ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

EDUCATION **8 DECEMBER 2020**

LUING PRIMARY SCHOOL

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Community Services Committee on the current situation of Luing Primary School, and invite Members to agree to the recommendations outlined.

1.2 It is recommended that Community Services Committee agree that:

a) Luing Primary School is mothballed on a temporary basis until June 2022, and that the School premises will be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis.

b) In the intervening period, Education Services will gather the necessary information, identify all reasonable options and assess those options in order to consider the future of Luing Primary School in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010, and present these findings to the Committee in the form of an Options Appraisal at the June 2022 meeting.

c) The community will have pre-arranged access to the building to promote community functions.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 There have been no pupils attending Luing Primary School since August 2020. As such, the School since August 2020 has been mothballed. The one registered pupil living in the Luing Primary catchment area currently attends Easdale Primary School. Of the children who are of pre-school age, there are two under-3s who do not attend any pre-school provision and one child who attends Easdale Pre School Setting.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee agree that:

a) Luing Primary School is mothballed on a temporary basis until June 2022, and that the School premises will be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis.

b) In the intervening period, Education Services will gather the necessary information, identify all reasonable options and assess those options in order to consider the future of Luing Primary School in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010, and present these findings to the Committee in the form of an Options Appraisal at the June 2022 meeting.

c) The community will have pre-arranged access to the building to promote community functions.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The School Roll at Luing Primary School has declined over the last few years and as of August 2020, there are no pupils attending the School. The one registered pupil living in the Luing Primary catchment area currently attends Easdale Primary School. Of the children who are pre-school age, there are two under-3s who do not attend any pre-school provision and one child who attends Easdale Pre School Setting.

4.2 All members of staff from Luing Primary School have either been redeployed in other posts within the Authority. The janitor/cleaner continues to ensure the school premises are retained on a care and maintenance basis.

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 As no pupils have been attending Luing Primary School since August 2020, it is recommended that the School is mothballed on a temporary basis until June 2022. In the intervening period, officers intend to monitor the situation and gather information in relation to the preliminary requirements with regard to rural school closures under the 2010 Act. In particular, this process will look to identify and assess the various options that are available regarding the future of Luing Primary School. The findings of these investigations will be presented to the Committee in the form of an Options Appraisal.

4.6 In the event of a school age pupil moving to live within the catchment area for Luing Primary School and seeking to attend the School, the present situation is that the School may require to re-open at the next appropriate session if a sufficient level of demand for the School can be demonstrated.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 It is proposed that Members agree to the temporary mothballing of Luing Primary School until June 2022, and in the intervening period Education Services will gather the necessary information, carry out the exercise of assessing the options for the future of Luing Primary School, in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act* 2010, and present these findings to the Committee at its June 2022 meeting in the form of an Options Appraisal.

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

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – None

6.2 Financial – If the mothballing of the School is agreed, there will be costs associated with the upkeep and maintenance of the School premises.

6.3 Legal – The provisions of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* will subsequently apply if the Authority later decide to formulate a proposal under that Act in order to determine the future of Luing Primary School.

6.4 HR – None

6.5 Fairer Duty Scotland

6.5.1 Equalities – None at present

6.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty – None at present

6.5.3 Islands – None at present

6.6 Risk – None at present

6.7 Customer Service – None at present

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