

# STIRLING COUNCIL

## CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE

19 March 1998

**THIS REPORT  
RELATES  
TO ITEM  
ON THE AGENDA**

**EDUCATION**

**NOT EXEMPT**

### **RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF KINBUCK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

#### **PURPOSE**

- 1.1 At the Children's Committee meeting on 22 January, 1998, it was agreed that the proposal to close Kinbuck primary school be the subject of formal consultation.
- 1.2 This report provides details of the comments received on the proposed closure of the school and contains a recommendation for the consideration of the Committee.

#### **SUMMARY**

- 2.1 On 22 January, 1998, the Children's Committee adopted the proposal that Kinbuck Primary school be **closed** with effect from 26 June, 1998, and that the pupils transfer to Newton Primary school as from session 1998/99.
- 2.2 All interested parties, including relevant school boards, were invited to make written comments on the proposals to the Director of Education, Stirling Council, Viewforth, Stirling, no later than 6 March, 1993. These consultation arrangements were advertised in the public press and a public meeting was arranged in Kinbuck Primary school on 18 February, 1998.
- 2.3 The consultative document is contained in Appendix A of this report, a summary of all views in Appendix 8 and a list of all correspondents in Appendix C.

### 3 RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 It is recommended that the Children's Committee confirm the proposal that:

Kinbuck Primary school be **closed with** effect from 26 June, 1998 and that the pupils transfer to Newton primary school from the start of session 1998/1999.

3.2 In recognition of the importance of a focal point for children in Kinbuck village it is recommended that immediate steps be taken to protect the play facility.

### 4 CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 A full summary of the views received is contained in Appendix B of this report with the list of correspondents in Appendix C. It is noted that there was considerable support from the school from many quarters in the form of four broad themes. The issues raised are summarised below.

4.2 The Educational Case

4.2.1 It was argued that pupils at Kinbuck Primary school enjoy a high quality education with motivated teaching staff. It was stressed that not only do they cover the full range of attainment targets within the 5-14 curriculum but enjoy a wide range of extra curricular activities supported by the community.

4.2.2 Whilst not wishing to dispute the quality of education directly nor challenge the excellence in Kinbuck primary school it is not accepted that Kinbuck is sufficiently isolated to warrant building facilities poorer than those available in Newton Primary school which is 3 miles along the road.

4.2.3 Having listened to the issues raised about the education case and having given it very serious consideration it is necessary to state the educational considerations:

- the levels of attainment in the 5-14 curriculum assessment programme are age related. Curriculum and assessment activities are planned to take account of age, needs and the level of attainment. Learning will be more effective and challenging in larger age peer groups as children's performance can be assessed and compared using a level playing field in relation to age, stage and level of attainment
- the numbers of children at each stage in Kinbuck are small (with a projection for 1998/199 of - P1=0, P2=2, P3=2, P4=4, P5=4, P6=7, P7=3) and can be accommodated in larger groupings in Newton. These age related groupings would be educationally more stimulating and challenging

- the within-school learning environment and space for learning and play cannot compare favourably with the new school at Newton. There are comparatively limited facilities for expressive arts physical education, art and design, music and drama) in Kinbuck which impede opportunities for children to achieve their potential in this area. The quality of the learning environment in Kinbuck can, in no way, be compared to the learning environment in Newton primary school

Kinbuck has very poor physical facilities, comparatively limited resources (e.g. IT; curriculum and staff development support materials and an outside toilet for children. Given these constraints however, the promotion of environmental education in Kinbuck is commendable. It is also strong in Newton.

- the 5-14 guidelines suggest that children should develop a @strong sense of fair play, respect for peers and group identity. The guidelines expect children "to enjoy and benefit from competing in sports and games". Due to the limited space in Kinbuck children are not able to play with sufficient numbers of their age peers in team games and in learning teamworking skills on a regular basis. These aspects of the curriculum are planned and assessment in terms of level of attainment which are age-related and require children to be in sufficient numbers to enable quality learning activities and valid and reliable assessment activity to be carried out
- Kinbuck needs extensive work to bring it up to the standards of a modern quality learning environment such as Newton Primary School which was completed in August 1995, at a total cost of 22.3 million

In conclusion, the educational case is very strong.

