

Education, Children and Families Committee

10:00, Tuesday 7 December 2021

Update on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All
Council Commitments	36

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the content of this report.
 - 1.1.2 Agree that a report including a proposed Statutory Consultation paper on the future of GME education in Edinburgh is presented to a special meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2022.

Amanda Hatton

Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

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Update on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Reports on the future of GME education in Edinburgh have been considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee in May 2021 and August 2021. Since that time, engagement between the Council and the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has continued in relation to site options for a GME secondary school.
- 2.2 This report provides an update on the ongoing engagement with the Scottish Government and recommends that a proposed Statutory Consultation Paper is presented for consideration to a special meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2022.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the Education, Children and Families Committee on 28 May 2021 a [report](#) including a draft statutory consultation paper on Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Edinburgh was considered.
- 3.2 The Committee approved the following recommendations:
 - 3.2.1 Note that following an informal consultation, the Council's preferred option for the future of Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh is outlined in the draft statutory consultation paper included in Appendix 1 [of that report].
 - 3.2.2 Agree that the Convenor of Education, Children and Families should write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to seek confirmation whether the proposal outlined in the draft statutory consultation paper aligns with the government's new national strategic approach for the growth of Gaelic Medium Education particularly in relation to the commitment to create a standalone secondary school in the centre of Edinburgh.
 - 3.2.3 Agree that the Convenor reports back to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 24 August 2021 on the outcome of these discussions before proceeding to the Statutory Consultation.
- 3.3 The Committee also approved the following based on a Green Group amendment:

- 3.3.1 That the Education Convener and Deputy Convener write to the Scottish Government to confirm that it will commit to deliver on its manifesto promise for ‘**a standalone GME secondary school in central Edinburgh**’ in order to provide a clear choice for parents in the forthcoming Council consultation on GME secondary education before proceeding with this consultation and also in time to address pressures of overcapacity at James Gillespie’s High School.”
- 3.3.2 That, as soon as the Scottish Government position had been clarified, this would be shared with Education, Children & Families Committee members, Gaelic Implementation Group members and representative parent bodies in advance of the next scheduled meeting of the Education, Children & Families Committee meeting on 24 August 2021.
- 3.4 An update [report](#) was submitted to Committee on 24 August 2021 which confirmed details of engagement with the Cabinet Secretary and informed Committee that a response had not been received from the Cabinet Secretary by the Convener of Education, Children and Families.

4. Main report

- 4.1 A response was received from the Cabinet Secretary on 4 November 2021, which is attached at appendix 1.
- 4.2 The Convener of Education, Children and Families responded to this letter on 24 November 2021 and a copy is provided in appendix 2.
- 4.3 A further response was received from the Cabinet Secretary on 26 November 2021. This letter is included in appendix 3. At the time of writing this report engagement with the Cabinet Secretary in response to the most recent letter continues.
- 4.4 The outcome of the correspondence is that the Scottish Government has been provided with as much detail as the Council can provide in relation to the cost of developing a stand-alone GME secondary school on the former Royal Victoria Hospital site and the Liberton shared campus site. It has been made clear to the Scottish Government that the Council will not be able to deliver the former Royal Victoria Hospital site option unless the Scottish Government makes the site available at nil cost to the Council and is willing to work in partnership with the Council in terms of the capital funding for the cost of constructing a new school, which would be an expectation irrespective of where the new school was constructed.
- 4.5 It is now proposed to carry out a statutory consultation on two options for the future delivery of secondary GME education in Edinburgh, the creation of two new GME primary units (with appropriate catchment areas) in the south east and west of Edinburgh and confirmation of the placement policy for GME in the city. The secondary options would be a dedicated GME secondary school on a shared campus with the replacement Liberton High School or a stand-alone GME secondary facility. If the Scottish Government confirm they will make the former Royal Victoria Hospital site available, then this will be included as the stand-alone option site. If the Scottish Government do not confirm the former Royal Victoria Hospital site is available, then

the statutory consultation paper will include an option for a stand-alone GME secondary facility on the existing Castlebrae High School site in Craigmillar.

