

KILCHRENAN 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 Kilchrenan Primary School, and invite Members to agree to the recommendations outlined.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Report recommends that Community Services Committee agree that:

- a) Kilchrenan Primary School is mothballed on a temporary basis and that the building be retained for two years on a care and maintenance basis.
- b) Officers will prepare a review of the school's mothballing for the Committee's March 2023 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 Kilchrenan Primary School.
- c) The community will have pre-arranged access to the building to promote community functions during the period of mothballing.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 As of February 2022 the Headteacher retires and the Education Service has been unable to recruit a replacement as a result of no applicants. Shared Headship was considered, however, a number of parents made the decision that the roll of 6 pupils, falling to 4 from August 2022 is too small to effectively meet the needs of their children.

Pupils residing within the Kilchrenan catchment area and currently attending the school will be transported to Taynuilt Primary from February 2022.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee agree that:

- a) Kilchrenan Primary School is mothballed on a temporary basis and that the building be retained for two years on a care and maintenance basis.
- b) Officers will prepare a review of the school's mothballing for the Committee's March 2023 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 Kilchrenan Primary School.
- c) The community will have pre-arranged access to the building to promote community functions during the period of mothballing.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Kilchrenan Primary School building be retained for two years on a care and maintenance basis.
- 5.2 If there are no registered pupils by the commencement of session 2023/24, 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 Kilchrenan Primary School has been falling over a number of years.
- 5.4 The school roll declined rapidly over a short period of time, due to families parental choice for a denominational school or placing requests to other schools.
- 5.5 As of February 2022 there are no pupils in Kilchrenan Primary School. Pupils residing within the Kilchrenan catchment area currently attend schools within Oban or Taynuilt. There are no Primary 1 pupils registered to attend Kilchrenan in session 2022-23.
- 5.6 All members of staff from Kilchrenan Primary School have either been redeployed into other posts within the authority or accepted redundancy.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 As no pupils are attending Kilchrenan Primary School since February 2022, it is recommended that the School is mothballed on a temporary basis until March 2023. At which point members will decide on whether to continue to mothball the school or begin the pre-consultation process in line with the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.
- 5.10 In the intervening period of mothballing, officers intend to monitor the situation and gather information in relation to the preliminary requirements with regard to possible 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 Kilchrenan Primary School.
- 5.11 In the event of a school age pupil moving to live within the catchment area for Kilchrenan Primary School and seeking to attend the School, the present situation is that the School may require to re-open at the next appropriate

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/schools-consultation-scotland-act-2010-statutory-guidance/>

session if a sufficient level of demand for the School can be demonstrated and if staff can be recruited.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 It is proposed that Members agree to the temporary mothballing of Kilchrenan Primary School until March 2023, after which the Committee will decide on a continued period of mothballing for the school or for the Education Service to begin gathering the necessary information, carry out the exercise of assessing the options for the future of Kilchrenan 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 Kilchrenan 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

7.8 Climate Change - None

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