several attendees highlighted that to make the school viable we *'Need a pre-school'.*

However, some parents felt that the current arrangements of their children attending Tayvallich was *'more than satisfactory and that the use of the school building should now be developed for the future.'*

6.2 Pupil Numbers

If the school were to reopen in August 2019, the maximum pupil numbers from the catchment would be 6 pupils, taking into account the

placing requests submitted before and since the school was mothballed. Pupils currently within the catchment area attend Tayvallich and Lochgilphead Primary Schools. In addition pupil numbers in the area over the next three years are not predicted to rise significantly. Some families have indicated they would not move their children back to Ashfield Primary as the children are established at Tayvallich Primary; whilst some have indicated they would want their children to attend Ashfield Primary if it were an option.

Table 4: Pupil Numbers

Ashfield Primary	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Approved Capacity	38	38	38
Roll Projection	6	8	8

6.3 Financial Information

The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration is **£115,683**.

The cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard is **£53,000**.

6.4 The Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are stated at Section 2 of the report. Re-opening the school would not adequately address those. Ashfield Primary School is currently mothballed, and reopening the school would not increase pupil numbers.

6.4.1 *Community Impact*

The reopening of the school would enable the premises to be used by the community. It would also be a possibility that the school pupils would invite the community in to specific events. The presence of a school and the facilities/activities that may be offered could make the area a more attractive place to live. Reopening the school may therefore encourage families with school age children to move to the community. This in turn may make the community more sustainable.

'Having an operational school in the village would attract more families to the area'.

'A shame the school has closed – it was a thriving, great wee school. Fantastic fund raising and concerts, community and

support.'

The village hall in Achnamara is in a state of disrepair. Several consultees suggested many options for use of the building if it became a community hub.

If the school were to reopen as an educational establishment there would be an economic impact with respect to the expenditure needed to bring the building up to standard. There would also be costs relating to staffing, and ongoing maintenance. The reopening of the school and the potential relocation of families may have a positive effect on the wider economy of the community.

6.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

If Ashfield Primary School was to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing and education of pupils who are able to walk or cycle to school. Staff would either travel to the school by car, or if they live locally could walk or cycle. There may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The positive and negative impact may balance. In terms of impact on other users of the school, there would be no other impact on their travel arrangements.

6.5 Educational Benefits

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

With respect to outdoor learning community spaces could be used in the school grounds if the school were to reopen. Outdoor learning is provided by all schools.

There would be issues with respect to the current condition and suitability of the school buildings and facilities which would negatively impact learning and teaching.

6.6 Staffing

After repeated advertising, both locally nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint a Head Teacher or class teacher to the school. Consequently the school was mothballed in March 2016. Since the mothballing of the school, there are still significant challenges in the appointment of teachers both locally in Argyll and Bute and nationally. In October 2018 there were significant vacancies for both Head Teachers and class teachers.

The last permanent Head Teacher left post in December 2012. During the next two sessions there have been two acting Head Teachers, followed by a retired Head Teacher who was employed on a supply basis. The education authority has also worked collaboratively with the Parent Council and other local schools in finding creative solutions to staff Ashfield Primary School adequately, however this has not proven to be sustainable. Pupils have attended Tayvallich Primary School from August 2014, initially part time, then from October 2014 full time.

At present, Argyll and Bute faces a significant challenge to recruit teachers and Head Teachers for existing schools. There is a national shortage of teachers and leaders in education, the reality of which has considerable impact on the day to day educational provision across authorities. The Scottish Education Council in a joint paper by COSLA and Learning Directorate (Teacher and Head Teacher Supply, Recruitment and Retention, January 2018) highlight,

'It is clear that it is becoming increasing challenging to recruit and head teachers in many parts of Scotland, particularly in remote, rural areas.'

On 8th October 2018:

- There were **51** Teacher vacancies in Argyll and Bute.
- There were **6** Head Teacher vacancies in Argyll and Bute.
- **36** of the vacancies were in Primary Schools; **24** in small rural schools, similar to Ashfield Primary School.

Argyll and Bute are working with other authorities, institutions including the University of the Highlands and Islands, and the Scottish Government towards finding a solution regarding staffing. However the situation remains a serious challenge as detailed above.

The staffing challenge would have significant impact on an attempt to reopen Ashfield Primary School.

6.7 Summary

If the school were to reopen in August 2019, the maximum pupil numbers from the catchment area would be 6 pupils, taking into account the placing requests submitted before and since the school was mothballed. As a small settlement Achnamara is not identified for growth. Some families have indicated they would not move their children back to Ashfield Primary School as the children are established at Tayvallich Primary. However, others have indicated they would want their children to attend Ashfield Primary if it were an option. The current travel arrangements have been in place successfully for two years.

There are financial implications if the school was to be reopened. The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration is **£115,683**. The cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard is **£53,000**.

If the school was to be reopened, the premises would be able to be used by the community as a hub, in addition to its use as an educational facility. The reopening of the school may encourage families with school age children to move to the community, which may make the community more sustainable.

Should the school reopen, there may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The positive and negative impact may balance.

There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

The recruitment of staff is an ongoing challenge in both Argyll and Bute and other rural authorities. The staffing challenge would have significant impact on an attempt to reopen Ashfield Primary School.

Based on the above factors and considering the reasons for the proposal, with particular emphasis on recruitment, this is not a reasonable option.

7. OPTION B: CONTINUED MOTHBALLING OF ASHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH THE PUPILS ZONED TO TAYVALLICH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Statutory Guidance for the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, in relation to mothballing, states "the maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote." Ashfield Primary School has been mothballed for 2 years.

7.1 Community Feedback

There was a view at the community meetings that mothballing the school for another shorter period of time may be desirable as it gives the community time to assess next steps in the development of a plan to take community ownership of the school building.

'If the school does not re-open for educational purposes, the community would like to look at plans on how the building could be used effectively to support the community.'