- 4.6 The intention is to carry out further informal engagement with school communities on the education implications of these options during the remainder of December 2021 and hold a special Education, Children and Families Committee before the end of January 2022 to consider a proposed Statutory Consultation Paper. If approved, the public consultation period would run from Monday 31 January to Friday 18 March 2022. An outcome report on the consultation would then be submitted to a full Council meeting in August 2022.

Liberton Option Design Considerations

- 4.7 The project to replace Liberton High School is part of the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Investment Programme and has a target date for delivery of 2025. Due to this requirement, the design process for the new school has had to progress while a decision on where a GME secondary school will be located has been delayed. The design process for provision of a GME secondary school at Liberton has also continued. However, the uncertainty of whether or when the GME school will be delivered has been incorporated into the design process and resulted in limited opportunities for design and cost efficiency.

Education Implications

- 4.8 The planned development of the GME curriculum creates different education implications for the shared campus option when compared with the stand-alone option. A detailed Education Benefits Statement for each option will be included in the proposed Statutory Consultation Paper.
- 4.9 If a statutory consultation can be completed before the end of the 2021-22 academic session, a GME secondary school could still be constructed at Liberton by 2025. The estimated delivery date for a stand-alone option on the former Royal Victoria Hospital Site or the Craigmillar site is 2027. The stand-alone option would therefore have rising rolls accommodation implications for James Gillespie's High School and a solution for which will need to be considered.
- 4.10 The new primary units would become operational for August 2023 and the first intakes from the new GME primary units into the new secondary school would be in 2030. It is not recommended to grow primary GME without a long-term solution for the future of GME secondary provision because there is not sufficient capacity at James Gillespie's High School to accommodate ever increasing pupil numbers.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If approved a detailed proposed Statutory Consultation Paper will be prepared for consideration by a special meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2022.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 All the financial implications for each option will be outlined in the proposed Statutory Consultation Paper.

- 6.2 The design to date for the Liberton GME option has been incorporated into the work of the design team who are taking forward the Liberton High School replacement project. This design process can continue until planning application stage. At present, the balanced 2022-2032 Capital Budget Strategy has no provision for the Liberton GME option. The capital budget requirements will be fully detailed in the statutory consultation paper.
- 6.3 It is intended that the GME secondary staffing allocations at James Gillespie's High School will be increased from August 2022 onwards as the GME curriculum is expanded when the school begins to utilise the Darroch Annexe. This expansion will continue as GME grows so that the staffing and revenue budgets required for the opening of a new secondary school are in place at the appropriate time.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Any necessary statutory consultation will be conducted in line with the procedures set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

8. Background/External Reading

N/A

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 Response from Cabinet Secretary 4 November 2021
- 9.2 Appendix 2 Letter to the Cabinet Secretary 24 November 2021
- 9.3 Appendix 3 Response from Cabinet Secretary 26 November 2021



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Clr Ian Perry, Convenor
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4th November 2021

Dear Ian and Alison,

Thank you for your letter of 12 August, following our meeting that discussed future plans for Gaelic medium education in Edinburgh. It was good to hear more about your plans for the future delivery of Gaelic medium education in the city and about the encouraging progress that has been made to date. I welcome your ongoing commitment to supporting the development of Gaelic and Gaelic medium education and look forward to working closely with you and the City of Edinburgh Council in relation to these matters in the months and years ahead.

In relation to GME secondary provision, it was helpful to receive an update on the various issues being considered and on the views you have received from parents and others. I note the council is undertaking a re-examination of potential sites for a new Gaelic school and I would appreciate the Council continuing to keep my officials updated on this.

There are of course a range of detailed and significant factors to take into account, including in relation to the viability of individual sites and value for money considerations. It is right that this detail is initially considered by Scottish Government officials and Council officers and I have asked my officials to make contact in the coming days. I recognise that planning for GME in Edinburgh is an urgent matter and I hope that these discussions at official and officer level can proceed soon, in order to support decisions which will assist with the progress we both need to make in relation to this matter.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours Sincerely,

Shirley-Anne Somerville

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Dear Shirley-Anne

Thank you for engaging with us in the important discussion regarding the future development of Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh. I think that we both appreciate how important this work is in the educational and cultural life of the city, and in Scotland. Equally, we are both sensitive to the complexities inherent in the various options that are being developed and proposed.