#### 4.3 Pupil Roll Projections

The community vigorously disputed the roll projections maintaining that a prediction of 7.5 primary pupils for each 10 houses built in Dunblane was more accurate. However, these matters had already been considered in detail by a planning enquiry and the Secretary of State's assessor, while understanding of the Community Council's scepticism, found clearly in favour of the local authority basis of calculation. Even taking into account the governments commitment to reduce maximum class size to 30 for infant classes, the roll projections contained in the consultative paper have sufficient tolerances to invalidate this argument. Among the primary schools in Dunblane there are sufficient places for the catchment areas of Dunblane and Kinbuck for the foreseeable future.

4.4 Notwithstanding the revenue savings that can be achieved 'through the closure of the school the issue of cost avoidance needs to be considered. From the recent building audit survey which was carried out on the school it has been assessed that £35,000 of priority work is required. in the longer term, however, should the school remain open, it would need to undergo major refurbishment to upgrade sanitary and ancillary accommodation. Clearly if the school were to close, scarce capital resources would be more effectively targeted in future years. The inherited estimate for a refurbishment of Kinbuck of £500,000 was challenged, It is acknowledged that refurbishing Kinbuck is not likely to be prioritised in the near future but work is required and the costs of refurbishing similarly sized schools include Gartmore - £424,000 and Deanston - £670,000

4.5 It is recognised that Kinbuck Primary school does service distinct landward communities but there never has been any open-ended commitment to retaining that distinction. The legislative framework enables an authority to consult on catchment areas throughout its area of jurisdiction. The Children's Committee may decide to retain Kinbuck primary school because of the strength of its community role but there is no planning reason to maintain a distinction between Dunblane and the landward communities.

#### 4.5 The Community Importance of the School

At the public meeting and in correspondence, the community importance of the school was stressed. Requests were made that the central question be whether the closing of the sole community facility within the village would destroy the community and therefore was far too high a price to pay for such a small saving. If the Children's Committee believe this to be the case then the official recommendation should be rejected. However, Kinbuck is more than just a cluster of houses around a school and the economic and environmental reasons people have for living there need not be diminished by the fact that the school serving the community is 3 miles away at Newton. It is recognised, however, that a focal point for children within the village would continue to be advantageous and therefore it is recommended that the play area be protected.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The reasons behind the recommendation to close the school are based on the promotion of a quality education service and value for money for each and every child throughout the Stirling Council area. The merger of the catchment areas can be taken forward in a socially inclusive way. The service changes reflect changes in the pattern of settlement rather than vice-versa. Given the fact that neither Kinbuck nor Ashfield is particularly isolated the change does not threaten their sustainability.

## CONSULTATIONS

6.1 Written representation on the proposals agreed by Children's Committee on 22 January, 1998, were sought from interested parties in terms of the Education (Publication and Consultation, etc.) (Scotland) Regulations 1981 (and Amendments Regulations 1987/188).

- 6.2 In accordance with statutory requirements parents affected by the proposals school boards and members of staff have been consulted. Copies of the consultative document have also been made available to the staff of any other affected schools, staff associations and the local MP.
- 6.3 The existence of the document was publicised in the press on 28.1.98 and 30.1.98 and copies were made available through the associated secondary school, the education offices, affected schools and local libraries,
- 6.4 A public meeting was held in Kinbuck Primary School on 18 February, 1998.

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The estimated net revenue savings of the proposal would be £33,057 in a full financial year and £18,014 in 1998/99. Further research into the projected revenue savings as part of the consultation process has identified that in the event of salary conservation being required this would reduce the projected savings to £31,218 in a full year and £16,865 in 1998/99. Notwithstanding this, the projected savings include a full year contingency sum of £8,773 to accommodate potential conservation of salary costs and ongoing maintenance of the building pending a decision on its future use.
- 7.2 Although reference is made in the consultation document to a previous proposal under Central Regional Council to refurbish the school at a cost of £500,000, no weight has been given to this figure. It must be recognised, however, that there is a need to undertake £35,000 priority maintenance work identified in the building audit survey and that longer term there will be a requirement for major capital investment to address sanitary and ancillary accommodation.
- 7.3 Staff from Kinbuck Primary school will be offered redeployment and it is hoped that redundancy will be avoided. All staff will be consulted about their future as will the appropriate trade unions.
- 7.4 Free home to school transport will be provided to pupils transferring to Newton Primary school as a consequence of the proposed closure in accordance with the Council's home to school transport policy.

## **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 See appendix A consultative document

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