

Consultation on Site Options for the Replacement of Portobello High School and St John's Primary School

Meeting of the Council

21 December 2006

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report advises the Executive of the responses to the consultation process that was undertaken in respect of proposals to replace Portobello High School and St John's Primary School. Recommendations are also made on how to proceed.

2.0 Summary

- 2.1 The consultation on the various options brought a strong public response with over 440 comments received via letter and e-mail. Most residents, action groups and amenity organisations favoured a rebuild of Portobello High School on the existing site, with a request that brownfield options be reconsidered for St Johns. For many, it was felt that open space should not be sacrificed to provide land for new schools.
- 2.2 Parents and most School Boards were strongly in favour of building on a new site in Portobello Park to take advantage of the larger site and to avoid the problems of a decant. It was also felt that the community recreational facilities that will be provided at the school will help compensate for land that is lost.
- 2.3 Evaluation of the two sets of views and their benefits, timescales, cost and deliverability supports building a new Portobello High School in the park, with a site for St John's being reserved at the current High School site.

3.0. Background

- 3.1 Portobello High School has a current school roll of 1450 making it the largest in Edinburgh in terms of pupil numbers. Proposals to replace Portobello High School were first made in 2002 under the second round of Public Private Partnership funding, but were not taken forward at the time although the need for a new school was recognised.
- 3.2 The school occupies a restricted 2.9 hectare site that has no playing fields and pupils are bussed to nearby facilities. The central feature of the current school is a nine storey tower built in the 1960's which is now outdated and in a poor condition and unsuited to meeting modern teaching requirements. The Council is now consulting on potential sites for building a new school.

- 3.3 Linked to the proposal to build a new Portobello High School is the replacement of St John's Primary School which abuts the secondary school.
- 3.4 The primary school has a school roll of around 400 pupils and occupies a tight 0.6 hectare site. The building dates from 1926 and extra provision is delivered via temporary classrooms. Classrooms in the main block are too small and the school fails to meet prescribed standards.
- 3.5 Consultants appointed by the Council carried out an assessment of 15 potential sites for the two schools. This considered factors such as:
- Site size;
 - Accessibility from the school catchments;
 - Site assembly and ownership constraints; and
 - Technical and design issues.
- 3.6 A sifting process narrowed down the original selection and a report to the Council Executive on the 12th September sought approval to carry out statutory consultation on site preferences for the new schools.
- 3.7 Three site options were identified for the replacement of Portobello High School. These were:
- Option A New High School on existing site (incorporating St John's PS);
 - Option B New High School on Portobello Golf Course; and
 - Option C New High School on Portobello Park.
- 3.8 In respect of a replacement St John's Primary School, the same three sites were identified for consultation along with a fourth option – Option D, a new Primary School at Bingham Park. During the consultation process, Option D made no public impact and only passing reference is made to the site in the report. Other, better located options took precedence from a community perspective.

4.0 Consultation Process

- 4.1 The consultation was carried out in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended 1981, and the Regulations made thereunder. The requirement is to consult with:
- the parent of every pupil at the school and every child expected to be in attendance at the school within two years;
 - the School Board; and
 - any person authorised for the purpose by the church or denominational body in whose interest that school is conducted.
- 4.2 It was acknowledged that the wider community would like to make their views known in tandem with the statutory consultation and the consultation process was open to everyone to comment.
- 4.3 The consultation period ran from the start of September to Monday, 30 October 2006 and views were invited via letter or e-mail or by attending parents and public meetings.
- 4.4 Meetings were organised by the Council at the dates and venues shown below. Due to the wider issues around the replacement school sites, meetings were held to allow both parents and the wider community to express their views. Representatives from the

Council were present to outline proposals, assist discussions and answer questions. Appendices 1, 2 and 3 contain the Minutes of these meetings.

Parents Meeting	Location	Minute of Meeting
3 rd October, 2006	Portobello High School	Appendix 1
4 th October, 2006	St John's Primary School	Appendix 2
Public Meeting	Location	Minute of Meeting
11 October 2006	Portobello Town Hall	Appendix 3

Consultation Responses

- 4.5 Over 440 responses have been recorded as part of the consultation and they are summarised in a separate report which will be made available in the Members Lounge. Copies of the report can be read online and copies will be supplied to the local Portobello libraries. Table 1 shows the breakdown of responses by category. Respondents were asked to identify if they were commenting as residents or parents. In many instances this information was not provided and this division was not possible.

Table 1: Consultation Responses by Category

Category	No of Replies	% Replies
School Board	5	1
Pressure / Interest Group	10	2
Parent	98	21
Resident	196	43
Parent or Resident	137	33
Total Responses	446	100

- 4.6 Most responses channelled through the Council came from residents (43%). This was nearly twice the number given by parents (21%), although there was a large percentage that consisted of either a parent or resident (33%).
- 4.7 Five School Boards made representations, including the two School Boards directly affected by the process. Portobello High School provided a folder of information which included the results of a questionnaire completed by over 1,000 people (pupils, parents and teachers). Towerbank School Board canvassed the views of parents via a questionnaire on the three options for Portobello High School (completed by 43 parents). St John's School Board also issued a questionnaire to parents / carers and teachers seeking views on the four options for a new St Johns Primary School (responses have been treated as confidential).
- 4.8 A number of interest and pressure groups made responses. This included the views of the local golf clubs, amenity groups, a local pressure group opposed to development on open space and a pressure group which supports a greenfield solution.

Consultation Responses – Main Issues

- 4.9 A number of themes emerged from the consultations. This included both support and objections to on-site re-development of Portobello High School. The issue of decanting and the implications for morale and teaching brought strong responses, as did objections to the use of recreational open space as site options. Other issues included funding arrangements, the design of the new schools and community use of the facilities and the impact of a new school on amenity and traffic.
- 4.10 These aspects are considered in greater detail further in the report, but there was a general consensus that Portobello High School should be replaced and for many, it was acknowledged as being long overdue.

- 4.11 Most responses related to a replacement Portobello High School but many of the issues were common to both schools since the site options were similar.
- 4.12 On the matter of the preferred location for Portobello High School two conflicting views emerged. One view opposed loss of open space in Portobello and was supportive of solutions that protected the park and /or the golf course. Supporters of this view favoured rebuilding on site or on alternative brownfield locations. To assist with school playing field provision, options identified included using new or upgraded facilities at Portobello Park or at Figgate Park.
- 4.13 A second view emerged that opposed on site redevelopment of the High School, on the basis that the level of disruption to pupils and the subsequent constrained site would not provide a school fit for the 21st century. A new school with space to meet modern day educational standards was regarded as the overwhelming priority.

Residents & Parent Views

- 4.14 Residents who replied to the consultation were strongly in favour of on-site redevelopment (see Table 2). From 196 responses, two thirds (128) supported an on-site rebuild of Portobello High School. Residents were even stronger in their opposition to development on the golf course and /or park with well over 80% (171 and 162) objecting to development in one or either location.
- 4.15 Parents, by contrast, favoured off-site options. From 98 replies, only 22 supported a rebuild on site, whereas 37% and 56% respectively supported development on the golf course and the park.
- 4.16 Among the mixed resident and parents grouping the responses were more variable. Over 40% (58) favoured a rebuild of Portobello High School on its existing site, whereas 37% (55) considered the park a suitable option.
- 4.17 Supporters of keeping Portobello High School at its present site also tended to favour a brownfield option for St John's. Various sites were mentioned, most which have already undergone an evaluation by the Council and this is covered later in the report.

Table 2: Consultation Responses from Parents and Residents

Category	No	Support Proposal			Object to Proposal		
		Opt A (Rebuild)	Opt B (Golf C)	Opt C (Park)	Opt A (Rebuild)	Opt B (Golf C)	Opt C (Park)
Residents	196	128	7	10	7	171	162
Parents	98	22	36	55	29	30	28
Residents / Parents	137	58	40	55	9	67	68

Note: Respondents could support or object to various options – ie support both B and C and object to Option A.

- 4.18 For comparative purposes Table 3 summarises the results of the extensive consultation undertaken separately by Portobello School / School Board on the preferred options. There is support for the greenfield options, with less than a quarter favouring a rebuild on site. All three groups canvassed (pupils, parents and staff) rated a rebuild the least popular option.

Table 3: Portobello High School Questionnaire Response

Category	No	Support Proposal			Support None
		Opt A (Rebuild)	Opt B (Golf C)	Opt C (Park)	
Pupils	936	240	389	307	0
Parents	90	11	17	61	1
Staff	39	4	14	21	0
Total	1065	255	420	389	1
% Support	100%	24%	39%	37%	0

School Board Views

- 4.19 The School Boards largely favoured options that best allowed the High School to meet modern day education needs without the constraints imposed by its currently restricted site – ie Options B or C. Table 4 summarises their responses, focusing on the educational factors behind their decisions.
- 4.20 Apart from St John's, all the School Boards ruled out Option A. St John's School Board favours an early rebuild of the primary school at Portobello Park, which would then free up the whole existing site for a new High School. The general preference is for a new school on site C (the primary school in the case of St John's Board), although Towerbank School Board thinks Option B would provide a larger site and the Royal High favours a shared campus.

Table 4: Comments made by School Boards

School Board	Preferred Options	Comments
Portobello High School	Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The best, most appropriate, affordable and practical location Parkland setting, central to the catchment, with adjacent sports and formal activity areas Likely to deliver sooner than any other option <p>Option A is rejected because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeats the mistakes of 40 years ago Would damage the educational prospects of pupils during re-building Would provide inadequate facilities for recreation
St John's Primary School	Option C for St John's PS Option A for PHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St John's would benefit from a new building in as short a timeframe as possible Playing fields at Portobello Park could be enhanced by floodlighting and new changing facilities A primary school at Portobello Park should be less controversial in planning terms Redevelopment of the High School could save costs by retaining the swimming pool and gym hall <p>Main findings from the Questionnaire responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current St John's fails to satisfy fitness for purpose and an upgrade is urgently required The majority of the St John's community do not favour co-location (pupil welfare and safety)

School Board	Preferred Options	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a wish to minimise loss of green space
Towerbank School Board	Option B for PHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option C is workable but site is not big enough • Strong dislike of Option A • A decant would have disastrous educational and divisive social impact, and would crush staff and student morale • Portobello Park is seriously underused, lacks versatility, and is not always used appropriately • Replacing Portobello High School requires urgent attention <p>The result of the parents consultation (43 replies) was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 support option A • 13 support option B • 25 support option C • 1 supports B or C • 1 objected to all options
Parson's Green	Option C for PHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly support Option C • Option A should be ruled out as it involves a decant of two or three years • A new school is an opportunity to improve and upgrade Portobello Park • Road safety will be an issue
Royal High	Co-location on Options B and C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horrendous for children not to have access to on site facilities such as football pitches • Entirely unacceptable to consider a decant • Sad to see the golf course go, but when balanced against enhanced educational there is no contest • Main issues are delivery of best educational experience, quickest to deliver and best value for taxpayers

Interest Groups / Pressure Group Comments

- 4.21 Several groups made comments during the consultation period and their comments are summarised below. The various Golf Clubs, amenity groups and Portobello Park Action Group all oppose building on open space and support Option A for Portobello High School, with a preference for St John's to locate to a brownfield site.
- 4.22 Portobello High School Management Team has a preference to build afresh on a larger site that offers greater educational opportunities and improved on-site facilities. A local action group (PFANS) also favours a greenfield site.

