

ACHALEVEN 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 Achaleven Primary School, and invite Members to agree to the recommendations outlined.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The report recommends that Community Services Committee agree that:

- a) Achaleven Primary School is mothballed on a temporary basis and the School premises be retained on a care and maintenance basis.
- b) Officers will prepare a review of the school's mothballing for the Committee's June 2022 meeting at which members can decide on a continued period of mothballing or request officers to begin a preliminary exercise with a view to starting the pre-consultation process to consider the future options for Achaleven Primary School.
- c) The community will have pre-arranged access to the building to promote community functions.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 There will be no pupils attending Achaleven Primary School from August 2021. There are eight pupils living currently attending Achaleven Primary School. Four of these children are in Primary Seven and will be moving on to Oban High School in August 2021. One family is leaving the area. The families of the remaining three pupils have made the decision their children will attend Lochnell or Dunbeg Primary School. Transport will be provided. There are no children of pre-school age registered for Primary One at Achaleven School in session 2021-22.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee agree that:

- a) Achaleven Primary School is mothballed on a temporary basis and the School buildings will be retained during this time on a care and maintenance basis.
- b) Officers will prepare a review of the school's mothballing for the Committee's June 2022 meeting at which members can decide on a continued period of mothballing or request officers to begin a preliminary exercise with a view to starting the pre-consultation process to consider the future options for Achaleven Primary School.
- c) The community will have pre-arranged access to the building to promote community functions.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 It is proposed that Achaleven Primary School buildings be retained on a care and maintenance basis
- 5.2 If there are no registered pupils by the commencement of session 2022/23, it is proposed that a preliminary assessment of options regarding the future of

the school be undertaken by way of an Options Appraisal, in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. Should the school subsequently be considered for formal closure, a statutory consultation process in accordance with the 2010 Act will be necessary.

- 5.3 The school roll at Achaleven Primary School has been small over a number of years. In June 2021 a group of Primary 7 pupils leave, the remaining families consider a school of three pupils too small to be viable. There are no Primary 1 pupils registered to attend Achaleven in session 2021 – 22.
- 5.4 All members of staff from Achaleven Primary School have 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.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 As no pupils will be attending Achaleven Primary School from August 2021, 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 Achaleven Primary School. The findings of these investigations will be presented to the Committee in the form of an Options Appraisal.
- 5.8 In the event of a school age pupil moving to live within the catchment area for Achaleven 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.

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

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It is proposed that Members agree to the temporary mothballing of Achaleven Primary School until June 2022, after which the Committee will decide on a continued period of mothballing for the school or for the Education Services to begin gathering the necessary information, carry out the exercise of assessing the options for the future of Achaleven Primary School, in accordance with the preliminary requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Policy – None
- 7.2 Financial – If the mothballing of the School is agreed, there will be costs associated with the upkeep and maintenance of the School premises.
- 7.3 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 Achaleven Primary School.
- 7.4 HR – None
- 7.5 Fairer Duty Scotland
- 7.5.1 Equalities – None at present
- 7.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty – None at present
- 7.5.3 Islands – None at present
- 7.6 Risk – None at present
- 7.7 Customer Service – None at present

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director with responsibility for Education

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly, Policy Lead for Education

For further information contact:

Louise Connor

Head of Education: Learning and Teaching

Louise.Connor@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Kathryn Wilkie, Education Officer Kathryn.wilkie@argyll-bute.gov.uk