'Concern expressed that another local service has been lost – reflecting the recent social decline in the geographical area.'

'Consider extending the mothballing period to evaluate demand for local schooling further and to allow the local community to put plans in place for possible community ownership of the building.'

'Consider mothballing for another 5 years and re-evaluate. Hard to attract families.'

The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a right for community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management. Public bodies including councils must consider such requests and respond within a reasonable timescale to them. The village hall in Achnamara is in a state of disrepair and the community may be looking to the school as the hub for activities.

7.2 Pupil Numbers

Table 2, at Paragraph 3.9 shows the historic, current and projected pupil numbers for both Ashfield and Tayvallich primaries should Ashfield remain mothballed.

7.3 Financial Information

The annual cost when Ashfield School is mothballed is **£5,591**.
The annual transport costs to alternative schools is **£16,246**.

7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The original reason for the proposal was due to being unable to adequately staff the school. Staffing continues to be a challenge for authorities across Scotland. Continued mothballing the school would not alter this situation, however it would not be necessary to staff Ashfield Primary School.

7.4.1 *Community Impact*

There was a view at the community meetings that mothballing the school for another shorter period of time could be an option as it gives the community time to assess next steps in the development of a plan to take community ownership of the school building, should it not re-open for educational purposes. If the community had a facility for activities this could make the area a more attractive place to live, and long term more sustainable. However, mothballing would not address the reasons for the proposal. There would be no change to the current economic impact of maintaining the mothballed Ashfield Primary School. The current cost of mothballing Ashfield Primary School is **£5,591**. The annual transport costs to alternative schools is **£16,246**.

7.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The travel distance from Ashfield Primary to Tayvallich Primary is 8.58 miles. The travel distance from Ashfield Primary to Lochgilphead Primary (Joint Campus) is 9.76 miles. The travel time for this journey is approximately 20 minutes for both journeys. The current travel arrangements have been in place for two years. If the school were to continue to be mothballed there would be no change in the existing arrangements either to staff at Tayvallich Primary School or to Ashfield catchment area pupils. There would be no alteration to the environmental effect which would be neutral against the current arrangements. In terms of impact on other users of the school, there would be no other impact on their travel arrangements.

7.5 Staffing

There are no staffing implications for this option as there would be no change to present arrangements.

7.6 Educational Benefits

Tayvallich Primary School offers a learning environment that encourages sound levels of achievement and provides a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. At Tayvallich Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with a range of colleagues. Tayvallich Primary School is part of the Mid Argyll Cluster, and a smaller local cluster which means that staff can be supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Tayvallich Primary School is part of a shared headship which means that staff can be supported together in a clearly defined way and staff work closely as a team.

At Tayvallich Primary School pupils from Pre-5 to P7 have taken on responsibilities which enhance the development of a positive ethos across the school. Children are provided with a variety of experiences to develop their sense of responsibility, independence, confidence and enterprising attitude. Across the school children are engaged with learning and contribute well in lessons.

7.7 Summary

There was a view at the community meetings that mothballing the school for another shorter period of time could be an option as it gives the community time to assess next steps in the development of a plan to take community ownership of the school building, should it not re-open for educational purposes. The school has been mothballed for 2 years and pupils have settled well into other schools, some parents are happy with this arrangement. As a small settlement Achnamara is not identified for growth.

A number of community members stated that the community would like to work with the authority to assume some access to the school building and develop it to the advantage of local residents, should the school continue to be mothballed or be closed. The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a new right for

community organisations to request the transfer of local assets into local community ownership/management.

If plans to acquire the building were to progress, this would potentially have a positive impact on the sustainability of the community.

There is a financial implication in the continued mothballing of the school. The current annual cost of mothballing Ashfield Primary School is **£5,591**. The annual transport costs to alternative schools is **£16,246**.

If the school were to continue to be mothballed there would be no change in the existing arrangements either to staff at Tayvallich Primary School or to Ashfield catchment area pupils. There would be no alteration to the environmental effect which would be neutral against the current arrangements.

There are no specific educational advantages to the continued mothballing of Ashfield Primary School.

There are no staffing implications for this option as there would be no change to present arrangements.

On the basis that pupil numbers are not expected to increase, that developing the buildings and grounds to benefit the community may be a consideration, that this proposal would address the reasons as stated above and have a neutral environmental impact against the current arrangements, continued mothballing is not considered as a reasonable option.

8. OPTION C: RE-OPEN ASHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA OF TAYVALLICH PRIMARY SCHOOL

8.1 Community Feedback

As part of any future consultation it would be proposed that there will be discussions with the parent body of Tayvallich and Lochgilphead Primary Schools regarding the future of Ashfield School. There was no representation from the Tayvallich or Lochgilphead Parent Councils at the public meetings. It was felt by attendees that moving the catchment area was not an option due to the remote nature of the location, the roads around the area and the accepted direction of travel. The community council then asked for this to be considered. Realigning the boundary for Ashfield School may have an effect on several other

remote rural schools and very little effect on the roll of Ashfield Primary School.

'If there are children living locally, the school should open for them. The option should be there for a school – if parents want their children to be educated here, then it should open again. More families are moving here.'

'School should open again to local families – there are plenty of children who would attend. Fantastic facilities and outside grounds. Feels safe. Children love the playground and the space that other schools cannot provide. School at the heart of the community.'
'There are children who are living locally that would attend. One parent has identified that she has 3 children that she would register if the school was open.'

8.2 Pupil Numbers

Table Two, at 4.5 shows the historic, current and projected pupil numbers for both Ashfield and Tayvallich primaries should Ashfield remain mothballed.

8.3 Financial Information

The annual running costs if the school were to be reopened is **£115,683 which includes** employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration**.**

The cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard is **£53,000**.

8.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are stated at Section 2 of this report. Realigning the catchment area and reopening the school would be a challenge.