Table 5: Comments made by Interest & Pressure Groups

Which group	Option Supported	Comments
Portobello Golf Club / Portobello Ladies Golf Club / St Philip's Ladies Golf Club	Option A Brownfield site for St John's or move to Holyrood school site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppose development of Park and Golf Course • Consultation ignores the question of funding • Consultation should address issues such as loss of amenity (golf course), loss of green space, traffic issues • Golf Course has been greatly improved in recent years • New school should not be at the expense of open space • Understanding that permanent provision of the golf course was agreed when Portobello became a city suburb
Portobello Amenity Society	Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green space should be retained • Options should include brownfield sites for the primary school • No housing should be built on the park or golf course • Consultation should be undertaken at all stages of the decision making process
PEDAL (Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform Group)	Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on green space is unsustainable • Brownfield sites should remain under consideration • New school should minimise energy use and waste • All options need to be adequately explored and costed
Portobello Park Action Group	Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppose development of Park and Golf Course • Believes that the park and golf course are common good land and this is supported by legal opinion • The Council has not addressed the potential loss of green space, loss of amenity, environmental issues and potential increase in traffic • Should consider brownfield options for St John's
City of Edinburgh Basketball Club / Basketball Scotland	Support new school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominant user of community facilities at High School outside school hours • Club requirements include two sports halls that can each accommodate a basketball court • Spectator seating for 200-300 people in one hall
Senior Management Team of Portobello High School	Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support build on Greenfield site. • Majority preference for Portobello Park site • A school in the heart of the community. • Least expensive option to deliver-but offers cost effective investment • Shortest timescale for delivering the school • The education of the current school generation would not be disrupted. • Opportunities for enriched sports facilities • A decant would be too much disruption to the pupils • A rebuild on site would not provide a large enough footprint • Strong teacher / pupil support for greenfield option
Support for Learning,	Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current building is unfit for purpose • Department is not accessible to physically disturbed

Portobello High School		<p>pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed accommodation in new school for Central Support is inadequate
PFANS Portobello For New Schools	Option B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable school fit for the 21st Century which would benefit the community. Opportunity for attractive, well designed school with ample open space for play and learning Site is well by bus routes and offers safe walking routes Park / Golf course not used to their full potential Option A fails for educational reasons and the costs of a decant cannot be justified It would be impossible to future proof such a cramped site

5.0 Main report – Issues Raised During Consultation

5.1 The following section describes the main questions / issues raised during the consultation period. These have been categorised under the following headings and each is considered in turn.

Main Issues / Questions

- Procedural Matters relating to the Consultation Process
- Funding / Timescale for the Schools
- New School on Existing Site (Option A)
- Policies on the Protection of Open Space
- Portobello Golf Course (Option B)
- Portobello Park (Option C)
- Alternative Site Options
- School Layout and Design
- Use of School Recreational Facilities
- School Catchment / School Rolls
- Traffic & Residential Amenity

6.0 Procedural Matters relating to the Consultation Process

- 6.1 The consultation process has involved consulting the parents, school boards and residents on the various options. Everyone was free to make comments, irrespective of where they live or their age. For example former pupils, now living outside Edinburgh have made comments and existing pupils have also given their views.
- 6.2 Most people have made individual representations whereas others have signed a standard letter or have used a standard letter as a template. All have been recorded.
- 6.3 The replies from the School Boards are recorded as single entries, but represent a collation of a body of opinion from parents and pupils.
- 6.4 No specific scoring or weighting is attached to comments made. The consultation process was intended to help gauge volume of public opinion and identify the main issues. This would then help when making recommendations for going forward.

- 6.5 Given the number of options and the fact that some options for the secondary school and the primary school related to the same site (Portobello Park and the Golf Course), it was difficult to count views as discrete comments.
- 6.6 A number of respondents questioned the timing of the report to the Council on the outcome of the consultations. It had been advised during the consultation process that the report would go to the Council on the 21st December which is the same day that the Tramways is being discussed. However given that this commitment was made prior to the consultation period, the need to be consistent and adhere to the programme, commits the Council to this timetable.

7.0 Funding / Timescale for the Schools

Comment

- 7.1 Comments were made on lack of detail or confirmation of source of finance for the new schools. Without such information it was difficult to make measured comments. Other respondents focused on the long timescales before the schools could open and sought clarification on the delay. There was a suspicion that the golf course would be sold for housing to fund the schools and this has attracted numerous objections.

Council Response

- 7.2 Much of the debate during the consultation has arisen regarding concern that the open space at Portobello Park and/or Portobello Golf Course would be sold for housing development to assist funding for the two schools. However, it was stated during the public meetings that there is no intention to do so, and this stance is reconfirmed in this report.
- 7.3 With regard to current schools sites, surplus brownfield land may be released for housing to supplement any required funding for the proposals. It is envisaged that any additional funding generated through these methods would be used to address the shortfall in schools' funding only.
- 7.4 Obtaining funding for the schools is a complex matter, which makes it difficult to predict timescales for the build but Table 7 below shows the various steps that are required, some of which may be able to run in tandem. Factors such as obtaining planning permission could take a long time, depending on the site and the level of objection. It is unlikely that a new secondary school could be completed before 2011 given the compulsory procedures the Council must go through; to appoint design teams and contractors, give proper consideration to the design of the school and undertake a two year build programme.

Table 7: Actions for Building New Portobello High School and St John's Primary School

Action
Council Selects preferred option
Funding bid to Scottish Executive
Funding agreed by Scottish Executive
Council assess shortfall and means of funding
Appoint Architects (require to tender)
Design school
Obtain Planning Permission
Appoint Contractors (require to tender)
Start building new school
Completion of Portobello High School

- 7.5 Should the Council reach a decision on site options for the two schools, the next stage will be to compile a business case for the funding for presentation to the Scottish

Executive. It is proposed that the replacement of the two schools should form part of a larger project which could form the next wave of investment in the Edinburgh schools estate. The larger project could include investment in new or refurbished schools for Boroughmuir and James Gillespie's High Schools, St Crispin's Special School and addressing fitness for purpose issues at other primary schools.

- 7.6 It will be up to the Scottish Executive to determine what type of funding is available. This could involve a further round of Public Private Partnership investment, or other alternative mechanisms. A response from the Scottish Executive would not be anticipated until mid 2007 at the earliest.
- 7.7 Should partial or no funding be forthcoming from the Scottish Executive, the Council would have to consider how to make up the shortfall. The principal options lie with the Council's Capital Investment Programme; the Prudential Borrowing Scheme, which allows borrowing against potential revenue savings; and the generation of capital receipts through the disposal of Council assets.
- 7.8 Until the Scottish Executive responds to the business case, it is not possible to speculate on the funding mechanisms or the Council sources of funding that will be required.

8.0 New School on Existing Site (Option A)

- 8.1 Option A relates to rebuilding either school within the boundaries of Portobello High School and St Johns Primary School. Implementing Option A for a new Portobello High School would require a decant, to an off site location such as Portobello Park. Option A for St John's is based on the notion that Portobello High School is built off site, freeing up adjacent land for a new St John's.

Comment

- 8.2 There was strong support for and against a rebuild on site. Many respondents who favoured this option were strongly opposed to the loss of open space/ amenity space / recreation space. Such respondents tended to favour a brownfield site for St John's Primary School. Other respondents felt that facilities at Portobello Park or Figgate Park could be upgraded for school use in conjunction with on site development.
- 8.3 Some respondents recalled that an earlier PPP bid for Portobello High School was based on a rebuild within the existing footprint. Others felt the decant costs seemed excessively high, which prejudiced this option from going forward.
- 8.4 There was also considerable opposition from respondents to rebuilding on site due to the disruption a decant would cause to teaching and several advised that they would consider removing their children to another school. The problem of a constrained site was also mentioned, as was the fact that the school would continue to have inadequate playing fields. Many respondents felt there was an opportunity to create something much better than at present, and the best way to achieve this was to build anew on a larger site.
- 8.5 The prevailing view among those closely involved in education was to oppose a rebuild on site. This would perpetuate the current limitations of a constrained site to the long-term detriment of the pupils education and in the short term, a decant would disrupt the pupils education.

Council Response

- 8.6 At the time of the original PPP bid made for Portobello High School no other options had been assessed. While it was technically possible to rebuild on site, it would have

caused considerable disruption during building works and the school site would still not have met desired size standards.

8.7 Rebuilding on the Portobello High School site removes the hurdle of finding a replacement High School site, but there are major knock on implications. The tight site boundary means the school will remain dependent on off-site playing fields (even if provided locally) on top of the general inconvenience.

8.8 However major issues arise from the need to relocate St Johns in advance of a rebuild and the disruption caused by a decant. This option requires St Johns to be replaced first. With funding still to be resolved, this brings greater uncertainty to the project because the two proposals are inter-dependent. It does not avoid the issue of loss of open space as a site would be required to reprovide this school.

8.9 The cost of the decant has been independently costed by consultants as being in the order of £5.8 million although this varies with options. Effectively the decant would mean setting up a temporary school in portacabins for two years or by using the vacated St Johns building linked to additional accommodation.

8.10 This option fares the poorest in terms of the resulting educational facilities that could be achieved through new build, disruption to education, timescale, and financial implications. The advantage is that the school remains in its present location, is well placed to serve its catchment population and minimises (though not wholly avoids) the loss of open space.

9.0 Policies on the Protection of Open Space

Comment

9.1 Many respondents objected to options that would result in the loss of open space to school development. They referred to National Guidance and Council policy on protecting open space. In addition, mention was made of the local plan that safeguards open space.

9.2 More specifically their concerns covered the following points:

- The golf course and playing fields are a valuable local resource and provide amenity space that helps define the neighbourhood and gives it an identity;
- It is important to retain local recreation facilities. They improve health and well being of residents as well as providing relaxation and enjoyment for users; and
- The replacement option mentioned for the golf course is on the edge of the city and would be less accessible to users.

Council Response

9.3 NPPG11 on Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space sets out national policy. Robust planning policies are required to safeguard established open spaces and playing fields and Councils are expected to lead by example and generally resist development of land in their ownership.

9.4 The Scottish Executive is currently reviewing NPPG11 and revised guidelines are likely to be in place by mid 2007. The guidance will give stronger protection to retaining open space. Only where there is strong justification, and where replacement open space forms part of the proposal, should open space be developed for an unrelated use.

9.5 The revised guidance further advises that where a planning authority proposes to grant consent for development on land identified as open space in the development plan, the application must be notified to Scottish Ministers.

- 9.7 The Draft Edinburgh City Local Plan contains two policies relating to the options to build on the golf course and the playing field. In respect of open space, permission may be permitted if the development is for community purposes, the benefits to the local community outweigh the loss and alternative, equivalent provision is made locally.
- 9.8 The second policy applies to playing fields. Permission may be permitted if an alternative playing field is provided or existing provision is significantly improved to compensate for the loss.
- 9.9 Should open space be sought for a new school site, the proposals would be predicated on the case that the development of a new school is a community facility and that mitigating circumstances include the new school resulting in the provision of enhanced leisure facilities for use by the school and the wider community. Initial discussions have taken place with planners in the Council on these issues. The ultimate decision will lie with the Scottish Ministers who will have the option to call in any planning application for determination.
- 9.10 The Council has given a commitment at the public meetings held to discuss the proposals to make good any land lost to open space, but at present, the site and timescales have still to be resolved. Should a decision be made to build Portobello High School off site, there would still be surplus land on the existing site, even allowing for a rebuild of St John's. If this site were not required to supplement the funding for the schools, consideration could be given to redeveloping the site for open space, to replace any open space lost to the relocation of the school.

10.0 Portobello Golf Course (Option B)

- 10.1 Option B lies in the south-west corner of the Portobello Golf Course. The site was selected because of its centrality, the land was in the ownership of the Council and it provided a site of 4.5 hectares to meet all the education requirements. However such an option meant the 9-hole golf course could not operate from the reduced site and a replacement site would be required.
- 10.2 Alternative provision has been mooted at Brunstane some two miles away on the edge of the city. It would take around two years to establish the course and allow for planting to mature. The site would have to be purchased, a layout designed and planning permission granted and this could add over £3 million to the costs.

Comment

- 10.3 Among the respondents there was little enthusiasm for a new golf course. Golfers liked the local accessibility and felt that the course was part of the town. There was considerable opposition to the loss of the golf course for several reasons:
- The golf course is part of Portobello and its loss would be detrimental to the whole community;
 - The Golf Course is Common Good land and the Council does not have authority to build on the site;
 - The golf course is a valuable area of amenity open space;
 - The golf course is a popular and well used recreational facility;
 - There is a need to encourage recreational use and healthy lifestyles;
 - A replacement golf course would be less accessible to local residents;
 - The replacement golf course would be an edge of city facility rather than a green lung within the city;
 - Expectation that the remainder of the site not used for the school would eventually be sold off for housing; and

- Development of the site would increase traffic flows in surrounding residential areas.

