



REPORT TO: SPECIAL MORAY COUNCIL ON 16 DECEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: LEARNING ESTATE STRATEGY

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The report updates the council on the outcomes of recent engagement activity on a new approach to developing a long-term strategy for the learning estate (**Appendix 1**), as approved by the Children and Young People's Committee on 4 March 2020, and at the special meeting of Moray Council on 9 October 2020.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Council in terms of Section III (D) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all the functions of the Council as Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council:
- (i) **considers the outcomes of the engagement on a new approach to developing a long term strategy for the learning estate; and**
 - (ii) **approves the 'Developing a Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate' as the strategic document that will guide the long-term development of the learning estate in Moray.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The draft document setting out the proposals for developing a strategic approach to the learning estate in Moray was presented to a special meeting of Moray Council on 9 October 2020. Members were updated on the planned reactivation of engagement work relating to the learning estate and it was agreed that the outcomes of initial engagement on the proposed strategic approach should be brought back to Council by the end of the year (paragraph 4 of the Minute refers).
- 3.2 Engagement on the Strategic Approach has taken place as follows:
- March 2020 (Pre-Covid) an online questionnaire was issued to Head Teachers, school staff, parents, union and community representatives

seeking feedback on the guiding principles contained within the strategy document. Engagement meetings were planned in March as a follow on to this initial questionnaire, however the meetings were cancelled due to the pandemic.

- November 2020 – online engagement meeting with Head Teachers seeking feedback on the guiding principles detailed within the Strategic Approach.
- November 2020 – three online engagement meetings with Parent and Community Council Chairs seeking feedback on the guiding principles detailed within the Strategic Approach.
- A follow on questionnaire for Head Teachers and Parent and Community Council Chairs requesting feedback on the strategic principles that are particularly important to them when considering their own community and local school context.

3.3 The outcomes of all of the above engagement activity is included in the Consultation Outcomes report at **Appendix 2**. In summary, the consultation has indicated broad support for the approach. All stakeholders are keen to see Moray progress with improving our learning estate, with a particular focus on:

- Ensuring our learning environments support the wellbeing of all learners (and staff and community) and meet all needs to support inclusion/accessibility
- Ensuring our learning estate is well managed and maintained in a good condition
- Ensuring all our schools are equipped with the best digital technology.

The comments received during this initial consultation will be used to inform the development of options for ongoing discussion with stakeholders

3.4 The next steps in terms of engagement on the learning estate will be a series of local consultation and engagement events to consider priorities in each Associated Schools Group (ASG); to develop options for consideration in each ASG; and to agree on a preferred option for each area. A timeline of consultation and engagement will be developed for consideration and monitoring by the Transforming Learning Board, with outcomes reported to a future Council meeting.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The 'Approach to Developing a Long-Term Strategy for the Learning Estate Strategy' will assist the LOIP in building a better future for our children and young people in Moray and growing a diverse and sustainable economy and will advance the Corporate plan priority reviewing and transforming the learning environment.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no policy or legal implications arising from this report.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the legal requirements for consultation on relevant proposals affecting individual schools. Engagement to date has been on the high-level strategic approach only. Future consultation activity focussing on options within Associated School Groups and for individual schools will follow the legal requirements as set out in the above Act.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

(d) Risk Implications

The risk of not agreeing a strategic approach is a piecemeal reactive approach which will not realise avoidable spend on maintenance and new build.

Without a strategic approach it is unlikely that we will be able to secure Scottish government funding towards projects.

If the approach is approved, there are significant risks with a programme of this scale and nature and these will be considered as the options and business cases are developed.

(e) Staffing Implications

There no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

(f) Property

The strategic approach puts in place the appropriate staffing resource and processes required for the development of a robust strategic approach to the Learning Estate, which will enhance the educational experience of young people and ensure the estate remains fit for purpose. It will link with building maintenance plans and the Early Learning & Childcare Delivery Plan and the Moray Additional Support Needs Strategy for Schools.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The quality of the learning environment can impact on learning and attainment by as much as 16%. The condition and suitability of our learning estate and capacity challenges associated with both growth and population decline in some areas give rise to unequal opportunity across Moray.

The strategic approach seeks to address this by ensuring that all Learning Estate buildings meet minimum standards and are fit for purpose.

(h) Consultations

The Head of Education (Chief Education Officer), Senior Solicitor (Litigation and Social Care), Tracey Sutherland (Committee Services Officer), Paul Connor, Principal Accountant and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted and the comments received have been incorporated into the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 'Developing an Approach to a Learning Estate Strategy' establishes the principles and objectives that need to be considered when developing and determining proposals for the future learning estate. Stakeholder feedback on the principles and strategy document has been positive and supportive.

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Background Papers: Detailed consultation responses held on file