

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 27 August 2019

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: School Learning Estate Review

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise the Council of the proposed review of the school learning estate, which will be carried out with a view to adopting a long-term strategic approach to the development and design of the school estate to ensure that it is fit for the future and delivers maximum educational benefits for children in East Lothian.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council is asked to:
- note the content of this report;
 - grant permission to the Education and Children's Service to undertake a full public pre-consultation exercise on the school estate and a comprehensive review of the school learning estate to ensure that it is fit for the future and fulfils the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence;
 - develop a Learning Estate Investment Plan (LEIP), taking account of the Council's Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2018-2023, to ensure that all Council assets and service provision are considered within the learning estate review; and
 - agree that following the pre-consultation and the full Council's consideration of its outcomes, the Education and Children's Service will prepare a set of proposals to be considered by full Council.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 East Lothian Council's vision is that East Lothian should be even more prosperous, safe and sustainable, with a dynamic and thriving economy that enables our people and communities to flourish.

3.2 The East Lothian Council Plan 2017-2022 sets out the journey towards realising the East Lothian vision, delivered through the following themes:

- Growing our Economy
- Growing our People
- Growing our Communities
- Growing our Capacity

The overarching objective of reducing inequalities within and across our communities is being delivered through the following strategic goals:

- Reduce unemployment and improve the employability of East Lothian's workforce.
- Reduce the attainment gap and raise the attainment and achievement of our children and young people.
- Improve the life chances of the most vulnerable people in our society.
- Extend community engagement and decision making and increase community and individual resilience.
- Deliver transformational change and harness the opportunities technology offers in the provision of services.

These goals align with the priorities set out in East Lothian's Education and Children's Service Improvement Plans and six drivers of the National Improvement Framework.

3.3 East Lothian Council is committed to delivering on its vision and ambition for its communities and understands the important role of sustainable, vibrant learning communities in realising its objectives and goals. The Council also wishes to deliver on its commitment to reduce the attainment gap, raise the attainment and achievement of our children and young people and improve inclusion, wellbeing and equality throughout East Lothian's schools. A One Council strategic approach, supported by our key stakeholders and partners is being taken to ensure our learning estate supports excellence and equity for all.

3.4 The Council has responded positively to the significant challenges presented by one of the highest population increases in the country, ensuring adequacy of enabling infrastructure and more specifically provision across our Learning Estate has been a central pillar of work undertaken as part of our recently approved [Local Development Plan \(LDP\)](#). The region's population grew by nearly 20 per cent between 1997

and 2017, the fastest growing council area in Scotland, and is set to expand further, particularly among children and the over 75s. The Council, through careful management of limited resources, has managed and invested in the school estate to create sufficient capacity and respond to unprecedented growth and now needs to consider the longer-term approach to firstly assess and then develop and design an overall school estate suitable for the 21st century and to meet projected population growth.

- 3.5 Working corporately, the Council tested education estate expansion options to identify how the LDP could accommodate the delivery of 10,000 homes in a manner that the Council could deliver to support sustainable and inclusive growth whilst making best use of existing facilities. This resulted in a costed and best value education expansion plan being identified as the LDP was adopted, with an accompanying [Developer Contributions Framework \(DCF\)](#), which seeks to maximise the legitimate amount of financial developer contributions that the Council can recover to finance the school expansion requirements.
- 3.6 In order fully to realise the Council's above ambitions, an up-to-date strategic review of the condition, suitability and sufficiency of the educational estate (and the lifecycle of curricular resources) is required as part of the 2019 Learning Estate Review. The outcomes of this review will ensure that children and young people have an equity of experience, opportunity and access, as detailed in the Education Service Improvement Plan. This process will formally respond to the collated intelligence and data that we utilise to strategically place assets, resources and training opportunities.
- 3.7 The review will take cognisance of the nine guiding principles outlined in the [School Estate Strategy: Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future \(2009\)](#) and lead to a strategic rationalisation of both the Education Estate and the wider Council Estate; to ensure best value in a well-managed school learning estate. The draft 'Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning' (2018/19), published jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA, is timely and very much welcomed by East Lothian Council. The new draft strategy adds a 10th and mutually recognised important principle in the form of 'Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth'.