10.4 There was also a degree of support for locating the school on the site on the following basis:

- Educational needs are greater than golfing needs;
- The location has the greatest scope to provide on site playing fields;
- The school could be built in an attractive setting; and
- The golf course is under utilised and could be put to a better community use for education and public open space.

Council Response

10.5 Option B offers the greatest scope in terms of layout, design and space but the potential loss of such a long-standing recreational facility has resulted in a large number of objections. Although a new school in this location would be central to the catchment it would lead to the complete loss of the golf course. Access to the site is also poorer than Option C, which can be served from a main road.

10.6 A new golfing facility would be required and this would involve negotiations to purchase a suitable site within private ownership. A decision would also be required on what to do with the remainder of the site, but there is overwhelming opposition to housing. From a planning perspective, it is more difficult to justify the loss of such a major outdoor recreational facility when other options (Option C) are less disruptive in their overall impact.

10.7 The Council is of a view that the land currently occupied by the golf course and the football pitches is not Common Good land as this land was purchased by the Council by way of a Feu Disposition and not gifted, as is the case for most land and property held on the Common Good Account. The land was originally subject to title conditions which restricted its use to that of a public park and recreation ground but the Council is of the opinion that these conditions are no longer enforceable, having been removed in 2004 by the reform of Scottish land law which came into effect at that time. However, in view of the Opinion given by Mr. R.L. Martin QC that the land should be regarded as land which is part of the common good of the Council, further investigations are ongoing with a view to the Council seeking its own advice from Queen's Counsel. The issue of whether or not a piece of land is part of the common good of a local authority is a matter of fact to be judged by the court.

11.0 Portobello Park (Option C)

11.1 Portobello Park comprises a rectangular area of grass containing two football pitches and a changing pavilion. Within the park there is sufficient space to provide a site of 4.5 hectares which includes provision of a full sized, all weather pitch. The two football pitches (as relocated) would be in addition to this area. Building works could proceed without the need to relocate St Johns or decant pupils at Portobello High School.

Comment

11.2 Many of the responses that objected to the loss of the golf course also opposed the partial loss of land at Portobello Park. The main reasons tended to cover the following issues:

- The park is Common Good land and the Council does not have authority to build on the site;
- Portobello Park is an important area of amenity space;
- It is the main park serving Portobello;

- It is a well used facility for exercising / walking the dog;
- It provides a place for the local children to play;
- Local facilities will be lost forever; and
- Development will be intrusive to local amenity and will cause traffic congestion around the school.

11.3 There was also considerable support for the option to build Portobello High School in the park. Reasons given for supporting this option included:

- Central location within the Portobello catchment and close to the existing school;
- The least expensive option and therefore has the greatest likelihood of proceeding;
- It can be delivered quicker than the other options and a new school is a priority;
- Site can meet current education requirements;
- Scope to utilise exiting football pitches if reconfigured;
- Opportunity to provide enriched community and leisure facilities;
- Football pitches are not heavily used;
- Better to build on the playing field as opposed to forcing the golf course to close;
- Deep dislike of Option A and prospective decant; and
- New school requirements will place greater emphasis on providing PE for pupils so improved on site facilities are needed.

11.4 Often, there was support for both options B and C, but when a choice was made, it tended to favour development on the Portobello Park. Few respondents specifically supported the relocation of St Johns to the park site, although the St Johns School Board favoured this option as a means of obtaining a new primary school in advance of rebuilding Portobello High School.

Council Response

11.5 Building a new school on the playing field offers a significant opportunity for the school in that the fully required site size can be achieved and also allows the school to enjoy the significant benefit of being located alongside additional grass pitches. The site provides the most straightforward and most cost effective option, assuming that planning permission is granted. The site is in Council ownership and in terms of timescale it can proceed faster than the other options.

11.6 The two football pitches at Portobello are not heavily used, with the principal regular user being Thistle Youth Club. If this option is taken forward, discussions will take place to see if their needs can be better served via joint use of state of the art changing facilities within a new school.

11.7 A floodlit, all weather pitch is proposed within the school site and on the remainder of the park, the two football pitches can to be re-orientated and shifted further eastwards. Discussion would take place on the use of the playing fields to serve the school and the aim would be to open up the school to wider community use out of hours and at weekends.

11.8 There will still be an overall loss of open space for kickabouts and casual use but there would be improved recreational facilities within the park and it should be more intensively used than at present. The Council intend to provide replacement open space to compensate for this loss, although land is still to be identified.

12.0 Alternative Site Options

Comment

12.1 A number of respondents felt that other options and particularly brownfield sites had been discarded prematurely, especially in the case of St Johns Primary School where

site requirements of 1.5 hectares were much lower than the 4.5 hectares sought for Portobello High School. Questions were raised why several sites were not considered such as:

Brownfield Sites

- Freightliner Terminal;
- Scottish Power Site;
- Powerleague Site;

Greenfield Sites

- Cavalry Park;
- Alongside Holyrood High School; and
- Figgate Park.

Council Response

12.2 Consultants appointed by the Council have undertaken a detailed analysis of various site options. A multi-disciplinary team led Smith Scott Mullan Associates reported in August, 2006 on 15 sites in the Portobello area. This included both brownfield sites and greenfield sites. The sites mentioned above were discounted for the following reasons.

- **Freightliner Site**

The environment is not ideal for a primary school being bounded by the railway sidings to the south, a section of dual carriageway to the north and an Industrial Park to the east. The site is currently subject to discussions for re-use and there is an expectation that the prospective developer will seek to buy or lease the site.

- **Scottish Power Site**

The site is in multiple ownership so there are significant cost and timescale issues in purchasing the site. The site is also likely to have soil contamination issues.

Engineers have advised that the site is covered with High and Low Voltage cables and they would have to be relocated which is costly and might not be allowed by Scottish Power. There is the option to build on the footprint of the existing building but that restricts the design of the Primary School.

- **Power League Site**

The Power League site is owned by the Council but is let on a very long lease. It would need to be re-located should agreement be reached on terminating the lease. The full site area includes an indoor bowling arena would have to be relocated to achieve the 1.5 hectares site requirement. There are accordingly significant risks and costs associated with the delivery of this site.

The site rests on the former outdoor swimming pool, and engineers have advised that it would be costly to properly level, as the fill material is unlikely to be good quality. In addition, the old power station once stood on an adjacent site. With the site underlain with sand and gravel and being near the sea engineers believe that contaminants may have leached on to the site.

- **Calvary Park / Holyrood High School**

Cavalry Park and the neighbouring site of Holyrood High School were discounted as having insurmountable planning issues. The greenbelt, nature conservation and designed landscape designations mean the only remaining developable area is being utilised for Holyrood High School. The sites are also poorly located to serve their catchments. Planning obstacles notwithstanding, it would also be undesirable to create a joint school campus of nearly 2,500 pupils.

- **Friggate Burn Park**

To create a sufficiently large area for a new primary school on the park would require a degree of drainage and earthworks and the clearing of mature planting. The park forms part of the wider flood prevention scheme and to build here would displace floodwaters to other properties. The pond area does not offer suitable ground conditions for building if drained. It was formed from an old clay pit and there are soil issues in terms of foundations. This proposal would also have the same issues regarding loss of open space as are associated with other sites.

13.0 School Layout and Design

13.1 As part of the consultation process indicative layouts were shown for the schools. These layouts were generic and were based on a three storey building with four storey elements. At the actual design phase, detailed plans will be developed.

Comment

13.2 A number of comments were made in relation to the design and layout of the schools and the poor condition of the existing High School. This included means of public involvement in the process and use of energy efficient systems and quality of materials. Other comments were made in respect of the design and layout on the existing site. Others queried why the schools proposed for golf course and park were placed in corner locations – was it to allow for housing?

Council Response

13.3 When the High School was built in the 1960's the construction systems used were new and over time their limitations became exposed. These issues are common to many buildings from this era. Modern construction methods are much better and far more flexible in their application and design life is 60 years plus for a new building.

13.4 With regard to the option of designing a new school for the existing site, the school would end up in a less-favoured, rear site if it were built around the existing building. Ongoing building of the replacement school would cause considerable disruption for pupils over a 2- 2½ year period and the layout and design would be restricted as a consequence. A decant of all pupils to another site (to study from portacabins) would probably be needed to allow building works to proceed unimpeded. In the interim, Portobello High School needs investment up to 2011 to keep the building in good order.

13.5 A greenfield site gives the opportunity for freedom of design and provides an opportunity to think about long-term aims, consider the best arrangements for the school and to learn from past mistakes.

13.6 The positioning of the schools on the park and golf course as shown in the Feasibility Reports were chosen to give them prominence and best pedestrian, vehicular and services access and minimise the amount of traffic being drawn through residential streets. The locations were also selected to minimise the impact on the open space. The actual school layouts are diagrammatical plans to illustrate how much land would be needed but are not detailed designs.

13.7 The layouts allow comparison between sites but more in-depth design work would be required for the preferred option. There will be extensive consultation further in the process over design, layout, massing, materials and the provision and location of the various components that make up the school building. The Council has a Sustainable Development Unit and an Energy Management Unit that promotes energy efficiency in the design, maintenance and management of the schools. Delivering school buildings

that meet sustainably criteria will be high on the agenda, and indeed forms a key element of the Council's current programme of new building.

14.0 Use of School Recreational Facilities

Comment

- 14.1 A number of respondents sought clarification on whether the wider community would be able to use the school facilities. There was also concern raised at the lack of outdoor facilities at the existing school and many questioned if new outdoor facilities would be provided alongside a new school. There was also a question on whether the sports hall and swimming pool at the current Portobello High School would be retained for use by a replacement St John's.

Council Response

- 14.2 The Council aspire to a site offering adequate space for the provision of quality sports and recreation facilities. The lack of playing fields is a major disadvantage for the existing High School site and the preference is to provide such facilities on site.
- 14.3 Out of hours community use of schools is Council policy and existing clubs such as Portobello Basketball Club will be welcomed at a new school. It is proposed that a full sized, all weather pitch will be built within the new or extended school grounds and the school will have indoor sports facilities which will at least match the existing ones. Wherever possible, wider community use of the facilities will be encouraged. St John's Primary School would also be provided with a new all weather pitch. Accordingly these developments would provide two new all weather pitches for the Portobello area. This would be a considerable enhancement both for the schools and also to the community on the basis of the pitches being available for wider use outwith school hours.
- 14.4 The after use of the current Portobello High School sports hall and swimming pool is an issue still to be considered if a greenfield option proceeded, but the cost of running a pool, on top of the pool provided at a new High School would almost certainly rule out this option. The existing sports hall was built around ten years ago and potentially could be reused linked to a new primary school, but this would be a matter for further discussion and assessment.

15.0 School Catchment / School Rolls

- 15.1 Whereas Portobello High School has a current roll of some 1450 pupils, it is proposed to plan a new school with a catchment population of 1,200 on the basis of falling school rolls.

Comment

- 15.2 A number of respondents, including Portobello High School Board and Senior Management Team questioned this proposed drop in the school capacity. It would mean having to turn pupils away and reduce the education on offer at the school. At present around 17% of pupils come from outside the catchment area and it is likely that a new school will generate additional demand. Other respondents asked if a catchment review would be undertaken as part of the process.

Council Response

- 15.3 The original work on Portobello High School was based on an estimated school population of 1,400 but recent population projections and a close study of the intakes of the feeder primaries show a falling school roll in line with the City wide trend of falling secondary school rolls. It is now proposed to build a new school with a 1,200 pupil capacity, with a corresponding S1 intake limit of 220 pupils.

- 15.4 It is proposed that in the interim, the intake limit is reduced in successive years to reach a roll of 1200 pupils for the opening of the new school. It is proposed that an initial intake limit of 260 places is applied for the 2007/8 session. This interim measure will also respond to the school's current accommodation pressures, where the roll is presently in excess of the current school capacity.
- 15.5 There is no intention to review catchment areas as part of this proposal. The Council considers the optimum size for a secondary school to be either 900 or 1200 pupils. It is felt that a school roll of 1,200 is the upper size limit for optimum efficiency and provision of educational needs.
- 15.6 Based on a school roll of 1,200, the Council still expect to be in a position to guarantee places for all within catchment pupils with a strong possibility of some non-catchment placings continuing.