8.4.1 *Community Impact*

'Having an operational school in the village would attract more families to the area'.

If there was an active school and the community had a facility for activities this may make the area a more attractive place to live, attract families, and the community may be more sustainable. This proposal would, however not address the reasons for the proposal or the issue difficulty in staffing

8.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

If Ashfield Primary School was to reopen there could be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing and education of pupils who are able to walk or cycle to school. Local members of staff could also walk or cycle to school. There would be an increase in the number of pupils at the school and therefore an increase in staff numbers. There could be increased car usage by staff resulting in a negative environmental impact. In terms of other users of the school, there would be no other impact on their travel arrangements.

8.5 Educational Benefits

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school and rezoning the catchment area, as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

With respect to outdoor learning community spaces could be used in the school grounds if the school were to reopen. Outdoor learning is provided by all schools.

There would be issues with respect to the current condition and suitability of the school buildings and facilities which would negatively impact learning and teaching.

8.6 Staffing

After repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school, the school was then mothballed in March 2016. The last permanent Head Teacher left post in December 2012. During the next two sessions there were two acting Head Teachers, followed by a retired Head Teacher who was employed on a supply basis. The Area Education Manager worked alongside the Parent Council and other local schools attempting to staff Ashfield Primary School adequately. This was unsuccessful. Pupils have attended Tayvallich Primary School from August 2014, initially part time, then from October 2014 full time.

At present, Argyll and Bute faces a significant challenge to recruit

teachers and Head Teachers for existing schools. There is a national shortage of teachers and leaders in education, the reality of which has considerable impact on the day to day educational provision across authorities. The Scottish Education Council in a joint paper by COSLA and Learning Directorate (Teacher and Head Teacher Supply, Recruitment and Retention, January 2018) highlight,

'It is clear that it is becoming increasing challenging to recruit and head teachers in many parts of Scotland, particularly in remote, rural areas.'

On 8th October 2018:

- There were **51** Teacher vacancies in Argyll and Bute.
- There were **6** Head Teacher vacancies in Argyll and Bute.
- **36** of the vacancies were in Primary Schools; **24** in small rural schools, similar to Ashfield Primary School.

Argyll and Bute are working with other authorities, institutions including the University of the Highlands and Islands, and the Scottish Government towards finding a solution regarding staffing. However the situation remains a serious challenge as detailed above.

8.7 Summary

If the school were to reopen in August 2019, the maximum pupil numbers from the catchment would be 6 pupils, taking into account the placing requests submitted before and since the school was mothballed. As a small settlement Achnamara is not identified for growth. Some families have indicated they would not move their children back to Ashfield Primary School as the children are established at Tayvallich Primary. However, others have indicated they would want their children to attend Ashfield Primary if it were an option. The current travel arrangements have been in place successfully for two years.

There are financial implications if the school was to be reopened. The total amount including employee; premises; supplies and services and catering consideration is **£115,683** per annum. The cost to bring the property to an acceptable standard is **£53,000**.

If the school was to be reopened, the premises would be able to be used by the community as a hub, in addition to its use as an educational facility. The reopening of the school may encourage families with school age children to move to the community, which may make the community more sustainable.

Should the school reopen, there may be a positive environmental impact as the use of vehicles to transport pupils may decrease. Conversely, there could be increased car usage by staff which may mean these travel arrangements have a negative environmental impact. The positive and negative impact may balance.

There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children.

The recruitment of staff is an ongoing challenge in both Argyll and Bute and other rural authorities. The staffing challenge would have significant impact on an attempt to reopen Ashfield Primary School.

Due to the geographic location of Ashfield, a very remote rural primary school, it is unlikely that the catchment area could be made more sustainable. A boundary realignment would include pupils who are at present settled in Tayvallich, Glassary and Lochgilphead Primary Schools. Two of these schools are also classified as very remote rural. Some Ashfield families have stated they would not move their children back to Ashfield if it reopened. Although there may be a positive impact in regard to environmental impact and sustainability, this proposal would not address the reasons for the proposal and the current mothballing and with particular regard to staffing challenges and the possible effect on other remote schools, this is not a reasonable option.

9. OPTION D: CLOSE ASHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL, ZONE PUPILS TO TAYVALLICH PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN ITS CATCHMENT AREA

9.1 Community Feedback

The community reflected that Ashfield Primary School had been vibrant and an integral part of the community, and there were contrasting views on the proposals for the future of Ashfield Primary School;

‘Feel that the children get a better education when in schools with higher numbers of pupils.’

‘Village Hall is old and tatty – would be great to use the school as community, as a hostel, a business, a café, art gallery – need to attract visitors.’

‘Needing to send pupils to Tayvallich, which is fine.’

There was a strong sense from the attendees at the pre-consultation sessions that if the school were not to re-open for educational purposes, it should be retained for community use and not allowed to fall into disrepair. The community are becoming organised to enable them to assess whether they could feasibly take over the building for the benefit of the wider community.

9.2 Pupil Numbers

Tayvallich Primary	*2018/2019*	*2019/20*
Approved Capacity	*38*	*38*
Tayvallich Projected Roll	*21*	*24*
Ashfield Projected Roll	*6*	*8*
Total Roll Projection	*27*	*32*
Tayvallich Occupancy	*71%*	*84%*

9.3 Financial Information

The annual cost to transport pupils to Tayvallich School is **£16,246**.
There would be savings to the Council of **£5,591** should the school be closed.

9.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

The reasons for the proposal are stated at Section 2 of this report. Staffing continues to be a challenge for authorities across Scotland. Closing Ashfield Primary School would not require any additional staffing in other schools as the children are already placed within school.

9.4.1 *Community Impact*

It is accepted that while school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, a vibrant community hub could be an asset to a community. Therefore the closure of the school could potentially have a very positive impact on sustainability of the community if this option were to progress. If the community wished to create a community hub, they would require to find a mechanism to acquire the property from the Council and deliver that aspiration.

