

Consultation proposal by Fife Council

Report by HM Inspectors, Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to establish a new 600 roll secondary school on the site of the Windmill Road playing fields and rezone the existing catchment area to the site of the new school. On completion of the proposed new school, Viewforth High School would close.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

Introduction

Fife Council proposes to:

- establish a new 600 roll secondary school on the site of the Windmill Road playing fields in Kirkcaldy;
- rezone the existing catchment area of Viewforth High School to the proposed new school; and
- on completion of the proposed new school close Viewforth High School.

1.1 The report from HM Inspectors is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.2 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 6 June 2013 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related

consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;

- consideration of further representations made directly to HM Inspectors on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the site of Dysart Primary School, Gallatown Nursery School, Kirkcaldy North Primary School, Pathhead Primary School, Rosslyn School, Sinclairtown Primary School and Viewforth High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.3 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Fife Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 The council consulted with a wide range of stakeholders on its proposal. Stakeholders were invited to attend public meetings on 6 and 12 June 2013. Notices were placed in local newspapers, primary schools, nursery schools, Rosslyn School, libraries and local council offices. In addition, Viewforth High School, cluster primary and nursery schools publicised the consultation process with newsletters and posters. Information was displayed in each establishment and the Groupcall parent messaging system was used wherever possible to increase awareness of the proposal. The proposal paper was made available at the Fife Council Education and Learning Directorate Headquarters, Rothesay House, Glenrothes and was available on the Fife Council website. Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were generally satisfied with the consultation process. Other stakeholders including S1-S6 pupils from Viewforth High School and P4-P7 pupils of primary schools in the Viewforth High School catchment area were also consulted, as were the chairpersons of their Parent Councils.

2.3 The general feeling of those attending the public meetings was that the proposal would bring significantly enhanced educational facilities to the East Kirkcaldy area for both the young people and the local community. However, there were a few issues raised by attendees. Significant support was voiced to retain

Viewforth High School as the name of the new school. Parents and local residents felt this would retain the heritage of Viewforth High School and build on its present reputation. Local residents living near the site of the new school expressed concerns as to the impact the proposed new school would have on their local environment.

2.4 Almost all children and young people with whom HM Inspectors spoke and those who had been consulted were very positive about the proposal. Young people at Viewforth High School particularly welcomed the opportunity to have a custom built school fit for the 21st century. They particularly welcomed improved information and communications technology (ICT), social spaces and enhanced sports facilities which they and the local community could use outwith school hours. They also welcomed the fact that the school would be 'greener' and disability compliant. They felt this would give equal opportunity to all those with mobility problems who could not presently attend Viewforth High School. All young people interviewed strongly expressed the wish for the proposed new school to be called Viewforth High School. All appreciated that the new school would still be a small secondary school which would help it retain the 'family' ethos which was said to exist at Viewforth High School. A few young people expressed concerns as to the impact the proposed new school would have on local residents living near the new site. Children attending cluster schools were very positive about the proposal. Again a few expressed concerns about the impact on local residents living near the new site.

2.5 Staff from all establishments who met with HM Inspectors were in favour of the proposal and felt it would enhance the learning opportunities for young people and the local community. All staff felt it was important to retain Viewforth High School as the new school's name. Viewforth High School staff wished they had had more opportunities to comment on the proposed new school design, but appreciated this process was on-going. They expressed concern that all staff may not automatically transfer to the new school. All cluster school staff were very positive about the proposal and its potential positive impact on the local community. Staff at Rosslyn School strongly expressed their disappointment that there was not a facility for their special school within the proposal. They acknowledged that as a result of accessibility issues in the current accommodation at Viewforth High School, it has not been possible for children from Rosslyn to benefit from liaison visits. Staff hoped that there would be potential for visits of their children to the proposed new school as part of the curriculum.

2.6 Parents who met with HM Inspectors were very positive about the proposal. They felt it would enhance the learning opportunities for their children and be an asset to the local community. They strongly expressed the view that Viewforth High School should be the name of the new school. A few parents were disappointed that their children would have a longer walk to the new school.

2.7 Members of the wider community, who attended the public meeting, were generally positive about the proposal. Their key concerns were that they wanted the name of Viewforth High School to be retained and, for those residents living near to the new site, the impact on their local environment.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The proposal by Fife Council to establish a new 600 roll secondary school on the site of the Windmill Road playing fields and rezone the existing catchment area to the site of the new school would offer significant educational benefits for the young people attending the proposed new school.

3.2 There are a number of significant weaknesses in the Viewforth High School building. The school is not disability compliant and therefore is unavailable to young people in the catchment area who have limited mobility. There are very limited sports facilities in the school. There is restricted use of ICT within the buildings. There is a lack of social space and a lack of flexible learning areas within the building. There are a number of outbuildings and young people commented on the length of time wasted in walking to and from parts of the school.

3.3 The learning environment for children and young people would be greatly improved by the council's proposal. The modern, purpose built accommodation would provide more flexible spaces to suit the demands of a 21st century curriculum. The proposed school would provide a range of improvements including better access to ICT. The large social spaces would benefit young people and help them to socialise in pleasant surroundings. The significantly enhanced sporting facilities will increase opportunities to participate in a variety of sports. The building will be disability compliant and will now be suitable for those young people within the catchment area who have limited mobility. The school will be a community school and available for the local community to use. This is not available at Viewforth High School. There is on-going consultation on the final design of the building. Children, young people, Viewforth High School staff and members of the community are keen to continue to consult with the council on the final design of the building. Overall, the proposal would bring significant educational benefits for children, young people and the wider community of Kirkcaldy East.

3.4 The council has considered how the position of the new school may impact on travel. There will be minimal impact on young people who will travel to the proposed school. The council has committed to consider and develop safe routes for cycling and walking to the school as part of the planning process.

4. Summary

4.1 The current buildings which house Viewforth High School are no longer fit for purpose. They do not meet the requirements of a 21st century curriculum. HM Inspectors consider the council's proposal will benefit young people from significantly improved educational and social facilities in a building with well-resourced accommodation designed to promote flexible learning and teaching approaches consistent with Curriculum for Excellence. Young people and the local community would benefit from enhanced sporting facilities.

4.2 The council has consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and is keen to continue to do so. Almost all stakeholders wish the new school to be called Viewforth High School. Some staff and parents from Rosslyn School are keen for

their young people to engage with the new proposed school. Staff from Viewforth High School have concerns over the transfer of staff to the new school. Residents living near to the site of the proposed new school have concerns over the impact it will have on their local environment. The council needs to continue to work with all stakeholders to resolve these issues.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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