16.0 Traffic & Residential Amenity

Comment

- 16.1 Many favoured rebuilding the High School on the existing site as the impact on traffic and residential amenity is already established. Others commented that building a new school on the Golf Course or the Park would be disruptive, be intrusive on residential amenity around the golf course and the park and would bring traffic into residential areas or onto an already very busy main road. Milton Road is proposed to become a bus priority street, which will reduce traffic to one lane each way – this could result in chaos.
- 16.2 Questions were asked as to what measures would be undertaken for traffic management and to ensure pupil safety when going to school.

Council Response

- 16.3 Whatever site is chosen will impact on traffic in the immediate area and it will be important to ensure there is adequate pupil movement management. The Council has built a number of new schools over the recent years and has experience of the issues that arise and what action to take.
- 16.4 Once funding is secured for the school, the next step is to have further consultation on matters such as planning, traffic and school design. This will involve the City Development Department and will require a traffic impact analysis, which includes all routes etc that could be used. Further consultation will be undertaken with parents, residents, pupils and School Boards on these matters.
- 16.5 The Council is also committed to developing its "Safer Routes to Schools" which promotes walking, cycling, use of public transport and car-sharing on the journey to school. Protective measures include traffic calming, no-parking areas near schools, new pedestrian crossings and full or part time 20 mph speed limits
- 16.6 School Travel Co-ordinators now work with schools to help create School Travel Plans, which promote healthier lifestyles and a cleaner environment. Alongside this, schools are encouraged to include cycling and road safety awareness in their curriculum.

17 Conclusions

- 17.1 The consultation process has revealed a split in the community's views between those who support a rebuild of Portobello High School on a larger site, in a parkland setting and those who oppose the loss of open space and feel that a rebuild on the existing site is the best option.

- 17.2 Views on the preferred option for the High School have influenced preferences for St John's Primary School. For those favouring a new site, this allows a rebuild of a primary school on the vacated site. For supporters of a rebuild, a site for St John's is a further issue. Most prefer a brownfield site or keeping both schools in situ.
- 17.3 There was a general absence of support to build St John's on open space, (apart from St John's School Board). Option C - to build a new secondary school in Portobello Park was the preferred greenfield option of most School Boards, parents and residents. It has a number of advantages over Option B – (to build on the golf course). These include:
- Keeps the golf course intact as a recreational facility and valued amenity space within the heart of Portobello;
 - Avoids the problem of finding and buying land to establish a replacement golf course;
 - Site B is more difficult to reach than Site C and would have a greater traffic impact on the surrounding residential area;
 - The lightly used football pitches could be shared with Thistle Youth Club and there would also be scope for the school changing facilities to serve both users; and
 - The floodlit, full-sized, all weather pitch at the school would serve the wider community at weekends and evenings, thereby increasing recreational provision within the area.
- 17.4 Of the greenfield options, the park provides the best and most popular site and is chosen for evaluation against Option A – an on-site rebuild of Portobello High School. The advantages of Option A include:
- The High School would remain on an established location, well placed to serve the catchment;
 - There is widespread support from local residents for a rebuild;
 - Scope for re-development on an expanded site to build a modern school facility;
 - Potential to retain the existing modern sports hall that serves the school;
 - Brownfield development of the High School avoids the loss of recreational facilities and amenity open space; and
 - Nearby parkland sites could provide playing fields.
- 17.5 The disadvantages of Option A relate mainly to educational, funding and phasing considerations. This includes:
- A displaced St John's would need to be relocated in advance of work on a new Portobello High School;
 - There are no locally available brownfield sites, that are free of major constraints to locate St John's thus the loss of open space remains an issue for this option;
 - A decant of Portobello High School would last 2-3 years to allow demolition and rebuild of a new High School;
 - A decant of so many pupils to a temporary site such as Portobello Park would not provide the best facilities for teaching and for learning;
 - Several School Boards, the Senior Management Team of Portobello High School and many parents oppose option A because of the perceived detriment to the pupils' education;
 - A rebuild of the High School would provide an all weather pitch but no playing fields. Pupils would still need to travel to off-site facilities; and
 - A rebuild is the most expensive and most complex option due to the high decant costs and the need to finance a new primary school in advance of Portobello High.

- 17.6 Compared to a rebuild, a new school at Portobello Park is a simpler, more cost effective alternative that will provide a higher standard of school facilities in one location. A particular attraction is the ability to provide the high school all its outdoor sporting facilities within one location, making this solution the best educational solution. In terms of funding, and deliverability of the project, new build on the park is the most straightforward option and demolition of the existing High School would provide a brownfield replacement site for St John's.

It is accepted that redeveloping St John's on the site of the existing schools will prolong the timescales associated with re-providing this school. The choice of this site however does not compromise the level of provision for the primary school in the way that its size would do for the high school. This site is attractive in its ability to minimise the loss of open space in the area.

- 17.7 There are environmental and amenity costs related with building on Portobello Park. It would result in the loss of an informal grassed play area and many residents feel the land has "common good" status and that recreational use should be protected in perpetuity. The advice of the City Development Department is that there is no impediment to building on this site, and indeed the location of a school here represents the development of a facility which will be an enhancement to the community. The Council has given a public commitment to make good the loss of open space should Portobello Park be developed but land has still to be identified for this purpose.
- 17.8 In conclusion, it is considered that best option is a new Portobello High School on part of Portobello Park. This would free up land for the rebuild of St John's Primary School. Selection of these brownfield and greenfield options will provide larger, well located sites for both new schools and produce the right setting to deliver a high quality education in Portobello.

18.0 Financial Implications

- 18.1 Should the Council approve a preferred option, it is proposed that an initial funding bid is made to the Scottish Executive early in 2007. This would form part of a wider application involving other schools including Boroughmuir and James Gillespie's High Schools, St Crispin's Special School and potentially other primary schools. The outcome of this bid, the funding shortfall and possible means of finance will be reported to the Council in due course.
- 18.2 This report recommends that Option C is pursued for Portobello High School and Option A for St Johns Primary School. This would see the Council potentially tendering for the High School project in 2009 (for completion in 2011) and the primary school in 2011 (for completion in 2012). Based on BCIS forecasts, it is anticipated that there could be an uplift in prices to 2009 of 17% and to 2011 of 29%. Accordingly the cost of the project at the time of tender is estimated to be £37.7m for the replacement of Portobello High School, and £11m for the replacement of St Johns Primary School. The upgrade of the remaining grass pitches at the park, which would be an essential element of the project, would require a further £0.6m.
- 18.3 It should be noted that there are risks associated with achieving the timescales outlined above, which would be dependant on the length of time that is required to secure planning permission. A slip in the timescales would result in an increase in the project costs. The chosen procurement route may also impact on project costs.

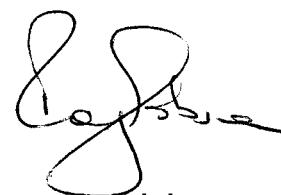
19 Recommendations

The Council is recommended to:

- 19.1 Approve the selection of Option C (Portobello Park) as the preferred location for a new Portobello High School subject to confirmation, through the courts if necessary, to the land being useable for this purpose;
- 19.2 Approve the selection of Option A (rebuild within the Portobello High School site) as the preferred location for a new St John's Primary School;
- 19.3 Delegate authority to the Directors of Children and Families and Finance to
- develop a funding strategy for the delivery of these schools
 - submit an initial case to the Scottish Executive in January 2007 in advance of submission of a full business case
 - and explore, with the Scottish Executive, possible delivery mechanisms for the Portobello High School and St. John's Primary School rebuild programmes
- 19.4 Approve the size of the new school as 1200 places with a corresponding S1 intake limit of 220 pupils. Approve an interim intake limit of 260 pupils for the 2007/8 start of session.



Andrew Holmes
Director of City Development



Roy Jobson
Director of Children and Families

Appendices

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Wards affected 35 Meadowbank; 36 Mountcastle; 39 Portobello; 40 Milton; 57 Craigmillar; 58 Duddingston

Background Papers Feasibility Report – St Johns Primary School, August 06
Feasibility Report – Portobello High School, August 06
Decant Strategy for Portobello High School, August 06

Scottish Executive: Consultation On Scottish Planning Policy 11: Physical Activity And Open Space
Edinburgh City Draft Local Plan, March 2006



Committee Minutes

Consultative Meeting on Replacement of Portobello High School

Edinburgh, 3 October 2006

Present:- Councillors Andrew Burns (Executive Member for Children and Families) and Perry also approximately 250 members of the public.

In Attendance:- Roy Jobson (Director of Children and Families); Lindsay Glasgow (Asset Planning Manager), David Fenton (Head of Infrastructure and Development), and Alastair Scott and Rachael Simmonds (Smith, Scott, Mullen, Architects) and Bill Miller (Asset Management Manager).

The Executive of the Council at a meeting on 12 September 2006 had agreed to undertake consultations on proposals to replace Portobello High School and St John's Primary School.

Introduction

Councillor Burns, Executive Member for Children and Families set the context of the consultation, explaining that the primary purpose of the exercise was to consider site options for replacing Portobello High School. He added that he hoped that the exercise would lead to the provision of a new school fit for purpose and ready for the 21st century. Councillor Burns also recapped briefly on the initial plan which would have seen financial provision made for a new Portobello High School under the PPP2 scheme. He was interested to ensure that the Council were in a position to take a decision on the potential site for the new Portobello High School at their meeting on 21 December 2006. The course of action which would lead through the consultation exercise towards that decision and the likely schedule of events from that point were outlined. Councillor Burns also explained that he was optimistic that the Scottish Executive would be prepared to support findings for the school's replacement. He explained that if the Executive agreed to make funding available it was usual for the Executive to fund 80% of the overall cost leaving the balance of 20% to be found by the Council. He also indicated that he considered it extremely unlikely that the Scottish Executive would wish to take a decision on any large building project in advance of the May election.

Explaining that the proposals did not require the provision of housing on the Portobello Golf Course or Park sites he also explained that the current High School

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site might be considered for release for housing if the decision favoured options B or C. He also fully expected any loss of green space to be compensated by provision elsewhere, as close as possible and preferably within walking distance. He encouraged all those attending to contribute to the discussion and reminded everyone that they were also welcome to submit written comments if required.

Presentation

Dave Fenton, Children and Families explained that the Council was obliged under statute to consult in considering replacement. He described Portobello High School as occupying a 2.9 hectare site and identified the nine storey tower, a central feature of the current school complex, as a highly unusual if not unique feature. He described this as a limitation as was the highly restricted site. Both these features restricted the fitness for purpose of the current building, something which was particularly emphasised by a lack of outdoor facilities. Reaffirming the need in educational terms to take action to address the shortcomings of the current buildings he outlined the range of options which had been considered and which had been narrowed by careful and systematic deliberation to the three options now recommended –

Option A - Existing site of Portobello High School and St John's Primary School.

Option B - Portobello Golf Course and

Option C – Portobello Park.

The relative merits and demerits of each option were then explained by Alastair Scott of Smith, Scott, Mullen, Architects. The firm had been appointed by the Council to carry out an assessment of the pros and cons of a wide range of sites and options. The results of this exercise were shown in a comparative assessment matrix with each site evaluated against selected criteria. The matrix (or traffic light analysis as it was sometimes known) provided a graphic guide as an aid to decision-making. He also explained that it represented a subjective assessment of the seriousness of issues based on the balance of probability and a thousand separate decisions by the Architects in attempting to provide a balanced view.

David Fenton was heard in further explanation of the sifting process in the analysis which had narrowed the original choice of 15 sites down to the three options now currently recommended for consideration. Each of these was explained in detail, attention being also drawn to the details of the main study, copies of which were available locally. Showing the site plans to the meeting, Mr Fenton was also careful to explain that the representation of buildings on the various sites were only there to offer a perspective on scale and were schematics rather than suggesting any preconceived ideas of the buildings themselves. He explained that whichever site was selected, the Council would require to commission a design based on a generic brief. That exercise would take 15 months to complete. During this period consideration could be given to any issues such as decant requirements.