The buildings forming the school premises are situated within walking distance of the village.

9.4.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The travel distance from Ashfield Primary to Tayvallich Primary is 8.58 miles. The travel distance from Ashfield Primary to Lochgilphead Primary (Joint Campus) is 9.76. The travel time for this journey is approximately 20 minutes for both journeys. The current travel arrangements have been in place for two years. Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel from the current arrangement. There would be no alteration to the current environmental impact. In terms of other users of the school, there would be no other impact on their travel arrangements.

9.5 Educational Benefits

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. There are no specific educational benefits from reopening the school as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of children, however the closure of the school and continued attendance of pupils at other schools allows children to experience a curriculum which is matched to their needs.

Both Ashfield and Tayvallich are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from Ashfield area, attending Tayvallich Primary School are benefitting from the broader rural environment, whilst not moving their learning to a school that is completely different to their home environment.

The co-location of the early learning centre (ELC) and the primary classes at Tayvallich enables a strong transition process between the ELC and school and includes joint early level learning every week.

9.6 Staffing

As in paragraph 8.7 above, there are considerable challenges with securing staffing for Ashfield Primary school.

9.7 Summary

The community reflected that Ashfield Primary School had been vibrant and an integral part of the community, and there were contrasting views on the proposals for the future of Ashfield Primary School. However there is a will that the school be retained for community use and not be allowed to fall into disrepair.

The current travel arrangements have been in place for two years. Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel from the current arrangement. There would be no alteration to the current environmental impact.

Tayvallich and Lochgilphead Schools currently accommodate pupils from Ashfield School, and both schools have an early learning provision. Pupil numbers in the Achnamara area are not projected to increase significantly, and Tayvallich Primary School has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers.

The annual cost to transport pupils to Tayvallich School is **£16,246**. There would be annual savings to the Council of **£5,591** should the school be closed.

Staffing Ashfield school continues to be a significant difficulty.
This option is considered to be reasonable and further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact, community impact and financial impact below.

10. OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

Option	Option Description	Outcome
A	Re-open Ashfield Primary School with its existing catchment area	Not a reasonable option.
B	Continued Mothballing of Ashfield Primary School with the pupils zoned to Tayvallich Primary School	Not a reasonable option.
C	Re-open Ashfield Primary School and realign the catchment area of other adjoining schools.	Not accepted as a reasonable option.
D	Close Ashfield Primary School and zone pupils to Tayvallich Primary School	Accepted as a reasonable option

11. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REASONABLE OPTION: CLOSE ASHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND REALIGN THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR TAYVALLICH PRIMARY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE THE FORMER ASHFIELD CATCHMENT AREA

11.1 Pupil Projections

Tayvallich Primary	*2018/2019*	*2019/20*
Approved Capacity	*38*	*38*
Tayvallich Projected Roll	*21*	*24*
Ashfield Projected Roll	*6*	*8*
Total Roll Projection	*27*	*32*
Tayvallich Occupancy	*71%*	*84%*

11.2 Educational Benefits

This statement focusses on Tayvallich Primary School, which is the school the majority of the Ashfield pupils have been attending since 2016.

11.2.1 *Learning and Teaching*

The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

Tayvallich Primary School offers a learning environment that encourages sound levels of achievement and provides a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The school ethos is very positive and conducive to helping pupils succeed.

There is a continual challenge for all schools to deliver a school improvement agenda and deliver effectively the principles and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The National Improvement Framework priorities include raising attainment for all, and closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence recognise the professionalism of teachers and the importance of this in exercising the freedom and responsibility associated with broader guidance. This means that schools are able to design their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their children and community. At Tayvallich Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review opportunities gained by working and learning with a range of colleagues. Tayvallich Primary School is part of the Mid Argyll Cluster, and a smaller local cluster which means that staff can be supported together, moderation and tracking of pupil progress is enabled and staff work across stage appropriate groups. Tayvallich Primary School is part of a shared headship which means that staff can be supported together in a clearly defined way and staff work closely as a team.

There is a planned programme of development activities and opportunities for quality professional dialogue on an ongoing basis at Tayvallich Primary School. All Teachers have been actively involved in key developments. In a recent curriculum review, curricular frameworks have been improved for Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and Numeracy, Science and Social Studies. The shared headship approach allows staff to work together, not only as two schools but also as part of the area cluster towards improving policy and practice. The Head Teacher is experienced and in previous roles led initiatives at a national level. The Principal Teacher at Tayvallich is part of part of Argyll and Bute's Leadership Network to support school self-evaluation and has taken the lead on specific areas of school improvement.

The shared headship model supports a distributive leadership approach and provides staff with opportunities to lead aspects of the curriculum and make day to day management decisions. In recent years children at Tayvallich Primary School have been taught in two classes composed of a number of children from more than one year group. They benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop social skills, meet challenges and exercise responsibilities as members of a social group. They are able to interact and socialise with groups of children their own age and gender, take part in team activities and move with their peers to secondary school. Pupils are close to one

another and have formed strong social bonds. Former pupils of Tayvallich continue the friendships they made in primary school through their continuous education in high school and beyond.

11.2.2 *Outcomes*

Through the GIRFEC practice mode, meeting the needs of every child continues to be a priority and teachers carefully plan and assess to ensure each child has the opportunity to reach their potential. Careful tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to evidence pupil progress. This includes professional dialogue with teachers, learning discussions with children, classroom observations, assessment and looking at pupil work. Planning for Progress meetings are being further strengthened. These discussions between home and school improve parental engagement whilst focussing on next steps for learning. Where appropriate, intervention is put in place, while working effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure the needs of each child are met.

In the primary classes, standards of attainment have been maintained over the last three years. Most children are achieving national expectations in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. A larger staff, parent body and partner group by nature increases the breadth of talent and interest that may be available to share within a school setting. This applies both in terms of the wider curriculum and within aspects of the curriculum that may be enhanced by staff individual expertise eg PE, language, science, expressive arts teaching. Tayvallich have had community and parental support input in outdoor education, science, health and well-being and circus skills over the past two sessions.

