

Skipness Public Consultation Meeting

Skipness Village Hall

10 November 2021

Panel:

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly, Policy Lead for Education

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director

Louise Connor, Head of Education: Learning and Teaching

Jen Crocket, Head of Education: Lifelong Learning and Support

Officers

Simone McAdam, Education Officer

Graeme McMillan, Solicitor

Fiona Ferguson, Directorate Support Officer

Laura Blackwood, Directorate Support Officer

Councillor Anne Horn

8 members of the Public

Councillor McNeilly opened the meeting and outlined the background to the proposal. Mr Hendry advised that the meeting tonight is to gather views on the proposal to close Skipness Primary School and realign its catchment area to Tarbert Primary School. A presentation then followed and questions from the audience were invited.

Question

Why is the date of closure December 2022?

Panel Response

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 legislation sets out the requirements which the council follows and this includes the time frames for reports to be produced and agreed by the council and Education Scotland.

The 1st December 2022 date allows for this process to be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the legislation.

Question

What would happen if there was a lack of capacity in Tarbert Primary School?

Panel Response

There is capacity in the school building at the moment and we look at projections for the next 5 years. The head teacher would manage class sizes and the use of the building.

Question

There is already pressure on the building. Work on the school has focused on the early years provision.

There is concern regarding the class sizes in Tarbert should further families move into the area.

Panel Response

We have projected figures until 2030 and Mrs Connor advised that she would send the roll projection figures to 2030 to Councillor Horn for her information.

Question

Query was raised in regard to the travel time to Tarbert and whether this is within the reasonable limits.

Panel Response

The travel to Tarbert by car is 25 minutes and by public transport is longer as there will be stops on route. This is considered a reasonable distance and many children within Argyll and Bute travel these distances on a daily basis.

Question

A query on the number of children currently living in the Skipness catchment area was raised. A member of the audience advised that 4 primary aged children currently live in the catchment area of Skipness.

Panel Response

Mrs Connor agreed to confirm the numbers as this was not the same as the information held by the service. Update: The number of primary aged children living in the catchment area currently is 3.

Question

What will happen with the building if option D is taken forward?

Panel Response

If there is a clear expression from the Community to take over the building then that is a route which can be taken forward. The council have transferred a previous school building over to the community.

The council would be happy to hear from the community if there is an interest in the community taking over the building and discussions can be opened up in anticipation of the closure.

Question

What is meant by community?

Panel Response

Any group can come forward with proposals and the council will engage with them.

Question

An ask was made for the council to share information with the community on the community take overs which have all been taken forward to provide as this would provide the community with ideas on how to progress.

Panel Response

Yes, this is something which we can do.

Question

Does the Council own the school building?

Panel Response

As far as we are aware the council do own the building, however ownership will be checked in regard to any restriction on the title of the property.

Question

If the community do not show an interest in the building will it go on the market?

Panel Response

Yes, if there are no proposals from the community the building would be put on the open market for sale.

Question

Further query in regard to travel to Tarbert for young children and if this will be standard process if this option is taken forward.

Panel Response

With the distances here there will always be the obligation on the council to transfer children to the school.

We recognise that there is a clear concern specifically regarding young children taking public transport to Tarbert and this will be looked at as part of the process.

Question

Consideration to use building as an outdoor/external learning area.

Panel Response

Councillor McNeilly expressed that Argyll & Bute Council would be keen to progress this however, it would require investment and funding which the council simply does not have.

A community group would have access to other funds which the council would not have.

Question

Were any children consulted in this process?

Panel Response

Yes, those children who attended Skipness and are now attending Tarbert were consulted and this is recorded in the report previous to the proposal paper.

Councillor McNeilly thanked everyone for coming along and for their contribution and advised that should anyone have any further queries they can contact one of the officers here tonight and that the consultation is open until 23 December.

Two meeting attendees left email addresses for any updates and follow up communications.

The meeting closed at 7pm.