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Questions

Councillor Burns then opened the meeting to questions indicating that he would take questions in groups of three, the responses to be given by members or officers as appropriate

Q1 The parent of child at Portobello HS asked for clarification on the figure of 1,200 pupils as the capacity for the new school. The current school had 1,450 pupils and a figure of 1,400 pupils had been mentioned.

Q2 The parent of St John's Primary School pupil asked for clarification on Option A. If St John's moved, a 3.5 hectare site would be available. What facilities would be used. Would there be bussing. What is the scope for expansion?

Q3 The parent of 2 children at Towerbank PS, expressing a strong preference for Option C, asked for a further explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of Option A.

Answers 1, 2 and 3

The Director of Children and Families explained that the original work on Portobello High School had been based on an estimated school population of 1,400. More recent estimates of the school population to 2011 reflected the general falling school roll. The Portobello area appeared to be following a national trend of a 20-25% long-term fall in school numbers. As such and following a careful study of the intakes of the feeder primaries, it was proposed to operate on the basis of a 1,200 school population. Replying to the question on bussing Mr Jobson indicated that if Option A was chosen, it appeared likely, given the restricted site, that it would be necessary to continue to bus pupils elsewhere to meet their sports/recreational/ social requirement. Expanding on the previous answer Mr Jobson recapped on the merits and constraints considered relative to Option A. He accepted that a site with a larger footprint should lead to improved flexibility in education planning terms and almost certainly to improvements in what was possible in sports/recreational aspirations.

Q4 The parent of a pupil at Parson's Green asked whether the record being taken of this consultative meeting would be made available?

Q5 A Portobello School Board representative expressed a preference for redevelopment on the current site (Option A). The questioner asked whether the need for decant could not be eliminated or at least reduced by building the new school on the open space provided by the current school play area, prior to the demolition of the current school building.

Q6 A Portobello High School pupil asked whether the new school would have a Tower Block?

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Answers 4, 5 and 6

Councillor Burns confirmed that the Note of Meeting would be made available in its entirety as an Appendix to the report which would be placed before the Council on 21 December 2006. He also explained how and where to access the papers.

Mr Jobson added that he was obliged in terms of the consultation process to record all the issues which were raised and to address them in the report which was put before the Council. Further he was obliged to be open and fair in his responses to all the comments made. Referring to the question on the Tower, Mr Jobson explained that in his visits to Portobello High School on occasion, he had become aware that the pupils generally did not like the 9 storey tower block because it hindered easy access between classrooms.

Prior to responding on Q5, Rachael Simmonds, sought confirmation from the inquirer that it would be his preference to avoid decanting the school to another site if that was possible. With that agreed, her immediate reaction was that, trying to build on the play area severely restricted site options. The school would end up on the less-favoured, rear site. Further as the demolition of the existing school buildings would take 22 weeks, it could be expected that the construction period would present security and health and safety issues for the new school as well as a very poor environment for pupils and staff alike. Adding to the comments already made on the Tower Block, Rachael Simmonds added that she expected that every attempt would be made to avoid provision of another Tower Block and confirmed that a three storey building was considered to be optimum for ease of access.

Q7 A parent of a Portobello High School pupil indicated that they favoured Option C. They reflected on the period of seven years they would have to wait for the new school building and the three years in decant. They also challenged any proposal to re-build on the current site and questioned the likelihood of asbestos being found.

Q8 A parent of 2 pupils at Towerbank Primary School drew attention to comments they had heard from a PE Teacher. The questioner asked whether it was really thought that the new High School could be served by an astro turf pitch and two other pitches. Suggesting that this was wholly insufficient, she suggested that the opportunity should be taken to provide much more generous sport and recreation facilities and a community facility available on an 8 to 8 basis.

Q9 The parent of a child at Towerbank Primary School suggested that priority needed to be given to the 1,200 or 1,400 pupils at the High School and that by comparison only limited use was made by the community of the Golf Course.

Answers 7, 8 and 9

The Director of Children and Families expressed sympathy with the parents and pupils who would help make the decision on the new High School but would never enjoy the benefits. Commenting on the decant possibilities he drew attention to the fact that having builders and pupils on the one site was not a good mix and drew

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attention to strict health and safety requirements. Relative to the question of decant, he also confirmed that he accepted that the decant of a whole school, particularly with the pupil population of Portobello High School, would pose serious difficulties. He accepted particularly that a three year decant period was hardly ideal for a pupil facing examinations which could influence the remainder of his life. Regarding the vision on sports and recreation provision, Mr Jobson agreed that whichever option was chosen it would be a difficult decision and that he aspired to a site offering freedom of design and adequate space for the provision of quality sports and recreation facilities. Responding to the question on asbestos, Rachael Simmonds explained that a type 3 asbestos survey was carried out as a standard preliminary to any major demolition. Should asbestos be found on the site, its removal would be planned during the buildings planning stage with no additional consequences expected to the programme.

Q10 The parent of a child at Portobello High School asked “Why consider Option A? If the brief calls for a 4.5 hectare site why not discount Option A immediately?” And how, in any case, could you justify a bill of £6m for decant if Option A was selected.

Q11 The parent of a pupil at Duddingston Primary School asked where it was intended to provide replacement green space? When you speak of supplementary funding, what do you mean? Please elaborate, does this relate to the question of housing provision on any site.

Q12 The parent of a child in a feeder Primary (unnamed) expressed concern at the proposed reduction in school population from 1,400 to 1,200, suggesting that this was madness given the demand for places at Portobello from the surrounding area. The enquirer added that due to the restrictions and despite the fact that she lived only a few minutes away from Portobello High School, her daughter would be sent to another school.

Answers 10, 11 and 12

Councillor Burns confirmed that the Council instruction required the officers to carefully consider the full range of options for the replacement of Portobello High School. As for the commitment on the replacement of amenity open space, he admitted that it was too early to be precise on the location. As for supplementary funding, Councillor Burns could only point out that he could not influence the outcome of the Scottish Executive deliberations and that the intervening election, involving as it did proportional representation, blurred the possibilities on predicting outcomes.

Mr Jobson indicated that Option A was there because it was recognised that there were those within the community opposed to development on the Golf Course or Park sites and that there was no suggestion of pre-judgement of outcomes. He also pointed out however that the constraints on Option A were evident from the discussion paper relative to the size of the site and the need to decant. Neither was it possible to identify a wider range of sites of the required size within the Portobello area. The decisions in the first phase of selection came down to a matter of choice

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on the site(s) offering the fewest disadvantages relevant to educational need but also to loss of amenity open space. As for the decant cost, Mr Jobson admitted that he fully recognised that the estimated cost of decant of £6m was high and indeed that, under other circumstances, that sum could represent the provision of an extra primary school. As for the anticipated provision of green space, he accepted that it was too early to attempt to identify where such replacement green space would be provided. He added information on the process followed in the first two rounds of PPP provision and indicated that there were uncertainties associated with the post-election position. Nonetheless he confidently expected that the post-election situation would not require the Council to trade housing for education provision and that the 80/20 balance required for PPP provision would continue. Given plans for a school with 1,200 places and expecting current policy on out-of-catchment placings to continue, Mr Jobson anticipated that he would be in a position to guarantee places for all within catchment pupils and a strong possibility of some non-catchment placings continuing.

Q13 The parent of a child at Portobello High School pointed out that her child would have left before the new facilities could come on stream and asked why seven years had to pass before the new facilities could be made ready. She also asked what investment there would be in the existing buildings in the interim. Particular concern was expressed at the current necessity for bussing pupils to sports and outdoor venues and to the loss of opportunity and time required by these efforts.

Q14 The parent of a child at Portobello High School asked for figures on the parking spaces made available under Options B and C. The question was also asked whether there might not be advantage in developing golf facilities at Portobello High School and making it a Golf Academy?

Q15 The parent of two children at Towerbank Primary School asked if, should Option B, the Golf Course site be chosen and if there was to be no housing development, would the Council consider allocating the balance of the site to sports use.

Answers 13, 14 and 15

Councillor Burns explained why the Council believed that the new school facilities could not come on stream before 2012 and reaffirmed his intention to commit to a site option at the Council meeting of 21 December 2006. Following from that, Lindsay Glasgow was heard in further explanation of the processes and timescales for development of a new High School building. She explained the period required for commissioning of Architects, the intense design process and the period required also for consultations. She also expressed the view that trying to take short-cuts in the initial stages of the process could easily result in errors which could compromise the final design. The planning application, she said, could take from six months to two years. Commissioning contractors would take a further six months with a minimum two year build period following, more if the decision was in favour of option A because of the demolition contract. Mr Jobson supported Lindsay's view that

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better results would follow from a considered and measured approach including careful and sensitive consultations in the early phases.

Alastair Scott, for the Architects, explained that the figure of 40 car spaces shown against the costs for all three options was a random figure based on the general requirements of Option A. The cost generated by that random figure had been adopted across all three options as the basis for cost comparisons. Whichever option was successful, it was anticipated that the car spaces figure would be reviewed as part of the school's design process.

The enquirer then explained that he was concerned at the trade off in terms of Option A between car parking and recreational open space. Mr Jobson replied that he had experience of secondary schools where it had proved impossible to provide car parking spaces (St Thomas of Aquin's). That decision could be taken later in the process, after the decision on the site and other facilities was known. He also advised that he would not discount the idea of a Golf Academy, although he considered that would be an issue for consideration on another day. If it happened that one or other of the sites was chosen, it would be hoped to provide adequate and reasonable community sports facilities. If then the Park site was chosen, a further question arose as to the use of the adjoining Golf Course site.

Questions

Q16 The parent of two children at Towerbank Primary School offered the opinion that Option A was entirely unacceptable and that she saw far greater benefits in Option B or C. She then asked whether the Scottish Executive were likely to weigh income from the sale of land relative to the new High School Development in their consideration of the funding needs for the project and whether the Scottish Executive view would be coloured by other non-financial considerations.

Q17 The parent of another child of a feeder primary asked if it was accepted that although it was of prime importance that the school was provided with well designed new facilities, Option A simply transferred the planning risk from the new High School to the replacement of St John's Primary School.

Q18 The parent of a pupil at Portobello High School asked whether there was any evidence that the current conditions in the school diminished the educational opportunities of pupils at the present time. They also asked for any hard evidence to that effect and also for a view of that situation relevant to decant.

Councillor Burns and the Director of Children and Families concurred in the view that Portobello High School could not be asked to continue until 2012 without significant investment in the near future, whatever the outcome of the consultation process. Mr Jobson expressed the view that funding by the Scottish Executive would be centred around the Council's business case on educational values and that they would not be drawn into considerations of associated issues on amenity, size or environmental factors.

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Responding to the question on transfer of risk to St John's Primary School, Lindsay Glasgow agreed that displacement of St John's and the process involved did involve a degree of transfer of risk to St John's as a site for that facility still required to be identified. The Director of Children and Families indicated that Portobello High School's educational attainment was comparable with most High Schools across the city and that he did not therefore believe that there was evidence to support any argument of the school under-achieving at this time. He was however aware of the need to bus pupils to meet their sports and recreational aspirations and hoped that that was not detrimental to pupils at this time. As for consideration of decant, the Director expressed the view that this would not present an attractive option for the school whatever arrangements could be put in place.

Q19 The parent of a pupil at Portobello High School indicated that he had had a conversation with a member of PE staff and as a result, that he had been persuaded to the view that the Golf Course was the best option available. He also asked the question of whether the needs of the local football club would be considered and why housing was to be considered for the current Portobello High School site if vacated, there being a strong case to be made for green space provision.

Q20 A pupil of Portobello High School pointed out that there were other Golf Club facilities nearby and that there were obvious deficiencies in toilet provision within the current Tower Block.

Q21 The parent of a pupil at Duddingston Primary School pointed out that the school roll at Duddingston was declining. She asked about the expectations for Duddingston Primary School pupils under the new arrangements for cluster school placings.

