

REPORT TO: Education Committee

MEETING DATE: 8 June 2021

BY: Executive Director for Education and Children's Services

SUBJECT: Learning Estate Review – Update June 2021

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update to Education Committee on the progress with the Learning Estate Review pre-consultation and the plans for the next stage of the community consultation.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- i. Note the completion of phase 1 of the Learning Estate Review pre-consultation
- ii. Note the impact of the pandemic on the timeline and plans for community-based engagement workshops.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Strategy, all local authorities are required to review their learning estate in order to develop a Learning Estate Investment Plan (LEIP).
- 3.2 The LEIP will outline how the Council intends to realise its ambitions to develop a modern, safe, sustainable learning estate that enhances and supports communities, whilst improving the lives of families in an equitable manner. In so doing, it will demonstrate the role that the learning estate will play in achieving the Council's vision for East Lothian to be even more prosperous, safe and sustainable; with a dynamic and thriving economy that enables our people and communities to flourish. A LEIP is a requirement of Scottish Government and access to any future funding is dependent on a

comprehensive learning estate review having been carried out and a LEIP created.

- 3.3 At a meeting of [East Lothian Council on 27 August 2019](#), Council granted the Education Service permission to undertake a full public pre-consultation exercise, to gather stakeholder views on the condition and suitability of the Council's existing learning estate. The views gathered during the Learning Estate Review pre-consultation will be used to develop the LEIP, which would in turn will inform the Council's Capital Investment Plan. This recognises the unique insight that our communities have and the importance of capturing their opinions, in order to meet community needs and enhance lifelong learning.
- 3.4 A Learning Estate Core Project Group was brought together comprising officials from Education, Legal Services, Communications, Projects, Engineering Services, Building Services, Planning and Development to undertake the planning required for delivery of a pre-consultation.
- 3.5 An update on progress was presented at a meeting of [East Lothian Council on 15 December 2020](#). As outlined at that meeting, the pre-consultation would occur in two phases, as follows:
- Phase 1** - feedback to be sought via an online questionnaire, which would be widely publicised and promoted. The online questionnaire to be hosted through the online consultation hub, offering participants an easy and secure way to engage.
- Phase 2** would follow in May 2021, with a series of online community workshops being organised by school catchment area. This would offer members of the public the opportunity to attend and learn more about the review and our school buildings. Sessions to be arranged to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to ask questions and offer feedback. This was a change to the original plan, which was to offer face-to-face sessions. This decision was taken in response to COVID-19 restrictions on public events.
- 3.6 Phase 1 was completed between 22 February and the 15 March 2021. As planned, relevant information was shared with schools, through social media, with press and with key stakeholders and partners. 380 responses were gathered from across the county. Work is now underway to analyse these responses and to identify key themes and trends. A full report to Council will be presented later in 2021. This will include the data, together with outcomes from the phase 2 community workshops.
- 3.7 Extensive background work has been undertaken to prepare for phase 2. This includes considerable work on the development of a web-based platform to include information outlining East Lothian Council's vision for the learning estate, the purpose of the Learning Estate Review and relevant information on the condition, suitability and sufficiency of the existing learning estate. This suite of information is being collated at school, catchment and county levels. A 'take five' pupil consultation exercise is also being developed to be

undertaken within primary and secondary schools and to ensure that the views of learners are captured.

- 3.8 The core facts for the learning estate (condition and suitability) are submitted to Scottish Government, as a statutory return and provide a snapshot of the current condition of our estate.
- 3.9 Whilst significant background work has been done to prepare this information, the impact of the Council's pandemic response and the need to prioritise the critical health and safety requirements in each school building as they have reopened from the second lockdown, has meant that further work is needed to ensure that the full suite of information is available to inform meaningful community engagement. The project group is also mindful that this term is particularly challenging for school teams with transitions across primary and secondary stages, and the preparations for the Alternative Certification Models for SQA Qualifications occupying significant resource in secondary schools.
- 3.10 Early scoping exercises have also been undertaken to determine the most suitable format and content for a series of online events. These events were to be specifically designed to meet the needs of communities and to allow for interaction with the core information. The Council's objectives for the process, as detailed in the East Lothian Council report of 27 August 2019 were "[to] engage constructively and directly with learners and communities... to achieve a full, fair and rigorous consultation". Online events are less likely to provide this type of consultation and therefore, given that the majority of Scotland has moved into level 2 of the Scottish Government Strategic Framework, it is hoped that it may be possible to arrange some of the events in a face to face format, if Scottish Government guidance and mitigations allow.
- 3.11 Taking all of this in to consideration, phase 2 will now take place at the start of the new academic session 2021/22. This alteration to the plan ensures that East Lothian Council is in line with best practice and learning taken from other local authorities who have already been through this process.
- 3.12 The preparatory work that has already been undertaken regarding the development of online and offline materials will still be used to inform phase 2 and will form the foundations of these events. A programme of intensive communication and promotion will be planned, in advance of the launch, with the aim of encouraging increased levels of engagement.
- 3.13 In the event that further national COVID-19 restrictions are in place at the start of the new session, Council officers are committed to progressing with phase 2 at that time, in order to protect the relevance of the phase 1 consultation and to ensure that the development of the LEIP is progressed.
- 3.14 Following completion of phase 2, all feedback from both phases of the pre-consultation will be gathered, analysed and presented to a future meeting of East Lothian Council.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

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 Financial - none

6.2 Personnel - none

6.3 Other - none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

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