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**Rezoning Request by Strone Parent Council**

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**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1. Strone Primary School Parent Council made a formal request to the council in September 2013 to consider rezoning their current catchment area.
- 1.2. Rezoning requests received since 2010 have not been considered due to the advice from the Scottish Government that the legislation was not fit for purpose and subsequently the report of the Commission for Rural Education which recommended amendments to the legislation.
- 1.3. The Council administration has made it clear that they have no plans to review the school estate at this time and the recommendations in the report prepared by the Commission for Rural Education are being considered by the Scottish Government and COSLA, joint commissioners of the report. However, none of the 38 recommendations in the report would prevent us from reviewing school catchment areas at this time
- 1.4. Three requests relating to rezoning of catchment areas have now been received by the Executive Director of Community Services, these being:
- Strone Primary School – Sandbank Primary School
  - Achahoish Primary School – Tarbert Academy (Primary dept)
  - North Bute Primary School – Rothesay Joint Campus (Primary dept)
- This report refers to the first of these three requests.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following consideration at the Bute and Cowal Business Day on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014 that the Bute and Cowal Area Committee:

- 2.1. Considers the request of Strone Parent Council to increase the catchment area of Strone Primary School (PS).
- 2.2 Supports the recommendation that if the proposal be approved existing children and younger siblings would not be required to transfer school for the duration of their primary education as a result of the proposal.
- 2.3 Decides whether the report should be presented to the Council in March 2014 to request officers are instructed to carry out a full consultation on the proposed change as defined in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.4 Notes that on completion of the consultation period a report will be presented to Council detailing the results of the consultation for consideration.

### 3. DETAIL

- 3.1 The existing boundary between the current catchment areas of Strone and Sandbank primary schools is shown in appendix 1. The request by Strone Parent Council was for the catchment area to be increased. Initially the request was to increase the boundary to mirror the Kilmun Community Council boundary.
- 3.2 The decision by Council to close Rashfield Primary School in June 1998, resulted in the catchment area of Sandbank PS being extended to incorporate the old catchment area of Rashfield PS, attached as appendix 2. This has resulted in the pupils residing along Loch Eck side and around to Kilmun expected to attend Sandbank PS.
- 3.3 Strone Parent Council, supported by Kilmun Community Council, feel that this decision was not correct and are now looking at having their school catchment area extended as the school roll has dropped in recent years. The four villages, Ardentinny, Blairmore, Strone and Kilmun within the current catchment area of Strone PS feel that if they are to continue to attract young families to the area, a local primary school is vital.
- 3.4 At a meeting of Strone Parent Council on 19 September 2013 the proposal was discussed and a new proposed boundary identified. Following a further consultation with Cllr Marshall who is supporting the proposal, a map has been prepared showing the proposed increase to Strone's catchment area – appendix 3
- 3.5 At a meeting of Sandbank Parent Council on 12 November 2013 the proposed boundary changes were shared with Sandbank Parent Council and the Head Teacher. The proposal by Strone Parent Council is opposed by Sandbank Parent Council and Sandbank Parent Council has received no evidence from parents in the affected area that they would wish to attend Strone PS.
- 3.6 The area proposed to be transferred contains 188 properties eligible for Council tax, of which 32 have a vacant/2nd home discount<sup>1</sup>. The authority is aware of 13<sup>2</sup> children of primary school age living in the area, 12 of whom currently attend Sandbank PS and 1 who is on a placing request to Strone PS. There are 3<sup>3</sup> pre 5 children known to be living in the area, currently attending Sandbank pre 5 unit.
- 3.7 The Gaelic Medium Unit at Sandbank primary has not been included in the proposal, the catchment of the GMU comprises the whole of Cowal and Bute. Sandbank PS also has an attached pre 5 education which covers both existing catchment areas.
- 3.8 School transport is currently provided to 10<sup>4</sup> children in the proposed area on two routes collecting 3 and 7 children respectively and transporting them to Sandbank PS. It is assumed that the other children are taken to school by their parents.

3.9 The roll of Strone PS has steadily fallen since the closure of Rashfield PS in 1998. The table below shows the census figures for 1998, 2003, 2008 and 2013<sup>5</sup>. The roll of Sandbank PS (not including the Gaelic Medium Unit) increased from 103 to 129 pupils from 1998 to 2003, before falling to 81 in September 2013. Strone PS has a maximum capacity of 121 pupils and Sandbank PS (including the Gaelic Medium Unit) has a maximum capacity of 209 pupils.

Primary School	1998	2003	2008	2013
Strone	98	65	54	30
Sandbank	103	129	124	81

3.10 Both schools have children on placing requests in and out of the current catchment areas. Strone PS has 4 placing request in and 5 out of the current catchment area<sup>6</sup>. One of these current placing requests is from a family in the area proposed to be transferred<sup>7</sup>. Sandbank Primary School has 20 placing request in and 9 out of the current catchment area<sup>6</sup>. Sandbank Primary School has 2 placing requests from within the existing Strone catchment area<sup>7</sup>.

3.11 The local housing strategy has identified two areas for future housing in Sandbank though these are not being taken forward by the Registered Social Landlord's at this time.

3.12 The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park local plan acknowledges that development opportunities in Kilmun, Strone and Blairmore are significantly limited due to topographical constraints. Two allocated housing sites have been identified and there remains some opportunities for small infill housing development which will help consolidate the linear settlement pattern. Development of the site opposite Blairmore Pier will improve civic amenity, tourism opportunities and visitor facilities through provision of open space and tourism opportunities associated with the refurbished pier and improved water transport.