Answers

Councillor Burns explained that the object of the exercise was to provide Portobello with a new High School. Beyond that, a number of decisions required to be made including those relating to the future of the PHS site. The Director of Children and Families reaffirmed that the decisions which would follow would be informed by the decision on Scottish Executive funding particularly. If, as was expected, the Council was asked to provide a 20% contribution, it was hoped to be able to examine a range of options for the provision of that 20%. Reversion to ordinary capital funding could, if it occurred, substantially influence the Council's thinking on the options available.

The Director of Children and Families reviewed the argument on the three sites now under consideration and confirmed that he expected to hear very persuasive arguments, on the future of the Golf Course. As for the future size of the school and the arguments for inclusion of Duddingston Primary School within the catchment area, he reiterated that the new Portobello High School with a population of 1,200 pupils, would meet the needs of the local catchment area and that the opportunity should still exist to consider out of catchment area applications. As for the needs of the local Football Club, it was confirmed that discussions had already been opened

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with Thistle Football Club on the Club's requirements and the possibility of transferring them as part of the process.

Q22 The Questioner, who did not indicate whether they were a parent or local resident, asked if it was not obvious that C was the best option available?

Q23 A parent of three children at Towerbank Primary School asked what the implications were of a recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Scotland on establishing skills academies and whether this might have an impact on the consideration of this development?

Q24 The parent of two children at Portobello High School asked about the effect of decant on educational attainment.

Q25 The parent of two pupils at Portobello High School asked whether consideration had been given to a recent announcement of new rules to protect green spaces within urban areas and also sought a guarantee that the new green space spoken of earlier would be provided within reasonable walking distance.

Answers 22, 23, 24 and 25

The Director of Children and Families explained that further announcements were awaited on the development of skills academies. He was therefore reluctant to comment in response to a particular question. As for the impact of decant on educational attainment, he was aware of anecdotal evidence that decant had a detrimental effect overall on educational attainment. As for green space provision, he felt that it was too early to be drawn on the issue simply because the information did not exist. He agreed that planning issues would be an important consideration and accepted too the higher planning risks associated with options B and C. On this he expected to open talks with planning colleagues at an early date.

Q26 The parent of a child at Towerbank Primary School (and one also at Portobello High School) expressed a strong preference for Option C and expressed also the view that Towerbank Primary School was unfit for purpose. They were concerned at the implications involved in replacement of Portobello High School and particularly concerned at the possibility in delays in decision making until after the election in May 2007.

Q27 The parent of a pupil at Portobello High School asked Councillor Perry if he recollected being quoted as linking the replacement of Portobello High School to the provision of additional private housing in the area. They asked for an update on that and on the position if planning refused to sanction the provision of housing in the area and what reassurances could be given that the project would be funded properly.

Q28 A parent of a pupil at Portobello High School commented that this was an opportunity to build good facilities, why not grasp that opportunity immediately?

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Answers 26, 27 and 28

Councillor Burns explained that the timescales for replacement of Portobello High School seems entirely realistic although he viewed it as unfortunate that many current pupils of the High School would be unable to enjoy the benefits of the new school. Although there was the appearance of downtime within the programme, those periods would be fully used in associated activities. It was reiterated that the Scottish Executive had given every indication that they would not decide on any new building in the run-in to the May 2007 election. This time would be used to work up outline bids and on informal discussions which would speed up processes following that point in time.

Councillor Perry explained that when he had made the remarks attributed to him -

- 1) The local population had remained unconvinced on site options and that he had asked the Council to look at the widest range of possibilities; and
- 2) That, since it had appeared that the project would not be funded under the PPP1 or PPP2 schemes, consideration had had to be given to other funding options. This meant self-funding and required the Council to consider disposing of assets to find the resources necessary. Because the idea of releasing land for housing purposes had been rejected, the Council was considering further borrowing to meet the cost. This had appeared impossible when the remarks had been made.

The Director of Children and Families added that if planning permission was refused for the site chosen as a result of the consultation process, it would require the Council to begin the process anew. Mr Jobson also added that there was no thought but that the Council would fund the project properly. As Director of Children and Families, he had experience of 17 other PPP projects all of which had been delivered on time and on budget and fulfilled all reasonable expectations on educational attainment. As for the remainder, Mr Jobson added that the Council had always believed that Portobello High School needed to be replaced or substantially refurbished. This was seen as probably the best opportunity to attain that goal.

Q29 The questioner, who did not declare whether they were parent or local resident, expressed a strong preference for Options B and C and asked whether Option A offered any advantages not available from the other Options.

Answer 29

The Director of Children and Families drew attention to the restrictions on the site inherent in Option A and the implications of this on the provision of playing fields and on delivery of flexible educational space. The Director was however unable to point to advantages in Option A which were not enjoyed in terms of Options B or C.

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Q30 The parent of a child in S1 Portobello High School observed that it was interesting that there were fewer High School parents present than might have been anticipated. Expressed themselves as favouring Option C although, they also expressed concern at the declining state of the Portobello High School buildings as existed. The questioner then challenged the figures provided by the Director of Children and Families on the declining school population. They based this they said on the signs evident in the area of the migration inward of young families.

Q31 The parent of a pupil at Portobello High School and a teacher of some years standing, spoke of their experience of a decline in school attainment as a result of a nine month decant. The speaker therefore cautioned strongly against any option that required a lengthy decant process and asked whether the Director of Children and Families could suggest any measures which could be taken to maintain standards during a difficult and lengthy decant period?

Q32 The parent of a pupil at Parson's Green Primary School asked whether consideration would be given at this stage to other options, if such options still emerged? He also asked whether the Scottish Executive was likely to reduce the allocation of funding for the project if they were aware that the Council were likely to benefit from the sale of property for housing purposes? They also asked for a commitment that any income from such a sale of property held on education account would benefit education provision in the city.

Answers 30, 31 and 32

Councillor Burns explained that the Council (and he in particular) was very keen to maintain the pace of this project and indeed to build a momentum beyond the decision of the Council of 21 December. The Director of Children and Families expressed his disappointment and concern that children now would not see the benefits of the project whatever site was chosen. He also exhorted everyone interested and involved with the project to make their views known either through the consultation meetings or in written form. Replying on the matter of the planned school population and the catchment area, the Director expressed the view that the falling birth rate across Scotland had informed the Council's planning although due consideration had also been given to local content such as the intakes from Primary 1 to Primary 7 in feeder primaries. Mr Jobson also indicated that he had an unhappy experience of decant operations and would prefer to avoid such a scenario if at all possible. Referring to the matter of income from the sale of property, he pointed out that in terms of the preferred schedule the decision on the choice of site and the approach therefore to the Scottish Executive, would be made in advance of any decision on the disposal of property. As for new options emerging, the three options before the consultation meeting were considered to be the only three viable options at this time. Nonetheless it was seen as necessary to keep an open mind in case other options did emerge. On the question of investment of returns from the sale of property, Mr Jobson pointed out that the Council had given a clear commitment to reinvestment of such income into the education field on previous occasions. He expected that situation to continue although the matter had not been considered by Council as yet.

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Q33 The Parent of a child at Portobello High School expressed the view that he was inclined to support Option A but had reservations. He asked whether consideration had been given to using Holyrood High School as a decant option?

Q34 The Parent of a pupil at Duddingston Primary School asked about the impact on the school roll of any move and whether it was likely to influence some parents to send their children to private school, particularly if those children were already living out of the catchment area?

Q35 A parent of a pupil at Portobello High School and Chair of Portobello High School Board extended thanks to the members and officers attending the consultative meeting for their efforts during the course of the meeting and for their explanation on the events and options which were now presented. Having said that, he then asked how the Council would weigh the responses which were received and how they would reach a decision on the matter.

Answers 33 34 and 35

The Director of Children and Families confirmed that Holyrood High School had been considered as a decant option relative to replacement of Portobello High School. The Director also explained however that the timing of the two projects made that difficult if not entirely impossible and that that option had eventually been discarded as impractical. As for consideration of the school roll, Mr Jobson referred back to the answers given earlier during the discussions on the clear evidence of falling school rolls and supported the figures presented by staff.

On the matter of the responses, Mr Jobson explained that it was always a difficult matter to weigh the information and views which were presented and he accepted that in many cases it was a matter of finding a balance. Nonetheless, he expected there to be a large response on this issue and confirmed that he would maintain an open mind until the balance of the arguments became clear and the argument for one of the options became persuasive. He also confirmed that he was not entirely discounting arguments on the grounds of financial or environmental impact for instance although his main concern was still to ensure the best educational provision for the area within the resource allocation available. He felt that the Department had a good record of provision in recent years and hoped to enhance that in ensuring and honest and transparent analysis for Portobello High School. It would then be for the Council to decide. He reminded those attending that there was still an opportunity at that final decision point for them to take representations direct to the Council and to be heard.

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Closing Address

Councillor Burns thanked everyone attending for contributing to a considered and measured debate and reminded them that they were still able to write in at any point up to the end of October to let their views be known or to attend the other meetings which had been arranged as part of the consultation process at St John's Primary School and/or at Portobello Town Hall.

Committee Minutes

Consultative Meeting on Replacement of St John's Primary School

Edinburgh, 4 October 2006

Present:- Councillors Burns (Executive Member for Children and Families) and Perry and also approximately 70 members of the public.

In Attendance:- Roy Jobson (Director of Children and Families), David Fenton (Head of Infrastructure and Development, Children and Families), Bill Millar (Property Manager, City Development), Lindsay Glasgow (Asset Planning Manger, Children and Families), Alistair Scott (Smith Scott Mullen), Rachel Simmons (Smith Scott Mullen) and Susan Scotland (St Johns School Board).

The Executive of the Council at a meeting on 12 September 2006 had agreed to undertake consultations on proposals to replace Portobello High School and St John's Primary School.

Introduction

Councillor Burns, Executive Member for Children and Families provided a context for the consultation, explaining that the main reason for the exercise was to consider site options for replacing St John's Primary School. He referred to the wider community meeting at Portobello Town Hall on Wednesday 11 October 2006 and explained the consultation process, and how the comments of members of the public would feed into the process. The purpose of the process was the building of a new school. Reference was made to the choice of the site and how funding would be received. There would be a decision on a site in December 2006, but the decision on funding was likely to be made after the elections in May 2007. None of this would affect the date for the new building. Two issues existed. It was not the intention to use funding from housing development on the golf course to fund the package. If use were made of the park or golf course, then the Council would replace this with more green space of an equal area. A decision on the site would be made at the Council on 21 December 2006.

Presentation

Dave Fenton, Children and Families, indicated that this was a formal educational consultation, was associated with St John's and which encouraged representations.

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St John's Primary School was located on a small site and had old buildings with temporary units. Issues had arisen in the past and surveys were carried out. The site was central to the catchment area. There were issues concerning the size of classrooms, the lack of dedicated spaces and the condition of the building. The funding history and the date when the school was initially constructed were cited. Regarding the possibility of extension and refurbishment, there could be disruption and poor value for money. Regarding the replacement option through new build, there was a site options assessment. There were 15 sites and independent architects had been employed. The required site was bigger and needed a good choice of a quality site. Finally, 4 options were to be considered –

- Option A** Existing Site of Portobello High School
- Option B** Portobello Golf Course
- Option C** Portobello Park – Pitches
- Option D** Bingham Park

The relative merits and demerits of each option were then explained by Alastair Scott of Smith, Scott, Mullen, Architects. The firm had been appointed by the Council to carry out an assessment of the pros and cons of a wide range of sites and options. The results of this exercise were shown in a comparative assessment matrix with each site evaluated against selected criteria. The matrix provided a graphic guide as an aid to decision-making. He also explained that it represented a subjective assessment of the seriousness of issues based on the balance of probability and a thousand separate decisions by the Architects in attempting to provide a balanced view.

David Fenton was heard in further explanation of the sorting process in the analysis which had narrowed the original choice of 15 sites down to the four options now currently recommended for consideration. Each of these was explained in detail, attention being also drawn to the details of the main study, copies of which were available locally. Showing the site plans to the meeting, Mr Fenton was also careful to explain that the representation of buildings on the various sites were only there to offer a perspective on scale and were schematics rather than suggesting any preconceived ideas of the buildings themselves. He explained that whichever site was selected, the Council would require to commission a design based on a generic brief. That exercise would take 12 months to complete.

