

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 21 May 2013

Future of Castlebrae Community High School

Item number	7.4
Report number	
Wards	15 – Southside/Newington 16 – Liberton/Gilmerton 17 – Portobello/Craigmillar

Links

Coalition pledges	P4 , P5 , P7
Council outcomes	CO1 – CO6
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

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Executive summary

Future of Castlebrae Community High School

Summary

The City of Edinburgh Council, at its meeting on 14 March 2013, considered a report on the “Outcome of Consultation Process for the Proposal to Close Castlebrae Community High School and associated catchment changes affecting Portobello High School and Liberton High School”. The Council approved the following motion:

- 1) To acknowledge the strong arguments presented in favour of, and against, closing Castlebrae Community High School; and the concerns expressed by the local community and the “Save the Brae” campaign.
- 2) To reject the officials’ recommendations in the report by the Director of Children and Families.
- 3) Council directs the Director of Children and Families to report to the Education, Children and Families Committee within three months with future options for Castlebrae Community High School including the potential to retain the Castlebrae Community High School as an Annex of Portobello High School until a new secondary school was delivered.
- 4) Council instructs officers to submit a report regarding the potential establishment of a Commission with appropriate external experts to look at viable options for the use of the proposed Annex.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

1. Reject the option of establishing Castlebrae Community High School as an annexe of Portobello High School .
2. Request the Director of Children and Families to proceed with short term improvement action including –
 - the consolidation of the Parent Council;
 - efforts to increase pupil enrolments for session 2013-14 in collaboration with the Parent Council;
 - support the current school cohort to ensure that curricular entitlements are met and that a range of personal and social development supports are in place;
 - a refresh of teaching and senior management staff;
 - consideration of the extension of current functions and the introduction of new activity to maximise the use of the school;

- consideration of how outcomes can be improved for this year's and next year's S1 pupils as they move through year stages, taking into account that numbers may not increase to any significant extent in 2013-14;
- establishment of a Working Group, including a panel of external experts, to advise the Council on options for the improvement of the school's performance in relation to attainment, achievement, attendance, positive destinations, and parental and community engagement, for implementation in session 2014-15 and beyond, taking into account the wider educational provision in the Craigmillar area, local regeneration activity and the commitment to a new school;
- identification of resource implications associated with the improvement programme.

Measures of success

- improved attainment, achievement, attendance and positive destinations for Castlebrae Community High School pupils;
- increased parental and community engagement;
- increased pupil numbers.

Financial impact

Resources required to implement short and longer term improvements will be contained within current budgets

Equalities impact

The recommendations in this report will have a positive impact on all aspects of equalities. The concerns raised in the Equalities and Rights Impact Assessment in relation to the the closure consultation focussed primarily on attendance and wider opportunities. These concerns are addressed by the proposed actions included in this report.

Sustainability impact

None

Consultation and engagement

Extensive consultation with all stakeholders is ongoing.

Background reading / external references

Future of Castlebrae Community High School

1. Background

- 1.1 The City of Edinburgh Council, at its meeting on 14 March 2013, considered a report on the “Outcome of Consultation Process for the Proposal to Close Castlebrae Community High School and associated catchment changes affecting Portobello High School and Liberton High School”. The Council approved the following motion:
- 1) To acknowledge the strong arguments presented in favour of, and against, closing Castlebrae Community High School; and the concerns expressed by the local community and the “Save the Brae” campaign.
 - 2) To reject the officials’ recommendations in the report by the Director of Children and Families.
 - 3) Council directs the Director of Children and Families to report to the Education, Children and Families Committee within three months with future options for Castlebrae Community High School including the potential to retain the Castlebrae Community High School as an Annex of Portobello High School until a new secondary school was delivered.
 - 4) Council instructs officers to submit a report regarding the potential establishment of a Commission with appropriate external experts to look at viable options for the use of the proposed Annex.
- 1.2 This report sets out short term proposals for improvements in the performance of Castlebrae Community High School following the Council decision not to close the school and a process for the identification of longer term improvements by a Working Group reporting to the Education, Children and Families Committee.

