South Morningside Primary School Nursery

Executive of the Council

27 March 2007

1 Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Executive on the available options for the relocation of the nursery accommodation.

2 Main Report

Background

2.1 South Morningside Primary School is currently housed on three sites: the principal site on Comiston Road comprising the main building and some Temporary Unit (TU) accommodation; two Primary One classes housed at Cluny Church annexe; and the nursery currently housed in the Greenbank Church Hall. The Church of Scotland issued a notice to quit for Greenbank Church Hall in 2006. This originally required the Council to move out by the end of 2006, however negotiations extended this period to the end of session 2007. There is no option to extend this period further and, a number of options have been pursued to ensure the continuation of the South Morningside Primary School nursery after June 2007.

2.2 Reference is made to a deputation to the Executive by the school’s Parent Teachers Association (PTA) on 23 January 2007. At the meeting, the Executive formalised the existing search for solutions to the nursery through its request that options, including the Braids South Morningside Parish Church, be explored and reported to the meeting of the Executive in March 2007.

Options for the Provision of Nursery Accommodation

2.3 An extensive search of premises and land has been undertaken in the South Morningside area to relocate the nursery. This search has also responded to suggestions put forward by the school community. The following options resulting from that search have been examined:
1. The Braids complex’s South Morningside Parish Church on Hermitage Terrace.
2. Other Church property in the Morningside area, including the Braids Cluny Centre.
3. The use of the Braids complex at Hermitage Terrace for the installation of a Temporary Unit (TU).
4. Other land on which a Temporary Unit can be located.
5. The Fairmilehead Parish Church Hall.
6. A TU on the main school site at Comiston Road.

**Option 1: Braids Complex – South Morningside Parish Church**

2.4 Representatives of the Church of Scotland have confirmed that the Church is not available until at least August 2008, and it has not yet decided on its long term strategy for the site and therefore it is not currently available for use by the Council. Dialogue will continue on this option as a longer-term possibility.

**Option 2: Other Church property in the Morningside area, including the Braids Cluny Centre**

2.5 Other church property in the Morningside area is not available or is unsuitable for the nursery, given the Care Commission requirements for internal and external space for 30 children. This includes the Cluny Centre, the Braids Centre, Greenbank Church, and Morningside Baptist Church.

2.6 Additional accommodation is available in the Cluny Centre to supplement the existing P1 accommodation. Unfortunately the accommodation available is not of sufficient size to accommodate the projected intake of 90 Primary One children, which would have enabled a nursery to be located at the main primary school site. In addition, the size of nursery which could be accommodated in the school building is restricted to a 20/20 nursery in comparison to the existing 30/30 nursery.

**Option 3: The use of the Braids Complex**

2.7 Under this option the Council requires exclusive use of space to meet the Care Commission requirements for a nursery. The Braids Church has declined the possibility of providing a temporary nursery unit (TU) and associated external space in the grounds of the Church, because there are other organisations which currently use the halls and grounds.

**Option 4: Other sites for the provision of a TU**

2.8 Other land in the area of the primary school has been examined with the aim of providing a temporary unit for use by the nursery. These comprise land in the ownership of Napier University, Lothian Health and two sites in Council ownership at Balcarres Street and Meadowspot.
2.9 The Balcarres Street site is zoned in the South West Local Plan as a significant area of public or private open space and as a result planning consent for the provision of a TU is unlikely to be granted.

2.10 The Meadowspot site at Myreside Road is designated open space for sports; with both open space protection and playing fields protection, developments involving the loss of open space are not permitted on this site.

2.11 Similarly, the Napier University site at Craighouse is noted in the South West Local Plan as:
   a. a local nature conservation area and
   b. of great landscaping value and
   c. sited in a building conservation area which accommodates a Grade A listed property.

2.12 Planning consent for the provision of a TU is therefore unlikely to be granted.

2.13 The Lothian Health Land at Astley Ainslie sits within a conservation area and would require planning consent for the provision of the TU. The time required to enable design details to be prepared and a planning application to be considered, is such that a TU could not be provided in time for the start of the new Term in August. Access to the site is also unsatisfactory.

Option 5: The Fairmilehead Parish Church Hall

2.14 Presently, Pentland Primary School Nursery occupies space in the hall which is leased from the church. This nursery will be vacating the Fairmilehead Church Hall in August 2007 to transfer to the newly extended Pentland Primary School, on the site of the former Comiston PS.

2.15 As long as the Pentland PS extension is completed within the anticipated programme, the hall is likely to be available for the South Morningside Nursery from mid August 2007. If this is considered to be a worthwhile option, minor works are required to the rooms and toilet areas. The equipment and furniture from the Greenbank Church nursery would be stored from June 2007 until the Fairmilehead hall is vacated in early August 2007 by Pentland PS nursery.

Option 6: A Temporary Unit on the Primary School site at Comiston Road

2.16 Preliminary design analysis has established that the provision of a temporary unit and designated external area for use as a nursery is a viable option. Should this option be adopted, a new system for the management of pedestrian traffic for all the children would be introduced.