Councillor Burns thanked David Fenton for his presentation.

Susan Scotland (St Johns School Board) referred to the consultative process which was to help gain a new school and better facilities for the children. The present building was not fit for purpose, it was too crowded and the heating and power supply were old. In the new school, more could be achieved and she referred to the possible options. The School Board had asked that brownfield sites be considered, but these had been ruled out, due to the possible cost of purchase, which left the four options, which had been described. The School Board wanted the parents to make their views felt and had not therefore favoured one option. It was thought that Option D, a move to Bingham Park was not suitable, due to its poor accessibility. For Option

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A the location was good, but the time factor for replacing the school was not advantageous, as St Johns would not be replaced until Portobello High School had been rebuilt. The children would be in the middle of a building site, and this was not beneficial for the learning process. Options B and C had both benefits and constraints. There was the faster building process, but there were problems with the location. The School Board wanted an assurance from the Council that the least amount of open space would be lost and that no housing would be built on the site. There was nothing to prevent St Johns proposing Portobello Park as their preferred option, but the board was not making recommendations. Regarding the possibility of co-locating the two schools on the one site, the board would be happy to consider this, if it was planned effectively and certain conditions were met. There also should be the least loss of green space.

Questions

Councillor Burns then opened the meeting to questions indicating that he would take questions in groups of three, the responses to be given by members or officers as appropriate.

Q1 The parent of a child at St Johns PS asked how the consultation process worked taking the two schools in isolation. The community should not be broken up, the two schools impacted on each other and there needed to be joined up thinking.

Q2 The parent of a child at St Johns PS referred to the cost of purchase of part of the golf course. It was necessary to put money into the Common Good Fund for the purchase of the land. Also, a firm assurance was needed that houses would not be built on the site.

Q3 The parent of a child in the area commented that this was a good school. It was not possible to build on this site four years earlier, it was not acceptable to give up the green site at that stage.

Answers 1, 2 and 3

Councillor Burns explained that it was not the intention to deal with the two schools in isolation and both schools should be rebuilt as soon as possible. He emphasised that it was not the intention of the present administration to build houses on the land, but there was political uncertainty, given the 2007 elections.

The Director of Children and Families indicated that he appreciated that there was concern regarding funding. However, in the last two parliaments there had been substantial funding for school building projects and this would hopefully be repeated. That was why the Scottish Executive was being approached for funding rather than it being achieved from the sale of houses. This process would need further consultation and this was being initiated now, to ensure a high quality of bid. When the new schools were completed, they would be of good quality and standard.

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Regarding the separation of the consultation for the two schools, there had to be two rounds of consultation, according to statute. The schools had two separate needs, but had common links. This was a complex exercise and it was necessary to take a balanced view of the arguments and to arrive at a satisfactory solution.

With reference to the timescale, the major disadvantage of the use of the existing site was the probable time delay. The funding should not run out, as it would be ringfenced at this stage of the bid.

Bill Miller, Property Manager, City Development, referred to the Common Good Fund. This land was usually gifted to the City of Edinburgh Council in the past for safekeeping, however, Portobello site was different in that the Council purchased it. There was a condition that the park should be used for recreational purposes. However, there had been a change in the legislation relating to the feuing condition. It was hoped that the community would use the park. There was now an investigation into Common Good Land in Council control.

The parent of a child at St Johns PS referred to events in Ayr, where the local Council tried to build on Common Good Land, but in a legal ruling, the Council lost the case.

Councillor Perry explained that in Edinburgh, the question was raised and legal advice had been taken. Consequently, it was permissible to build on the park.

Q4 The parent of a child at St Johns PS referring to the funding issue, relating to the market value attached to the site, suggested that this would preclude building.

Q5 The parent of a child at St Johns PS stated that the children received a good education, so why should the present building be renovated and term and conditions could be included. If there was a move to the other end of the site, the new sections of the building could be possibly included. It was a spurious exercise to link the two sites.

Q6 The parent of a child at St Johns PS raised health and safety concerns, which included asbestos, if the existing site was retained, under Option A.

Answers 4, 5 and 6

The Director of Children and Families explained that the market value was about £10m maximum and the total cost would be approaching £50m. It was difficult at this stage to get accurate figures and it depended upon the funding package from the Scottish Executive. In the past the Private Public Partnership (PPP) was employed. A gap did exist with funding needs, but it was not yet known what the nature of the funding was, it was usual for the Executive to fund 80% of the overall cost leaving the balance of 20% to be found by the Council.

He explained that there were difficulties with the present site and it had been found that major refurbishment did not yield the best dividends. Refurbishment meant

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having the same structures and size of classrooms. The way to achieve best value was to build high quality with sustainability, and new build could take into account the view of the public and incorporate new technology and good design. Referring to linkage, it was up to the schools to maximise these, however, sometimes, links had worked well. Also, it could be argued that the savings achieved from co-location were fairly marginal.

Alistair Scott (Smith Scott Mullen) explained that school building considered health and safety issues. When demolishing buildings, it was possible to find asbestos, but it was not harmful if left untouched. Buildings were dismantled rather than demolished now which could take 22 weeks. There were issues of sustainability and recycling to be considered and dismantling buildings meant that recycling of materials could take place. New disciplines had emerged in relation to health and safety. The major issues to be considered were dust, noise and disturbance, rather than safety, as it was difficult trying to teach in these circumstances.

Q7 The parent of a child at St Johns PS commented that the proposed rebuilding of St Johns in 2011-2014 involved a big time factor and asked were there any plans for refurbishment at present. There were no significant savings through co-location, but how would financial gains be achieved.

Q8 The parent of a child at St Johns PS indicated that the sustainability issue had been cited, but there was no mention of the sustainable use of land, which was disappointing. All the brown field sites had been rejected and Holyrood Park site was not being considered. Construction in this location might be advantageous.

Q9 A further question was raised about the development of houses. After the May 2007 elections, the Labour Party would probably retain influence. Therefore what would their policy be on the use of the park.

Answers 7, 8 and 9

The Director of Children and Families indicated that in relation to the 2011 figure, the first aspect answered depended on the amount of funding received from the Scottish Executive. If there were no funding package, it would be difficult to attend to the task. If the bid was satisfactory, while keeping to the building program over next few years, it was not advantageous to inject large amounts of money for refurbishment, but this had to be balanced against the need to upgrade the school. It depended on the funding regime when keeping the building in good condition.

Referring to the use of the land in green space, Mr Jobson explained that in respect of the use of Holyrood, there had been difficulties in replacing Holyrood in the past, and the chances of building a school in this location were very low. Rachel Simmons of Smith Scott Mullen, explained that the number of hectares at Holyrood which were cited, and the actual hectares required was less than the ideal size for the proposed school. From a planning perspective it was disadvantageous to build on this land.

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Alistair Scott drew attention to proposals for building on green space. He had hoped to find a brownfield site, but this was not possible, as in carrying out this analysis, the brownfield sites were not satisfactory, as the Council could not acquire these. Some greenfield sites were also discarded, therefore no bias in choice of sites existed. Regarding the sustainable issue, there needed to be a balance of green space, the potential green space to be lost might not have huge present benefit, but it could be improved at a later date.

Bill Miller explained that there were problems with brownfield sites. Most of these sites were not in Council ownership, therefore, it was hard to deliver on them, as there would have to be a purchase made and these sites cost substantial amounts of money. The Council has compulsory purchase powers to buy sites, but it was a difficult process and a hearing process would probably be invoked. Regarding the site in Council ownership, this was not in Council control, but was tied to an outside arrangement, which would last for 82 years. The Council could buy out the interest and the occupiers had expressed interest, but it would cost the Council to have to find other site.

In response to the question about possible housing development, Councillor Burns explained that there were no plans for building houses on the park or the golf course.

Q10 The parent of a child at St Johns PS asked if the two schools were built on the golf course, how much would it cost to build other golf course.

Q11 The parent of a child at St Johns PS asked for clarification of the option whereby St Johns PS moved out and the High School was located in this vicinity. If there was to be a loss of a greenfield site, St John's should be built on the Park and the High School would be built on the present site. She thought there should not be a primary school near a High School.

Q12 The parent of a child in the area commented that there was a more difficult decision to be made at the High School. People needed assurance about the move from the brownfield site and an explanation was required to explain the process of the move. The majority opinion was for a move to the Park.

Answers 10, 11 and 12

Lindsay Glasgow, Asset Planning Manager, Children and Families, explained that the cost of a new golf course had been researched before. This would cost £2.25m for a golf course and £1m for a clubhouse, and it would take two years to complete.

Roy Jobson stated that it was necessary to balance the different aspects, of the various options and choices had to be made about the use of land. There needed to be further consultation about the decision from the Scottish Executive. He referred to the preference for one site. There were implications of size, and of total amount of land for co-location, there were savings and gains from co-location such as those at Oxfangs and Firrhill, which had the joint use of sports facilities. There were also educational advantages such as teaching links. St John's was not linked to

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Portobello. This did not prevent some links from taking place, however it was necessary for schools to feel comfortable with their respective locations. Some parents of primary children did not want their children near a High School and it was necessary to build in safety measures.

Alastair Scott explained that there were implications for size. If both schools co-located, the pitches would be used, rather than the golf course, which would mean there would be less impact on the streets. In terms of space, this would take up the whole of the pitches. There could be gains in co-locating, such as energy use, but these should not be over-estimated. It was possible to lose out with co-location regarding football pitches, but if this possibility was decided, it was possible to move the golf courses.

Q13 A parent of Child of St Johns PS expressed the view that the funding was forthcoming. Was it advantageous to have an exchange of green space. Were Options B and C not similar here and why was the space requirement for St John's School increasing in size by a factor of 2.5?

Q14 A parent of Child of St Johns PS referred to the funding process, stating that there was a need for a replacement, therefore when was it recognised that this school had a finite time.

Q15 A parent of a child in the area asked what would be the life span be of the new school?

Answers 13, 14 and 15

Councillor Burns indicated that at the start of the 1990's, there should have been more resources spent on infrastructure, and there was now a catching up process. Portobello had been considered as part of the PPP process, but it did not go ahead. There was now a good opportunity to attend to both schools.

Roy Jobson explained that the major cutbacks started in 1976 with the International Monetary Fund crisis and there was 25 years of very little capital investment. It was necessary to keep a rolling process of building schools every year. Regarding the use of the existing site if the school was relocated, the City of Edinburgh Council would make a decision that funding was re-invested in schools. With respect to the need for more space, there was a basic need for PE, sports and social space. This view would be put to the school board and there was a need to see a balance of arguments and responses.

Lindsay Glasgow stated that regarding the prioritisation of funding, this responded to the funding available from the Scottish Executive. Big projects were high on the list of priorities, which made it possible to tackle replacement of schools. It was possible to look at primary schools in different ways as other sources of funding existed for them. There was a period of catch up in recent years and St John's was one of the next priorities.

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Referring to site size, Lindsay Glasgow explained that the main issue according to statute was to provide a site size of 1.5 hectares. This current building was two-thirds of the size it should be and outdoor sports facilities were vital.

It was explained that the new builds would last 50 years, whereas many of the 1960's buildings were not that flexible. The school curriculum had moved considerably in recent years. Building design at present was the key, which included the type of spaces, classrooms opening up to activities and sliding partitions. Space should respond to the changing needs of the curriculum.

Roy Jobson indicated that in the 1960's schools were built to last 20-30 years, but they were of insufficient quality at the time. Alastair Scott explained that for modern buildings, the cost of materials was analysed when designs were made and how easy were they to replace. Long term life and sustainability were human factors. The educational evolution of the build had to be right, there needed to be good building and flexibility, and it was desirable for people to prize the buildings.

Q16 A parent of Child from the area commented that not everyone at the previous meeting was in favour of Portobello Park. Regarding St John's PS, the Holyrood site was the preferred option. How could there be constant change taking place, such as separate consultations. The public was being told that there was funding from the Scottish Executive, which did not exist previously.

Q17 A parent of Child at St Johns PS indicated that she was pleased with the momentum that was taking place. What involvement would the City of Edinburgh Council have with the design process?