2. Main report

- 2.1 The approved Council motion requests a report on future options for the school including the potential to retain it as an annexe of Portobello High School.
- 2.2 Castlebrae Community High School is currently a stand alone secondary school with its own designated catchment area. Changing the status of the school to become an annexe of Portobello High School would have a number of implications:
- By virtue of being transferred to Portobello High School, the delivery of the curriculum at Castlebrae Community High School would either be completely or partly discontinued constituting an effective closure of the school.

- Therefore a new full statutory consultation process would have to be undertaken. Any new proposals would take time to develop; the necessary approval to consult would then need to be sought before the consultation was undertaken in advance of reporting to Council for a decision. The earliest implementation date for any such proposal is likely to be August 2014.
- The establishment of Castlebrae Community High School as an annexe would add physical capacity to Portobello High School and the capacity of the school would need to be increased or, if not, would be very susceptible to challenges against refusal of non catchment placing requests. Increasing the intake would be likely to result in the full curriculum being unable to be delivered in the Portobello building and a significant level of relocation to the annexe.

2.3 Following further discussion with elected members, community representatives and the Head Teachers, there is consensus that there are no educational advantages to be gained from the establishment of an annexe and the consultation process required to do so would result in a further extended period of uncertainty regarding the future of the school. In order to have the best prospect of delivering successful improvements, the school and the wider community require certainty about the future of the school. It is therefore considered appropriate to discard the option of establishing the school building as an annexe of Portobello High School and focus instead on developing and implementing an improvement programme for the current Castlebrae Community High School.

2.4 The improvement programme requires to be considered in two phases. Immediate and short term action is required and is outlined below while longer term improvement measures will be developed by the Working Group proposed in the Council motion, with advice from external experts.

2.5 In the short term, for session 2013-14, immediate action should be undertaken as follows:

- Consolidate and strengthen the Parent Council in order to ensure that parents and the wider community are able to play a key role as partners in the improvement programme.
- In collaboration with the Parent Council, engage with parents of P7 parents in the catchment primary schools with a view to increasing the number of S1 enrolments for August 2013.
- Support the current school cohort to ensure that curricular entitlements are met and that a range of personal and social development supports are in place.
- Refresh the teaching staff and senior management in the school following individual career development discussions with all staff.
- Consider how the level of activity in the school could be increased by extending current functions such as vocational education and transferring other functions from elsewhere into the school, taking

account of the significant levels of community and regeneration activity in the area.

- Review the condition of the building and identify any works required to keep the school fully operational until a new school is built.
- Consider what resources, financial and otherwise, will be required to support short and longer term improvements for consideration by the Council, taking into account the current and projected financial environment.

2.6 In order to develop a longer term improvement plan, a Working Group, reporting to the Education, Children and Families Committee should be established. The Working Group would advise Committee on options for the improvement of the school's performance in relation to attainment, achievement, attendance, positive destinations, and parental and community engagement, taking into account the wider educational provision in the Craigmillar area, local regeneration activity and the commitment to a new secondary school.

2.7 The working group would have a core membership augmented by a panel of external experts to provide advice to the working group as required. Establishing the working group with a reporting line to the Education, Children and Families Committee would ensure proportionate elected member representation. External experts would be invited to contribute but would not be core members of the working group. A lead officer and supporting officers from Children and Families would be required and the working group would be serviced by Committee Services. Parent and Community representatives would be co-opted as core members of the working group. Proposed core membership:

- Chair – Councillor Fullerton;
- Elected members – 2 Labour members, 2 SNP members, and 1 each from the Conservative, Green and Liberal Democrat groups ;
- Officers – Gillian Tee, Director of Children and Families, Mike Rosendale, Head of Schools and Community Services, Karen Prophet, Senior Education Manager Quality and Curriculum, an Edinburgh secondary Head Teacher with appropriate experience;
- Community representatives – 3 representatives of the Parent Council and 2 representatives of the wider community;
- Castlebrae Community High School – Head Teacher ;
- Edinburgh College – Mandy Exley, Principal or her nominee;
- Total East Neighbourhood – officer to be nominated by Mark Turley, Director of Services for Communities.