East Lothian is in a unique position as we are:

- establishing new communities (Blindwells)
- creating new provision and services for existing communities, where there is projected growth (with a focus upon skills development, lifelong learning, employability/training and economic growth)
- developing our East Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2019–2024 setting out how we will continue to reduce carbon emissions that cause

global warming, adapt to changes in our climate, and improve sustainability, including within our school estate

- partners in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Regional Deal, including working closely with Queen Margaret University to deliver an innovation park adjacent to their Musselburgh campus
- 3.8 The Council remains fully committed to its statutory obligation to deliver Best Value by demonstrating continuous improvement in how it delivers services, including the provision of a high quality education service. We are committed to developing a new LEIP (Learning Estate Improvement Plan) which will take consideration of all relevant strategic risks, whilst developing plans for improving the performance of the school estate. This will maximise opportunities for all.
- 3.9 The Depute First Minister of Scotland, at the Education Buildings Scotland Conference, November 2018, announced that a further £1 billion of investment would be available for the school learning estate. This investment is to be available when the current Scottish Government school building programme ends and access to these funds requires local authorities to provide information on the current status, in particular, condition and suitability of their learning estate. An initial information request was made by Scottish Government Learning Directorate on 4 July and an appropriate submission duly returned in accordance with the required deadline of 5 August. This submission provided a status update on progress being made with developing our Local Learning Estate Strategy and references the proposals included in this report.

Pre-consultation and review

- 3.10 Decision making protocols and guidance around the school estate are set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and reflect recommendations made in the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education Report. They provide very clear expectations and details as to how consultation on the school estate should be implemented as well as stating the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders: Council, Education Scotland, Scottish Government, the public and stakeholders in the school community. In relation to the Act, it is important to note that this proposed consultation is an informal consultation or pre-consultation which aims to engage with communities before any formal 2010 Act proposal papers are considered. The Statutory Guidance states“ pre-consultation” can cover a range of engagement with communities regarding a proposal before a formal 2010 Act proposal paper is published.
- 3.11 It is not a substitute for, nor does it reduce any of the requirements for formal consultation under the 2010 Act. However, pre-consultation can play an important part in information gathering and sharing in advance of a statutory consultation. It is often this type of participation which really engages and empowers communities to understand and help shape the proposals that affect them. There are many different approaches to pre-consultation, from an extension to the authority’s regular engagement with Parent Councils to consider concerns regarding a school’s future and

possible options, to an authority issuing a pre-consultation paper on a wider range of possible options for the school estate before refining which of these should become statutory proposals.

- 3.12 Very much in accordance with the way we do things, East Lothian Council will engage constructively and directly with learners and communities, in advance of any statutory consultation. There will be a phase of informal pre-consultation, where we will seek to share the vision for the future of the school estate, and, to engage with stakeholders in the broadest of terms. We will do this by hosting pre-consultation events across our communities in the Autumn/Winter of 2019 as well as other planned engagement activities to ensure the voice of our learners and communities is gathered. All stakeholders will be invited to participate.
- 3.13 We aim to achieve a full, fair and rigorous consultation providing high quality and accurate consultation information and documentation whilst ensuring high standards of transparency. Elected Members of the Council have played an integral part in supporting this work to date. Through the review, the Council will explore how the existing education estate investment plan, approved in the Council's capital budget, can be adapted to create synergies between the growth agenda and 1140 hours generated capacity requirements alongside condition improvements to create fit for purpose environments that support place-making. The School Learning Estate Review will also take account of the revised principles set out within the draft Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy document.
- 3.14 The School Learning Estate Review will also consider whether existing catchment areas are fit for purpose and that we have enough efficient and suitable provision to fulfil our duties to provide education both now and in the future. We will take into account planned and potential future housing developments, projected population changes and the impact of parental choice. Additional Support Needs, Digital Innovation, Getting It Right for Every Child, Curriculum for Excellence, the Senior Phase curriculum, Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, the six key drivers of the National Improvement Framework, as well as Adult Employability and Training will also be considered.
- 3.15 The purpose of the Learning Estate Improvement Plan (LEIP) is to review and implement the broad strategy for the management of the school estate within East Lothian Council to ensure that future investment proposals are well planned and include a robust lifecycle and maintenance plan, which is clearly articulated in the Council's financial and capital strategies and supporting Council budget. There are significant and continued challenges for the school estate in East Lothian. The main challenge involves the rapid population growth due to the large volume of built and planned housing in the region. A sizeable number of schools in the estate require to be extended or replaced to accommodate the anticipated population growth. There is a continuing financial pressure relating to the costs of maintaining our existing ageing buildings, especially when much attention has been focussed on satisfying growth-related challenges. It will be essential to ascertain a fully costed revenue plan to sustain and refresh the school