#### 4. Impact of changes

4.1 It is most unlikely that if the re-zoning proposal were approved that all of the children would transfer from Sandbank PS to Strone PS. It has been recommended that if the proposal be approved existing pupils and their younger siblings would not be required to move school for the duration of their primary education as a result of the proposal. However for the following calculations we have assumed all pupils transfer and the roll of Strone PS would increase to 42 and Sandbank PS would decrease to 69.

4.2 Any significant changes to the roll of a school could have implications for the number of teachers required, number of support staff required and potentially the head teacher's salary. In this case, the head teachers' salaries are unlikely to be affected by the proposed changes as the likelihood is that they would both remain within the same banding as they are currently evaluated against.

4.3 Sandbank PS, currently have 4 classes and if the school roll were to drop by 12 this would be unlikely to change.

- 4.4 If Strone PS roll were to increase by 12 pupils to 42 pupils an additional teacher may be required for 3 composite classes. The number of classes required is dependent on both the number and ages of the pupils attending. There are currently 2 classes at Strone PS.
- 4.5 A decrease in the roll of Sanbank PS could have an implication on the GAE received. If the school roll were to drop below 70 it would qualify for the small schools element of GAE. The authority would therefore receive the enhanced support of around £2,500 (annually variable) per pupil. If the school roll dropped by 12 pupils to 69 pupils the amount of GAE received would be £172,500.
- 4.6 An increase in the roll of Strone PS from 30 to 42 could also have an implication on the GAE received. The school qualifies for the enhanced support payment and an increase by 12 pupils would amount to an increase of approximately £30,000.
- 4.7 The proposal also impacts directly on free school transport provision. Facility Services have confirmed that it is likely that the authority would require a larger minibus to collect children living up Loch Eck side. Transport is currently provided by a 9 seater minibus and 7 children are collected and delivered to Sandbank. This would require to be increased to a 17 seater to transport a potentially increased number of children to Strone. The difference in cost between a 9 seater and a 17 seater is £737.57 per annum in leased costs. Facility Services estimate that the increased driver time delivering to Strone Primary would amount to 30 mins driver time x £9.72 (hourly rate + on costs) x 190 days = £923.40. The increased mileage will also increase fuel costs amounting to 12 miles per day x 23p per mile x 190 days = £524.40. The increased cost of school transport based on the children currently receiving school transport would be £2,287.37<sup>8</sup>
- 4.8 Care must be taken when considering the transport costs as we are aware that not all children in the proposed area are currently in receipt of free school transport to Sandbank. Parents may not be able to drop children at Strone so conveniently and numbers may increase. The converse of this may also apply.
- 4.9 A parent within the area proposed to be transferred contacted the Business Improvement Manager directly and although sympathetic to the situation has said that they would not want to transfer their child to Strone as it would be disruptive to their education.

## **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 The proposal from Strone Parent Council to increase their catchment area qualifies as a permanent change to a school as defined in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 5.2 The Act defines the steps the local authority must undertake when proposing a major change to a school. These being
- I. Publish proposal paper, including a statement of the educational benefits of what is proposed
  - II. Set a consultation period of at least 6 weeks of term time

- III. Let parents and the Parent Council know about the consultation and invite responses
- IV. Hold a public meeting
- V. Invite Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to prepare a report on the proposal
- VI. Publish a consultation report

5.3 If Council were to approve the proposal by Strone Parent Council, officers would begin steps 2 to 5. The full consultation report, step 6, would be presented to Council after the summer recess for a decision on the proposal.

5.4 Education Scotland have also indicated that they expect councils to properly reflect on their comments prior to finalising their reports. Failure to do so increases the risk this will be called in by the Scottish Government. Lengthening the timescales reduces this risk.

5.5 If Council were mindful to agree the changes to the boundary of Strone Primary School these changes could be made in time for registration for the 2015/16 academic year.

### **3 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Policy - if the proposal is adopted it will result change to the defined primary school catchment boundaries

4.2 Financial - if the proposal is adopted there could be a potential increase to the number of teachers required at Strone PS. There would also be an increase in school transport costs. There is uncertainty regarding the GAE , the proposal could lead to a potential increase in GAE, though all cost / income will await confirmation of the school rolls.

4.3 Legal - as per the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010

4.4 HR - an additional teacher may be required if school rolls were to significantly increase at Strone PS, dependent on confirmation of the school roll and ages of the children.

4.5 Equalities – none

4.6 Risk – there is a risk that the proposal may be opposed by the public

4.7 Customer Service – consultation will be full and thorough in line with the legislation

**Morag Brown**  
**Business Improvement Manager**  
**Community Services**  
10 January 2014

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – current Strone and Sandbank Primary School catchment areas

Appendix 2 – Catchment area of the closed Rashfield Primary school

Appendix 3 – Proposed increase to the catchment area of Strone Primary School

Notes:

1. Corporate Address Gazetteer, accurate as of November 2013
2. Information provided by Sandbank and Strone Primaries, accurate as of November 2013
3. Information provided by Sandbank Primary, accurate as of November 2013
4. Information provided by Facility Services, accurate as of November 2013
5. School census returns, September 2013
6. Information provided by the Education Service, accurate as of September 2013
7. Information provided by Sandbank and Strone Primaries, accurate as of November 2013
8. All costs provided by Facility Services, accurate as of December 2013