As you are aware we were carrying out a more detailed assessment of the Fettes Police Headquarters and the former Royal Victoria Hospital sites. After discussions with Police Scotland we have ruled out the Fettes site because it will not be available in the timescale to which we are working. Following discussions with Lothian Health we established that the former Royal Victoria Hospital site is available for development but there are two constraining factors which are highlighted below.

The first is the timescale.

Scottish Water are currently on the site carrying out significant infrastructure works which will continue for approximately another 12 months. This will obviously extend the timescale for the building of a new school, see below for an initial estimate of the timescales involved to construction.

Scottish Water complete works – 2022
Agreement for land transfer and associated funding – 2022
Concept Design – 2023
Detailed Design – 2024
Construction – 2025 & 2026
New School Opening – 2027

The estimated completion time for building the new school on the Liberton site is 2025. Extending the timescale for delivery of a new school will increase accommodation pressures at James Gillespies High School. Our present estimate is that the school will be beyond capacity by 2025 meaning if we extended the timescale it would lead to overcrowding which could adversely affect the quality of education.

The second factor is Finance.

NHS have confirmed the capital receipt from the Royal Victoria Hospital site disposal is expected to be part of the funding package for the Western General Masterplan. Therefore, if this site is to be used for a GME secondary school the Scottish Government would have to be involved in agreeing the site can be transferred to the Council and that agreement would need to include meeting the funding gap which would then exist in the Western General Masterplan funding package. The process to secure this agreement would need to be concluded expeditiously otherwise it will be an added pressure on the timescales identified above.

The likelihood is that this option, mainly due to the cost of acquiring the site and additional building costs, would amount to between £20-£25m more than the Liberton option for a new school.

Assuming the level of GME capital grant provided by the government for building the new school is similar irrespective of where it is constructed then this estimate of £20-£25m is the additional funding the Government would need to provide in order to make this option work (bearing in mind this should be index linked to recognise rising costs). If the capital grant is not forthcoming then a GME secondary school, irrespective of the site, becomes undeliverable because the Council does not have the capital funding to deliver a GME secondary school by itself.

However, at this point I must bring to your attention that we are still of the opinion the best educational option for the development of Gaelic is the co-located campus we are proposing for the Liberton site for all the reasons we have outlined in our previous correspondence and discussions.

We are planning to bring a report to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2021. This report will identify the council sites that are available. It will offer outline costs, with an appraisal of each option, and I will ask committee to consider starting the statutory consultative process with the Gaelic and school communities. Consequently, in order to allow the officials time to prepare a report including recommendations for the content of the statutory consultation, we please need an answer as soon as possible as to whether the Scottish Government is willing to make the former Royal Victoria Hospital site and the extra funding required to deliver a GME secondary school at that location available to the Council. .

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible

Kind regards

Cllr Ian Perry

Convener of Education, Children and Families



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Cllr Ian Perry,
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26 November 2021

Dear Cllr Dickie and Cllr Perry

Thank you for your letter of 25 November.

I welcome the aim of seeking to make progress with these matters by providing additional information and some estimates of cost in relation to building a new GME school in Edinburgh. This is helpful. However, the Scottish Government cannot commit to funding the building of the new GME school without greater detail on the total anticipated costs of proposed sites, and how these have been arrived at. We need to apply a range of value for money tests in the use of public money and therefore need to see greater detail on overall projected costs before making any commitment to any particular site.

I note the constraints you have outlined in relation to the Royal Victoria site in terms of timescales and additional costs. I note that you have now discounted the Fettes Police Headquarters site due to this not being available within an appropriate timescale. I also note that you are still of the opinion that the best educational option for the development of Gaelic is the co-located campus you are proposing for the Liberton site. Can you confirm that there are no other potential sites in central Edinburgh which in your view could be suitable for the new school and represent value for money?

I am keen that we can continue to make progress on identifying a suitable site as soon as possible. I look forward to your more detailed response on financial projections for both sites and how your indicative figures have been arrived at.

Yours sincerely

SHIRLEY-ANN SOMERVILLE

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