estate. The condition and suitability ratings of the school estate are due to be reviewed to inform the Learning Estate Improvement Plan.

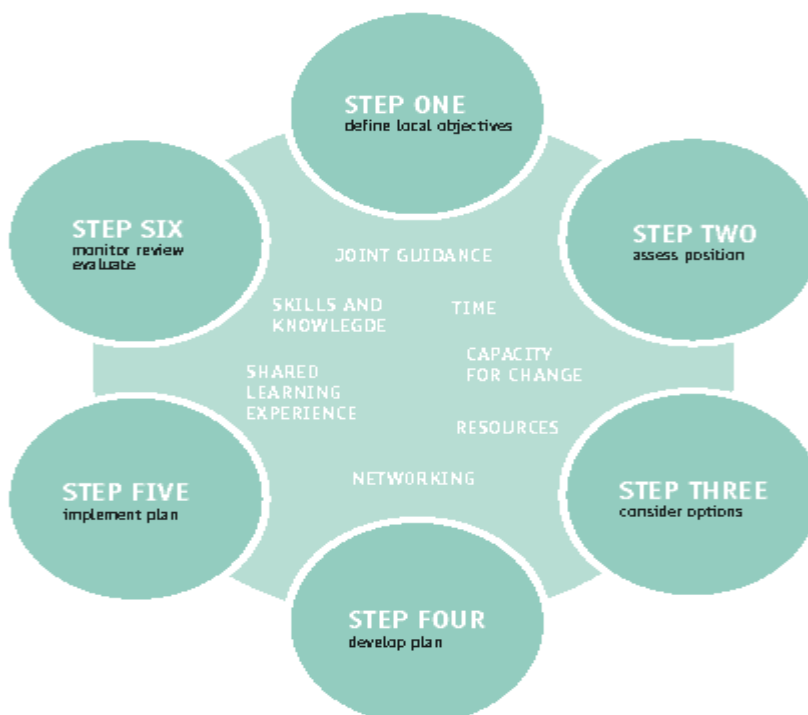
3.16 The feedback from the pre-consultation event will be used to inform next steps. It will be taken into consideration in the formulation of any proposals which may thereafter be prepared. A further, formal, consultation process will then follow, if required, in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014) and the Statutory Guidance issued pursuant to that Act.

3.17 The review of the whole school learning estate will consider a full range of possible options, including:

- Status quo;
- Catchment reviews;
- New school build requirements;
- School merger proposals on a new site involving closure of existing schools;
- School re-design for children and young people within a catchment area
- Any alternative proposals presented by stakeholders during the pre-consultation exercise

3.18 The school estate review will follow the six step process as detailed in the diagram overleaf:

ACHIEVING THE VISION



4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None associated with the content of this report.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Personnel – this work will need to be prioritised, above existing duties, so that capacity can be created and resources can be allocated within existing staffing structures, to enable collaboration and take forward this important review and future planning of the school estate.

6.2 Financial – The review of the school learning estate will influence the council's capital investment plan and long term revenue financial planning arrangements.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Building our Future: Scotland's School Estate
<https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2003/02/16251/17422>

7.2 Building better schools: investing in Scotland's future
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-better-schools-investing-scotlands-future/>

7.3 Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning

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