11.2.3 *Experiences – Broadening the range of Opportunities*

Children are offered a range of active, planned experiences which help them develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future. In the Pre 5 Unit children enjoy a range of experiences. Staff know the children well and are sensitive to their individual needs. There is a strong transition process in place between the ELC and school at Tayvallich and includes joint early level learning every week.

Pupils from Pre-5 to P7 have taken on responsibilities which enhance the development of a positive ethos across the school. Children are provided with a variety of experiences to develop their sense of responsibility, independence, confidence and enterprising attitude. Across the school children are engaged with learning and contribute well in lessons.

Staff promote positive relationships at all levels and also through the Young Sports Leaders programme, the impact of this being that children enjoy good relationships with their peers, young leaders feel confident and entrusted to take these developments forward. A 'Respect Me' policy is built into class lessons and permeates the whole school ethos through assemblies and class work on rights and responsibilities.

11.2.4 *Environment for Learning*

Tayvallich Primary School is a well- supported school situated in the beautiful village of Tayvallich. The school is at the heart of the community. There has been substantial investment in recent years. The teaching area for Pre5 has been upgraded. A second teaching area is being developed at present with a target completion date of January 2019. While outside space is limited, pupils benefit from access to a range of community facilities which are in close proximity to Tayvallich Primary School including the village hall, shop and local businesses. The school makes good use of the local woodland for learning.

Both Ashfield and Tayvallich are remote rural schools. Each school is set within a remote rural area (Scottish Government classification). Children from the Ashfield area, attending Tayvallich Primary School are benefitting from the rural broader environment, whilst not moving their learning to a school that is completely different to their home environment. The children maintain links with friends who live in their own village as well as creating links with children from two other rural communities.

11.3 Assessment of Rural Factors

One of the original reasons for considering a closure proposal was due to being unable to adequately staff the school. Staffing continues to be a challenge for authorities across Scotland. Closing Ashfield Primary School would not require any additional staffing in other schools as the children are already placed within school

11.3.1 *Community Impact*

It is accepted that school closure may have an adverse effect on a community, a vibrant community hub could be an asset to a community. If the local plans for the building progress, this would have a positive impact on the sustainability of the village. Formal closure would mean that these plans could potentially be progressed by the community. Although school closure can have a negative impact, the potential use of the school as a community asset could have a positive impact on the sustainability of the community. The community are considering future uses for the building, which may enhance the community giving a focus for activities and events.

The school roll is low and would not be predicted to rise in the future. Achnamara is a small settlement and is not identified for growth in the local development plan. There are no housing allocations or potential developments identified.

11.3.2 *Travel Arrangements*

The travel distance from Ashfield Primary to Tayvallich Primary is 8.58 miles. The travel distance from Ashfield Primary to Lochgilphead Primary (Joint Campus) is 9.76. The travel time for this journey is approximately 20 minutes for both journeys. The current travel arrangements have been in place for two years. Closing the school would have no impact on staff or pupil travel. There would be no alteration to the current environmental impact.

11.4 Financial Impact

The main elements included within a school budget are Teacher employee costs (i.e. basic salary costs plus related employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions plus any relevant individual allowances); Local Government employee costs and an allocation for discretionary expenditure incurred by the school (i.e. educational equipment, materials, staff travel, etc.). Teacher staffing budgets are calculated on an annual basis and within the Primary sector are determined, taking cognisance of the SNCT class size maxima, by the number of classes required to provide for the specific number and age of the pupils in each school. When a school ceases to be operational the Teacher staffing budget is adjusted (at the appropriate time), per entitlement information from Education HR, with the staffing budget resulting in a nil value. As a result of the authority's policy for no Teacher redundancies it is presumed that the staff are deployed elsewhere within the authority and therefore their salary costs

still exist with an increase to the receiving school's budget. This is also in line with the national priority of maintaining teacher numbers. This methodology also applies to the school's discretionary budget which again is formula based. The budget of the receiving school, in terms of any pupils being transferred, will have increased. The figures outlined below take account of the fact that the Staffing and Discretionary budgets have been adjusted to nil.

The annual running costs during the mothballing of Ashfield Primary School are **£5,591**.

The annual savings generated through closing Ashfield Primary School would be **£5,591**.

The costs/savings outlined above assumes all revenue expenditure would cease. This includes non-domestic rates, utility costs, insurances, etc.

11.5 Environmental Impact

Pupils will continue to travel by school transport to Tayvallich School and through placing requests to Lochgilphead Primary School. This will continue.

Steps taken to address the reasons for the proposal.
Ashfield Primary School was mothballed because despite repeated advertising, both locally and nationally and across social media, Argyll and Bute Council was unable to appoint teaching staff, either Head Teacher or Class Teacher to the school.

