

# Education, Children and Families Committee

10:00, Tuesday, 24 August 2021

## Update on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All
Council Commitments	<a href="#">36</a>

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
  - 1.1.1 Note the content of this report.

#### Julien Kramer

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## Update on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 At the Education, Children and Families Committee on 28 May 2021 the Convenor committed to 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.
- 2.2 A meeting was held with the Cabinet Secretary after which the Council decided to re-evaluate two other site options for a GME secondary school. A new secondary school could only be delivered on either of these sites with support from the Scottish Government. As a response from the Scottish Government is still awaited it is not considered appropriate to progress with a statutory consultation at this stage.

### 3. Background

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- 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 submitted for consideration.
- 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.
  - 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.

## 4. Main report

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- 4.1 Following the Committee meeting the Convenor of the Education, Children and Families Committee wrote the Cabinet Secretary and a follow up meeting was then held on July 15 2021.
- 4.2 Following the meeting, the Convener and Vice Convener wrote to the Cabinet Secretary to outline some of the key issues discussed and to update on the Council’s decision to re-evaluate other site options for a GME secondary school. The informal consultation had raised issues around ‘centrality’ and there are two sites that would potentially address this particular concern. It was made clear though, that they can only be delivered with the support of the Scottish Government. A copy of this communication is included in appendix 1.
- 4.3 At the time of writing a response has not been received from the Cabinet Secretary. It is therefore not considered appropriate to progress with a statutory consultation at this stage. One implication of delaying a statutory consultation is it will not be possible to establish two new primary GME units – one in the south east and one in the west of the city – for August 2022 as was suggested in the draft statutory consultation paper considered by Committee on 28 May 2021.
- 4.4 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. However, the new primary units would only become operational for August 2023 and the first intakes from the new GME primary units into the new secondary school would be in 2030 rather than 2029. 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 pupils numbers beyond those typically feeding through from a double stream school.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 Once a response has been received from the Cabinet Secretary a further update report will be submitted to Committee for consideration.

## 6. Financial impact

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- 6.1 There are no additional or new financial implications.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 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 reading/external references**

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N/A

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Letter sent to the Cabinet Secretary

## **APPENDIX 1 – Letter to Cabinet Secretary**

Dear Shirley-Anne

Thank you for agreeing to meet with myself and the Vice Convener, Cllr Dickie in July to discuss the Council's proposals for a new and dedicated GME High School on the Liberton site to support the growth of Gaelic Medium Education in the city. We found it a very helpful meeting and we welcomed your positive comments and the Scottish Government's continued support for our strong proposals.

It was helpful to talk around the outstanding issues and concerns raised by parents, and to agree that it is their voice that is key in the forthcoming statutory consultation.

As you know, the Council has explored other sites when considering what could be delivered, whilst maximising the educational and immersion benefits for the young people at the heart of our proposals. Following further discussions and your offer of support we have decided to re-examine some of the original sites that were identified in order to ensure that there are no other viable options. In particular, those which would address the issue of 'centrality' which has been raised.

You will recall the table we provided which outlined the site options the Council had already explored. We are therefore writing to inform you that, with your offer of support we are reassessing two sites - the Police Headquarters at Fettes and the Old Victoria Hospital in Comely Bank.

However, it should be noted both of these options would only be viable with additional Scottish Government funding and we estimate the build cost – excluding the cost of the land - would be approximately £48 million

Another key and immediate barrier would be the site itself. We would need to have some assurance that the land would become available within the timescale we have set to open the new school before proceeding to a Statutory Consultation.

We would therefore ask you to consider whether you would be able to provide the level of support (if either of these options are available) and meet our criteria for building a new Gaelic school. As always, we are grateful if you have any further suggestions about other sites.

It is important to note that we know you will have many competing demands to balance at a national level, but fairness is at the forefront of our minds in Edinburgh too, given the rising rolls situation in this popular city, and the significant needs across our school estate.

In summary though, we'd like to assure you that we remain fully committed to doing our very best for Gaelic families and the growth of Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh. These are exciting times with GME growing at all levels in the city and that's why it is important we pause the consultation to ensure we take the right decision.

Again, thank you for your time.

Kind Regards

Cllr Ian Perry, Convener

Cllr Alison Dickie, Vice Convener