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By email

04 03 2022

A chàirdean

Re: follow up to Education, Children and Families Committee meeting 1 March 2022

Many thanks to you all for taking the time to listen to our deputation and for your thoughtful questions at the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 1 March 2022.

In terms of the discussion, we welcome the Council's commitment to the growth of the GME curriculum at Darroch as well as the announcement that instruction has been issued for a new Depute Head Teacher to be appointed at James Gillespie's High School as part of the agreement to build the GME staffing team. We are also very supportive of plans to engage with GME families and we offer our assistance in this wherever is appropriate.

In terms of overall timescales, we would appreciate further information here, especially as there are many aspects requiring exploration, such as sites for a new GME high school, the development of primary provision, clarity around financial support and plans for engagement with GME families.

Noting the discussion regarding a catchment review, we are aware that any such proposal would apply to James Gillespie's High School. However, we would like to remind the Council that in terms of GME, there is currently no alternative provision for GME at secondary level for families in Edinburgh and the Lothians who seek to access this educational option for their children. We therefore seek assurances that GME pupils at JGHS would not be affected by a catchment review until a guaranteed, sustainable, long-term alternative for secondary school provision is available.

Regarding discussion around Liberton as an option, we would highlight the comment made that the Council 'does not have an option that everyone universally accepts' as though there were several options presented in the last informal consultation of 2020. This is not the case; there has been no consultation around any other site but Liberton. Until further information is available on other sites and accompanying assessment of these, families are simply unable to make an informed choice. We therefore welcome the note in the report to

look at other sites, including for example Castlebrae (which was proposed by the Council but which has not been included in any informal consultation).

On this note, we request further information around Darroch as this could feasibly be a medium-term solution, supporting the development of GME and establishing a larger cohort of GME pupils prior to the creation of a GME high school. Or, could the Council look to Darroch as a potential stand-alone GME school in its own right, given that it already has the established links with an EME school, a criteria the Council has highlighted throughout the process, and offers a more central location.

As noted in our deputation, assessment of options should take into account not only location, transportation and the size of the site, but also to consider staffing, curriculum and immersion.

We appreciate the Council's comments regarding the need for greater clarification from the Scottish Government in order to progress. As you know, we have written to the Cabinet Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville to request further information and we attach this letter.

We look forward to working with you.

Le dùrachdan

Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)