2.17 The side entrance to the school will be fenced to allow a separation of nursery pupils and staff from primary access and egress, and for restricted access for particular pupils at the side entrance. A parent’s room and waiting area for the primary pupils will be set up at the janitor’s house, to reduce congestion for the pupils and parents at the front entrance. The Head Teacher may be required to
alter the leaving times of some pupils, and change the accommodation of the P4s, to alleviate the pedestrian traffic at the start and end times of the day.

2.18 A TU could be in place for mid August 2007 (excluding external works to form the nursery playspace which would follow within a few weeks).

2.19 Of the foregoing six options, options 5 and 6 are viable options worth of consideration. The advantages and disadvantages of each is described below.

Option 5: The Fairmilehead Parish Church Hall

Advantages

- The facility is set up as an existing purpose-built nursery and is leased.
- This is the lowest cost option in terms of property costs.
- There is no impact on the playground and buildings within the main school grounds.
- This is the most straightforward to organise.

Disadvantages

- The nursery is 1.5 miles from the school which creates difficulties for parents dropping off children of both nursery and primary age and may mean transport costs for parents.
- The school retains operations on three separate sites.
- The nursery staff and children are separated from the school staff and children.

Option 6: A Temporary Unit on the Existing Primary School Site

Advantages

- The installation of a new purpose-built temporary nursery on the site.
- The main school will operate on two sites and not three.
- The nursery children would be part of the primary school population, for the whole-child experience.
- There would be more contact between the nursery and school teaching staff.
- The nursery would be more integrated into the school site.
- It is more convenient for parents with children at nursery and primary.
- There would be defined access for primary and nursery children.
- There would be enhanced waiting facilities for parents.

Disadvantages

- The existing shelter in the playground will have to be demolished to accommodate the TU.
- There is a reduction in the playground space.
- There is an increase in noise with the addition of 30 more children onto the site.
o Two break times may be necessary each morning and afternoon.

Consultation with the School, School Board and Parents

2.20 Councillor Burns attended the school board in January and March 2007, when the board were consulted on the proposals. On 13 March 2007, a letter was sent to parents outlining the remaining two viable options and seeking a view on their preference. The results of this consultation will be reported at the meeting of the Executive.

Long Term Options for the School

2.21 The three-stream school with a roll of 620, plus 60 nursery children, operates from Comiston Road, Greenbank Church and the Cluny Centre. There is a documented history of the continuous search for feasible land in the area for a new primary school to serve this area of the City. This was planned to remove the need for a single stream of accommodation at South Morningside Primary School to alleviate the challenges of the three-stream school on three sites.

2.22 In order to address the split site issue and continuing use of temporary units on-site, consideration is being given to refurbishment and remodelling of the primary school buildings on the existing site. A preliminary feasibility study has confirmed that it would be possible to achieve all school operations on the existing site.

2.23 This option comprises the retention and refurbishment of the main school, demolition of remaining buildings and construction of a new three storey extension incorporating a separate nursery building.

3 Financial implications

3.1 The comparable costs for the two temporary options are detailed below for each proposal.

Option 5 – Transfer of the nursery from Greenbank Church Hall to Fairmilehead Parish Church Hall

3.2 The existing rental amount is similar to the rent at Fairmilehead, so that no significant increase is expected in the current revenue costs to the Children and Families’ revenue budget. The cost of moving the nursery and a refresh to the building is estimated to be £7k, to be met from the City Development’s revenue maintenance budget.
Option 6 – Transfer of the nursery from Greenbank Church Hall to a TU on the Comiston Road school site

3.3 The estimated cost of the demolition of the external shelter, the installation of the TU and the formation of the external play-space is £90k, to be met from the Children and Families Capital Investment Programme 2007-10. The hire cost of the TU for a 5-year period is estimated at approximately £100k to be met from the Children and Families’ revenue budget 2007-2010. Further work is required to establish an accurate cost.

4 Recommendations

4.1 The Executive are asked to note

a) The relocation of the nursery pupils and staff is necessary because of circumstances outwith the Council’s control.

b) The range of options considered and the resultant two viable options.

c) A decision on the site for the nursery is required to enable work to be completed in time for the start of the new school term in August 2007.

d) The current position regarding long term options for the school.

4.2 The Executive consider the two viable options, the result of the consultation with parents and determine the option to be adopted for the relocation of the nursery.

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Director of City Development

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Director of Children and Families

2007

Appendices
None

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Wards affected
46, 51 and 52.

Background Papers
None
Agenda item:

Report title: South Morningside Primary School

In accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders, the contents of this report have been noted by the appropriate Executive Member.

Without prejudice to the integrity of the report, and the recommendations contained within it, the Executive Member expresses his/her own views as follows:

Signed: [Signature]
Date: 19th March 2007

For information – Standing Order 57(1) states:

“Heads of Department will prepare reports, with professional advice and recommendations, on matters requiring decisions by the Executive:

➢ a report seeking decisions on matters of corporate strategy, corporate policy and corporate projects will be submitted direct to the Executive

➢ a report seeking decisions on matters relating to the special responsibilities allocated to an individual member of the Executive will be submitted, in the first instance, to that member. The member will add his or her own recommendation to it before submission to the Executive. Where the Executive member disagrees with the advice and the recommendation of the officers, the Executive member will also state his or her reasons.”
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