2.8 Proposed membership of the expert panel: (proposed members have indicated an agreement in principle to participate subject to approval of Committee)

- Ross Martin, Centre for Scottish Public Policy
- Keir Bloomer, Education Consultant
- Alan Mclean, former Principal Psychologist, Glasgow City Council
- Dr Terry Wrigley, Visiting Professor, Leeds Metropolitan University

- Brian Macalinden, former Head Teacher of Castlemilk High School and member of the Cabinet Secretary's working group on attainment
- Lindsey Watt, Head Teacher of Castleview Primary School and member of the Cabinet Secretary's working group on attainment
- Dr Rowena Arshad, Head of Moray House School of Education or her nominee.

Education Scotland have agreed to provide input to the working group following completion of their scheduled follow through inspection Castlebrae Community High School at the end of May.

In addition to the expert panel membership detailed above, the Working Group may also want to invite evidence on the regeneration of the area from PARC.

The chair of the Working Group will have discretion to invite other external experts as agreed by the Working Group.

2.9 Proposed indicative timetable for the Working Group:

- Two initial meeting in June to consider officers' paper setting out current performance data, strengths, areas for improvement and to hear the views of staff, pupil representatives and local elected members and to agree key aspects of the improvement programme requiring advice from the expert panel;
- Meeting in late August with expert panel to hear and discuss their advice (The Chair of the working group may decide to have an additional meeting with the expert panel in light of the volume of evidence which may be presented);
- Meeting in October to agree improvement measures;
- Report to Education, Children and Families Committee on Working Group recommendations in December;
- Final meeting of Working Group in March 2014 to review progress of improvement programme;
- Report to Education, Children and Families Committee in June 2014 on implementation of improvement programme.

All working group meetings should be scheduled for at least a full morning or afternoon and should take place in Craigmillar if possible.

Local elected members would be updated on progress throughout the process by the Head of Schools and Community Services and the Chair of the Working Group.

3. Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

- 3.1 Reject the option of establishing Castlebrae Community High School as an annexe of Portobello High School .
- 3.2 Request the Director of Children and Families to proceed with short term improvement action including:
 - the consolidation of the Parent Council;
 - efforts to increase pupil enrolments for session 2013-14 in collaboration with the Parent Council;
 - support the current school cohort to ensure that curricular entitlements are met and that a range of personal and social developments are in place;
 - a refresh of teaching and senior management staff;
 - consideration of the extension of current functions and the introduction of new activity to maximise the use of the school;
 - consideration of how outcomes can be improved for this year's and next year's S1 pupils as they move through year stages, taking into account that numbers may not increase to any significant extent in 2013-14;
 - establishment of a Working Group, including a panel of external experts, to advise the Council on options for the improvement of the school's performance in relation to attainment, achievement, attendance, positive destinations, and parental and community engagement, for implementation in session 2014-15 and beyond, taking into account the wider educational provision in the Craigmillar area, local regeneration activity and the commitment to a new school;
 - identification of resource implications associated with the improvement programme.

Gillian Tee

Director of Children and Families

Links

Coalition pledges	<p>P4. Draw up a long-term strategic plan to tackle both over-crowding and under use in schools</p> <p>P5. Seek to ensure the smooth introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and that management structures within our schools support the new curriculum</p> <p>P7. Further develop the Edinburgh Guarantee to improve work prospects for school leavers</p>
Council outcomes	<p>CO1. Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed</p> <p>CO2. Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities</p> <p>CO3. Our children and young people at risk, or with a disability, have improved life chances</p> <p>CO4. Our children and young people are physically and emotionally healthy</p> <p>CO5. Our children and young people are safe from harm or fear of harm, and do not harm others within their communities</p> <p>CO6. Our children and young people's outcomes are not undermined by poverty and inequality</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>SO3. Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential</p>
Appendices	<p>None</p>