

MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In response to the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic this report sets out proposals to further extend the mothballing of Minard Primary School and to reschedule the community pre consultation meeting to such a time that this is permissible under the Regulations relating to public gatherings.
- 1.2 It is recommended that Community Services Committee agree that:
- a) The mothballing of Minard Primary School be continued on a temporary basis until May 2021, and that the School premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis.
 - b) In the intervening period, Education Services will undertake a pre consultation meeting as part of the preliminary work and options appraisal process when it is permissible under the Regulations relating to public gatherings.

MINARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 There have been no pupils attending Minard Primary School since October 2018. As such, the School has been *de facto* mothballed for over two years. Three pupils in the Minard Primary catchment area currently attend Furnace Primary School, three attend Inveraray Primary and eight attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus Primary. Of the children who are of pre-school age, there are four under-3s who do not attend any pre-school provision and one child who attends Inveraray Nursery.
- 2.2 The Community Services Committee previously agreed to extend the mothballing until December 2020 and that the preliminary work and Options Appraisal would be undertaken during this time.
- 2.3 Before the community pre-consultation could take place, the coronavirus outbreak caused schools to be closed and restrictions on public gatherings were enforced as part of the “lockdown” measures. It was therefore clear that the preliminary consultation exercise would not be able to proceed as originally planned.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee agree that:

- a) The mothballing of Minard Primary School be continued on a temporary basis until May 2021, and that the School premises be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis.
- b) In the intervening period, Education Services will undertake a pre consultation meeting as part of the preliminary work and options appraisal process when it is permissible under the Regulations relating to public gatherings.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The School Roll at Minard Primary School has declined over the last few years and as of October 2018, there have been no pupils attending the School. As such, the School has been *de facto* mothballed since that date. Three pupils living in the Minard Primary catchment area currently attend Furnace Primary School, three attend Inveraray Primary and eight attend Lochgilphead Joint Campus Primary. Of the children who are of pre-school age, there are four under-3s who do not attend any pre-school provision and one child who attends Inveraray Nursery.
- 4.2 All members of staff from Minard Primary School have either been redeployed in other posts within the Authority or accepted redundancy.
- 4.3 The mothballing of a school is a temporary closure. It does not require a statutory consultation to be carried out as it is an informal non-statutory measure. It is appropriate where the Authority considers that a school is not presently viable, but do not wish to close it immediately in order to assess the prospects of the number of pupils in the area increasing to the extent that the school should be re-opened in the future.
- 4.4 The Scottish Government's Statutory Guidance on the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*¹ stresses that this flexibility to close a school for a temporary period is not used to undermine the requirements of the 2010 Act to consult on all closure proposals. Mothballing is only appropriate for a temporary period, should be subject to at least an annual review and, in most cases, should last no more than three years in total.
- 4.5 Minard Primary School has been *de facto* mothballed since October 2018, we are seeking further continuation of this mothballing and in the intervening period, Education Services will undertake a pre consultation meeting as part of the preliminary work and options appraisal process when it is permissible under the Regulations relating to public gatherings.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Given the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic this report sets out proposals to further extend the mothballing of Minard Primary School in order to satisfy the preliminary requirements under the 2010 Act, including the holding of a pre-consultation community engagement meeting when the UK/Scottish Government restrictions on public assemblies allow it to proceed.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/schools-consultation-scotland-act-2010-statutory-guidance/> (See Paragraphs 63-65.)

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – proposals in line with previous committee decisions
- 6.2 Financial – none arising from this report
- 6.3 Legal – proposals comply with *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*
- 6.4 HR – none
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: none
 - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - none
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - none
 - 6.5.3 Islands - none
- 6.6 Risk - appropriate measures put in place to ensure the learning and teaching environment remains safe
- 6.7 Customer Service – proposals allow all relevant stakeholders to engage for an extended period of time

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04 November 2020

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