12. CONCLUSION

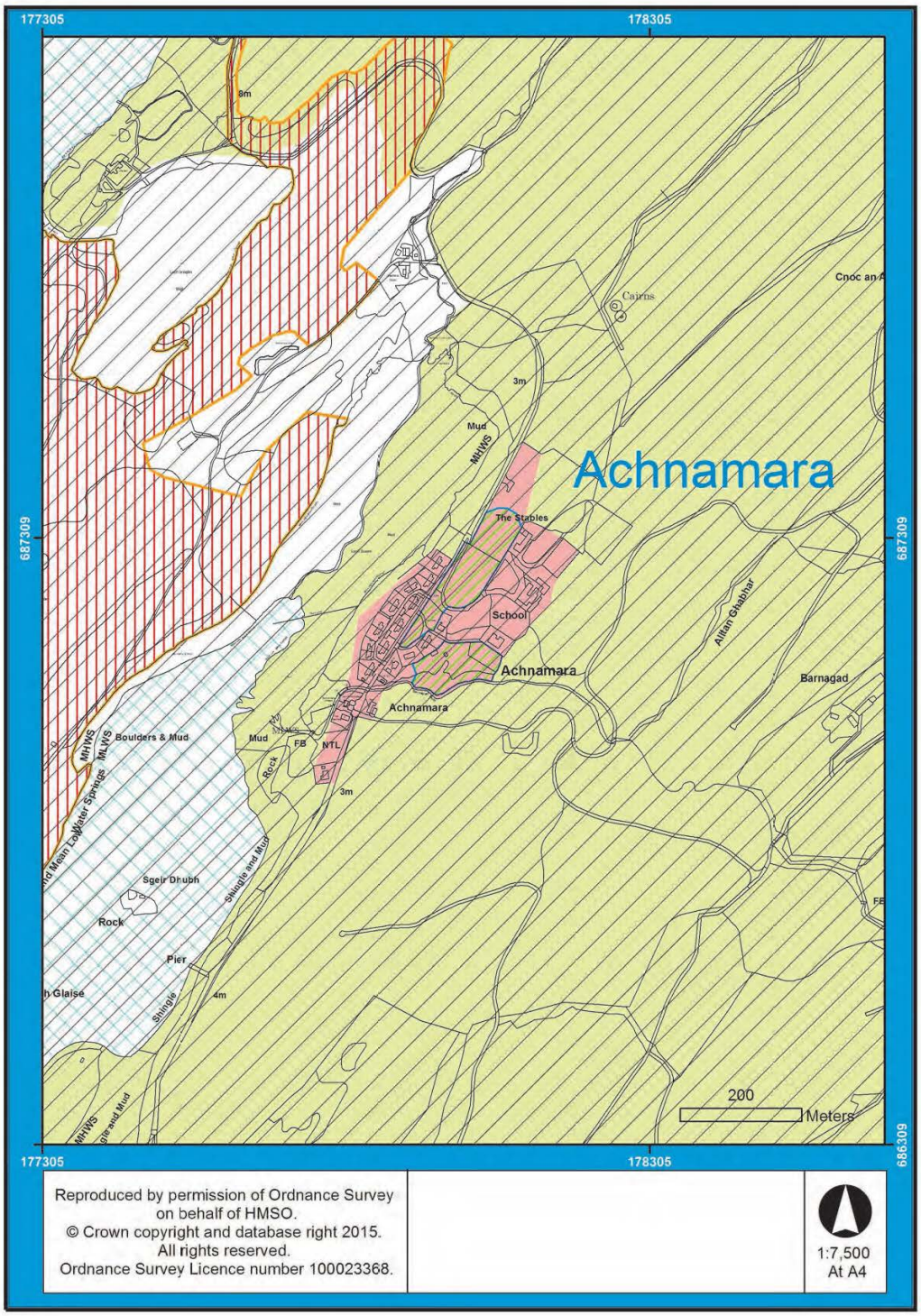
Four alternative options have been reviewed in considering the future of Ashfield Primary School. Information was collated and consideration was given to pupil numbers, housebuilding, finances, the school premises, travel arrangements, environmental impact and the local area and community - which all informed the respective options.

An authority that is formulating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act before starting to prepare its proposal paper. After consideration of the preliminary requirements, as set out in the Act, and the options, and having regard to the specific reasons for the proposal as set out at Section 2 of this report, it is recommended that closing Ashfield Primary School and redrawing its catchment area to Tayvallich Primary

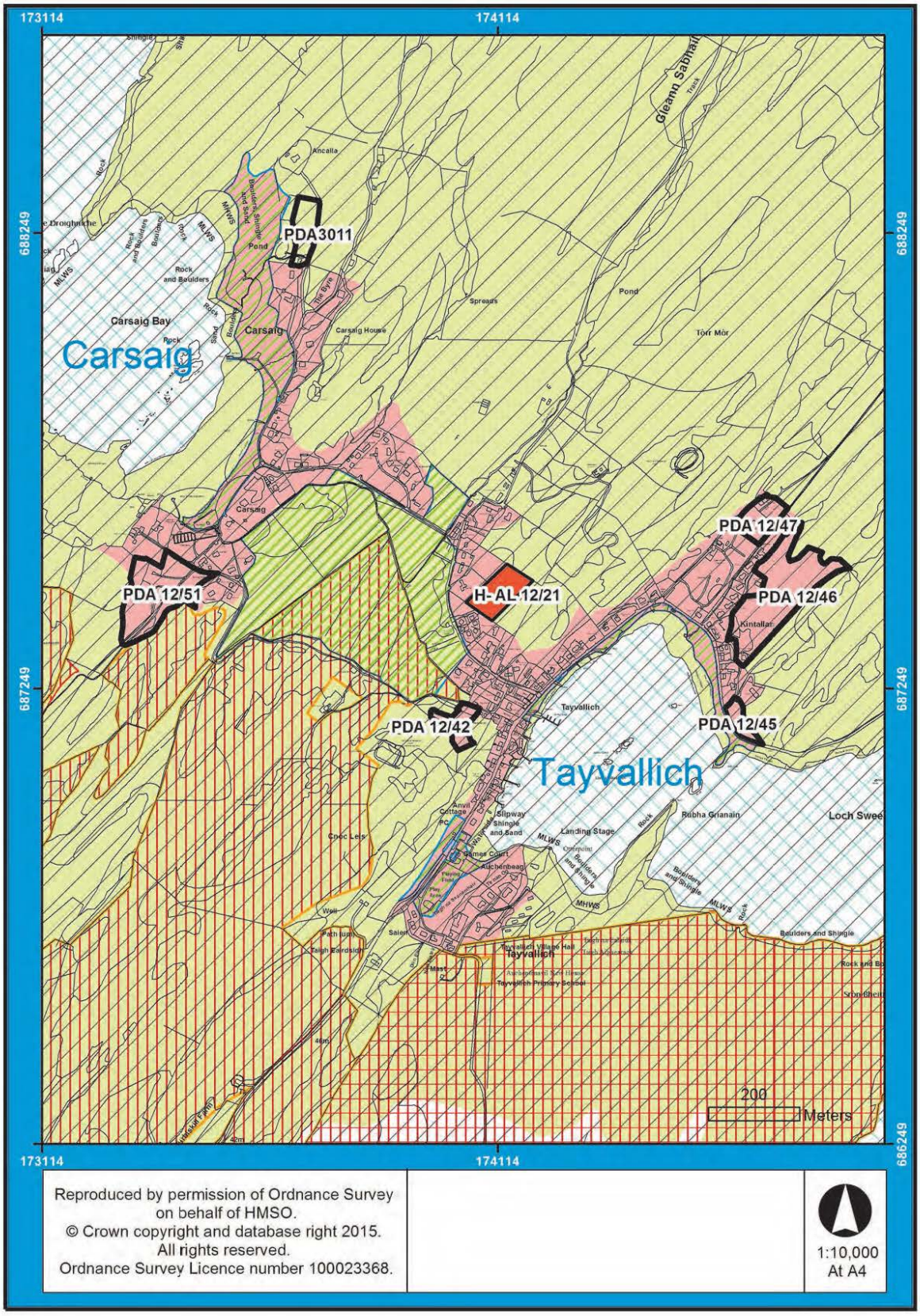
School is the most reasonable option having regard to all the relevant factors and in order to address the Reasons for the possible proposal.

Members are asked to note the outcome of this consideration of the preliminary requirements and that officers will come back to a future meeting of the Committee with a report and draft proposal paper for approval by members which would subsequently trigger the formal consultation process under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Appendix 1: Local Development Plan - Achnamara

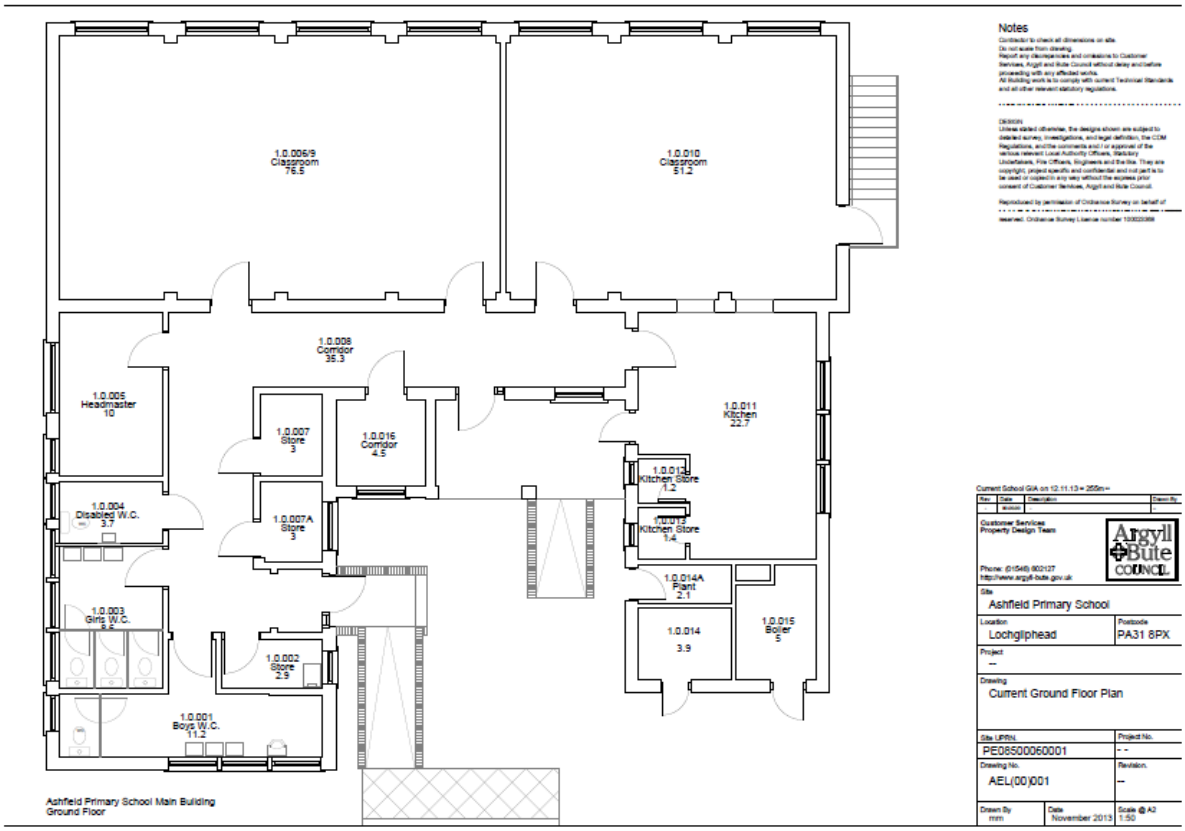
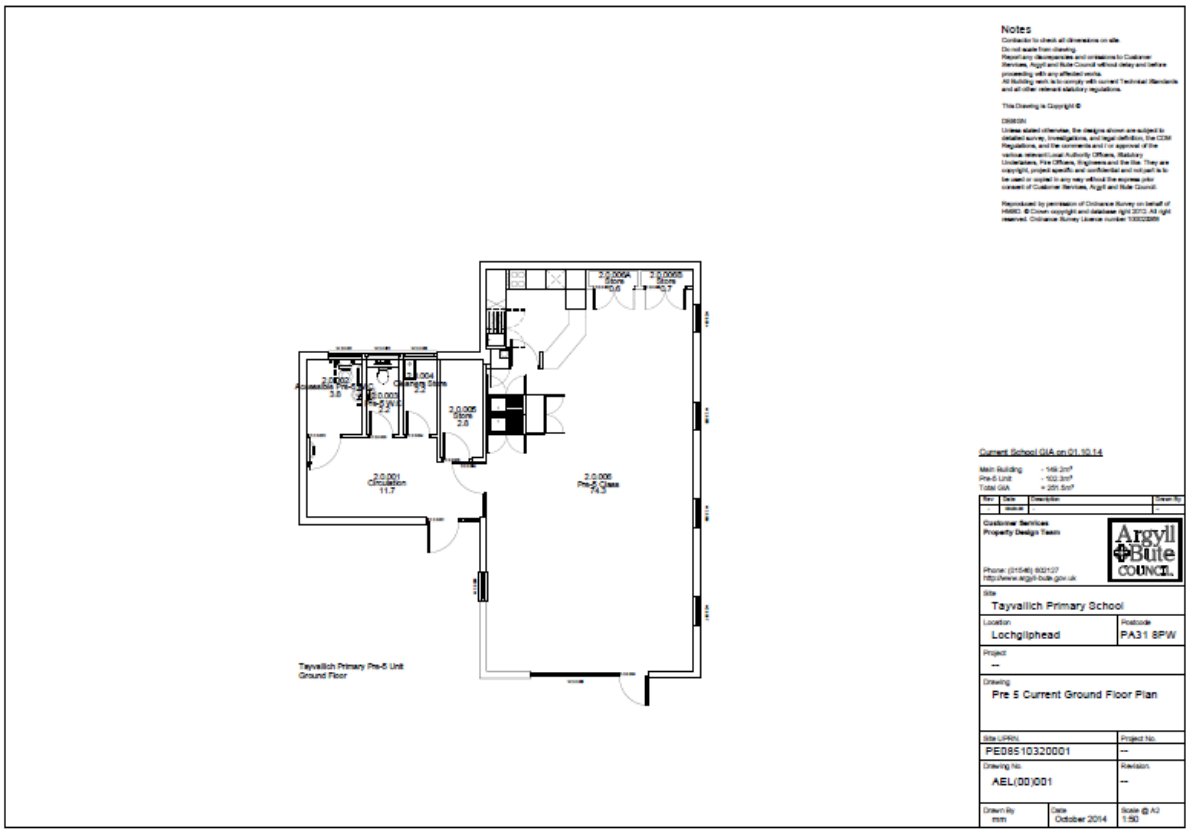
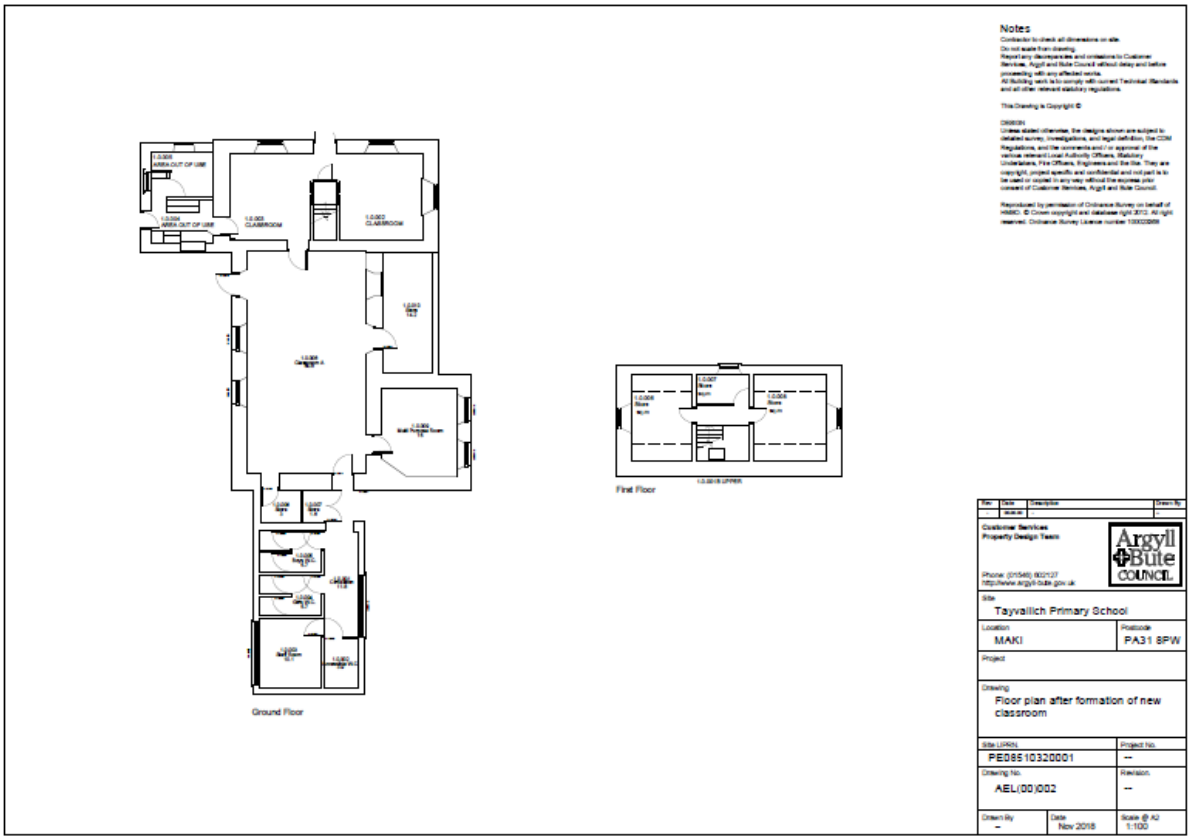


Appendix 2: Local Development Plan Tayvallich



Appendix 3: Key for Local Development Plans

Appendix 4: Ashfield Primary School floor plan



Appendix 5: Tayvallich Primary School floor plan