Q18 A parent of Child of St Johns PS asked about the desirability of swapping green spaces.

Answers 16, 17 and 18

Councillor Burns indicated that there had been changes, and the Council was now more responsive to parents' views. This was the consultative part of the process and the Council would make the decision.

Referring to the design process, Roy Jobson explained that in the first round, there was more public involvement and better design was formulated. The process had a momentum, consultations were proceeding and had to be fully reported and a series of recommendations formulated. Because a political decision had to be made, elected members knew the points that had been raised, and consultation was now a very formal process and subject to legislation. It should be possible to determine the Scottish Executive's official view about the possibility of building monies being available.

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Roy Jobson referred to the possible exchange of one green area for another. Regarding the funding package, the whole value of the site might be needed, however, it was too early to provide an answer and the Council had to consider this.

Q19 A parent of a child of St Johns PS commented about the potential design of the new High School from the previous meeting. Co-location was a bigger issue for primary children than secondary children, as there needed to be distance between the schools.

Q20 A parent of a child of St Johns PS referred to the timescales of the various options and the implications for the locations of the two schools, and the possible loss of parkland.

Q21 A parent of a child of St Johns PS indicated that she was not in favour of co-location and she thought that ensuring the safety of the primary children was an issue.

Answers to 19, 20 and 21

Roy Jobson explained that in relation to co-location, it was possible to reflect on the points raised and explore the issues at a School Board meeting. There should be a definition of what was meant by co-location, as it might be relatively close location and it depended on size. It also depended on proximity and sharing of facilities. This topic should be explored with the School Board and the dialogue should be kept going.

It was explained that Portobello would only be relocated first if St John's stayed on site. There was the consideration that Portobello would be kept and St John's re-located. It should be understood that construction works and children should not be in the same location. A decant would be essential which would have cost implications.

Councillor Burns made a commitment to return to the School Board on the issue of co-location.

Closing Address

Councillor Burns thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the consultation and reminded them that they could also make written submissions up to the end of October. People were also welcome to attend the next meeting at Portobello Town Hall.

Committee Minutes

Consultative Meeting on Replacement of Portobello High School and St Johns Primary School,

Portobello, 11 October 2006

Present:- Councillors Burns (Executive Member for Children and Families) and Perry.

In Attendance:- Roy Jobson (Director of Children and Families), Lindsay Glasgow (Asset Planning Manager), David Fenton (Head of Infrastructure and Development), Alistair Scott and Rachel Simmonds (Smith Scott Mullan Architects) and Bill Miller (Asset Management Manager).

Also Present:- Approximately 450 members of the public.

1 Welcome

The Executive of the Council had agreed to undertake consultations on proposals to replace Portobello High School and St John's Primary School. Councillor Burns, Executive Member for Children and Families, stated that the Council was committed to engaging with the community and that tonight's meeting was not part of the statutory process which the Council was required to follow but that the Council had gone beyond its statutory obligations to ensure wider community participation.

2 Introduction

Councillor Burns set the context of the meeting, explaining that the primary purpose of the exercise was to provide new Fit for Purpose schools for Portobello High School and St John's Primary School. Councillor Burns then set out the process which the Council was required to follow. Following a public consultation exercise (which was due to end 30 October 2006) the Council would make its decision on site options. Following this the Council would then write officially to the Scottish Executive for funding. He explained that if the Executive agreed to funding, it was usual for the Executive to fund 80% of the overall cost leaving the balance of 20% to be met by the Council. Councillor Burns stated that it was extremely unlikely that the Scottish Executive would

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wish to take a decision on any large building project in advance of the May election. This, he stressed, would not affect the proposal and opening dates of 2011/2012. Once the funding was secured the Council would then proceed to build the schools as proposed. This would involve further consultations and discussions with key stakeholders.

In concluding Councillor Burns stated that it was not the intent of the City of Edinburgh Council to build housing on either the park or the golf course. It was the Council's view that should part of the golf course be used it would replace green space with at least the same amount of green space.

David Fenton, Children and Families, then explained that the Council was obliged to undergo statutory consultation in considering the replacement schools. He then gave a short presentation on the current school facilities, the funding history of both schools, the replacement options together with a site assessment for each of the options. He explained that the original choice of 15 sites had been narrowed to three options for the High School and four options for the Primary School now currently recommended for consideration. Each of these was explained in detail –

- Option A – Existing site of the two schools.
- Option B – Portobello Golf Course.
- Option C – Portobello Park.
- Option D – Bingham Park (St Johns Primary School only)

Mr Fenton was careful to explain that the representations of buildings on any of the site plans were only there to offer perspective and scale, and were schematics rather than an illustration of preconceived ideas of the buildings themselves. He explained that whichever site was selected, the Council would require to commission a design based on a generic brief. That exercise in itself would take 15 months to complete and during this period consideration would be given to any issues such as decant requirements, etc.

The relative merits and de-merits of each option were then explained by Alistair Scott of Smith Scott Mullen Architects. The firm had been appointed by the Council to carry out an assessment of the pros and cons of a wide range of sites and options and the results of this exercise was shown in a comparative assessment matrix with these sites evaluated against selected criteria. The matrix (or traffic light system), provided a graphic guide as a need to decision making. It also represented a subjective assessment of the seriousness of issues based on a balance of probability which would assist the architects in attempting to provide a balanced view.

Questions

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Councillor Burns then opened the meeting to questions indicating that he would take questions in groups of three, responses to be given by members or officers as appropriate.

Question 1 – I would like to ask a question regarding Option A. The Council has admitted to mistakes when building the existing Portobello High School. I would like to know will they be back in 10 years time doing the same thing as tonight if these buildings prove to be inadequate?

Question 2 – One of the key issues relating to Option A is the decant process. We have heard that the Council may use temporary accommodation however, Holyrood High School is currently being built by PPP2. Why not decant to that site? It may be possible to do this and save the park.

Question 3 – Councillor Burns stated that the timescale would be unaffected by the elections and would be on track for 2012. Yet the options mentioned in the presentation referred to the year 2014. Does this mean that you have pre-judged the outcome of the consultation. Can you guarantee that no housing will be built on the park or golf course.

Answer 3 – Councillor Burns – The timescale for Options B and C is 2011/2012 while for Option A it is 2013/2014. I have no preconceptions at this stage. I do not know what will come out of the consultation. I am personally delighted at the public response and so glad to see so many people here again tonight. All I can say is once again there will be no housing built on the park or golf course if I am still here.

Answer 1 – Roy Jobson – With regards to coming back – there are vital ingredients. The site is big enough for a freedom of design. If you have a smaller site then there are more constraints put on the design process. A smaller site also impacts on the playing fields. I have learned a lot over the years about building schools. The current Portobello High School and others of that generation are being replaced, it is a fact. They were not well built, not well designed and are not fit for purpose. We need to design to a higher specification than the architects and planners of that generation. It is true for new schools that size and location impact on design.

Answer 2 – Roy Jobson – With regards to the decanting it is a difficult task, the arrangements are complicated, it will be difficult and expensive which ever we choose. If we were to move into temporary buildings there are doubts over the educational value of that, and this is a high cost option. For Holyrood we did look at that but there are a number of issues not least the timing. There also questions of acceptability to residents, transport issues, contractual issues which make that suggestion unfeasible.

Lindsay Glasgow – With regards to the Holyrood decant we did look at that option but Holy Rood is due to open in 2009. The new building would be

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wrapped around the current building because of green belt restrictions. The footprint of the current school would be used for ancillary spaces for the new high school such as playing grounds, parking, pitches etc. If we keep this building and use it for Portobello High School then we would have to wait until 2013/2014 for the existing Portobello High School to be available which would make Holyrood open for a further four or five years and no new play space for either of the Schools' pupils.

Answer 3 – Roy Jobson – The matter of the timescales and elections is important because the issue of funding is key to the project. Some favour the park site, some favour no houses, some oppose it. The timescale is important. The elections will be held in May 2007. In previous years funds have been made available for school replacements and we do expect a third phase of funding to be available but we will not know that until after the elections.

Question 4 – Could we hear more about the proposals for decanting? I am horrified about the educational impact of decanting pupils.

Question 5 – I have the same question. I have three children, the youngest is finishing at Portobello High School I have questions over the educational impact of the campaign in that school.

Question 6 – I have concerns over the volume or detail provided for this. Which option provides best value, which is the best for education provision for the school and which gets the quickest results?

Answer 6 – Councillor Burns – It is not black and white all of the options have positives and constraints. None are 100% perfect none are 100% dreadful this is the reason we are talking to the public and gathering more information.

Answers 4/5 – Roy Jobson – With regards to the educational impact of the decant it could be extremely high. Within the city we do not have a great experience of decanting in this size. It is a big school and to be candid we do not have the alternative school building to place the pupils therefore we have to consider options such as a temporary village and address any problems that that would bring. We do however have experience of whole school decants and previously as Director of Education in Manchester I had experience where a whole school burned down and I had to provide a whole school out of temporary accommodation. It is very difficult to find adequate classes etc and over two years it can have a huge impact both educationally, socially and psychologically. In this case a decant which may last two or three years will have an impact. It may seem like a long time but in the lifetime of a youngster it is half of their secondary lifetime and without adequate PE, science and home economic provisions life can be difficult. The issue of the decant is an important consideration, it is not impossible it can be done.

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Answer 6 – Roy Jobson – The issue of what the best option is, is complex. We have to assess all the information, approximately 1,600 pieces of information from architects alone, we will have the parent and public comments from these public meetings and correspondence, e-mails etc and I have to present a report to the Council which is fair and balanced. I will make a recommendation as an officer and the Councillors will take a political decision.

Ian Perry – With regards to the change in the political landscape. It is true that politics could change in May and everything gets turned on its head. We have had informal meetings and it is clear that the public wanted all sites analysed in greater detail and for us to look at more sites than we had brought to the table now there are four sites suitable for consultation. You have told us that you don't like houses in the park or golf course. We have removed this from the plan. If politics does change in May I doubt any party would attempt to build houses there.

Question 7 – I have observations in Option B and C. I am a resident in Duddingston Crescent opposite the playing fields. The road gets very busy in the morning and in the evening rush hour. We were told last year that the proposed green lane in Milton Road which means that traffic would only have one lane to operate there. You are suggesting you put a school there which means in an area of high volume traffic you would have parents dropping kids off, pupils crossing roads, buses, cars and bikes. It would be chaos. What would you do for children's safety and what would you do in terms of ensuring a proper infrastructure. This is bound to take up more space. What would the impact be of the new school on traffic and what would this mean in terms of additional land being used for traffic infrastructure.

Question 8 – If I can make a point about question 7, why not have a traffic free school? My question relates more to finance. It is documented that there have been significant problems with regards to the PPP route taken to finance public buildings in terms of the limitations of designs and substantial bills which the authority has incurred and which have to be paid over a long time into the future. Will the Council consider other routes such as public bonds, extra taxation etc.

Question 9 – I am a student at Heriot Watt University studying to be an urban planner and I have been reading planning policies. Nearly all state that it is essential to protect green space especially, inner city space. The concept of building on the park or green space therefore goes against local, national and European policy.

Answer 9 – Councillor Burns – You have a valid point and I agree we should protect green space. None of the options are 100% perfect the nature of this will be a compromise if you want 21st century schools. If we go for the green space option we will replace green space.

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Answer 8 – Roy Jobson – With regards to PPP there are a number of pros and cons. We have had two rounds of this in the Education Department now but we are driven by what the Executive makes available. I would be happy to go down the route of public bonds and other capital funding routes etc. We have done it before.

Answer 7 – Roy Jobson – You make a fair point. Clearly any site will have an impact on traffic and it will be important to ensure there is adequate pupil movement management. We have experience with this within the Department and we have built a number of new schools over the recent years. We need to involve City Development. We need a full traffic impact analysis which includes all routes etc that could be used. The project will work in stages. Firstly the City of Edinburgh will decide in principle the site on 21 December 2006. Then we have to secure the funding from the Scottish Executive, the third step then is to have further consultation on planning, traffic and design etc. It is a long process for the residents, the School Board, for parents and for pupils but it is a worthwhile process. There is an issue of land use depending on which other site is chosen, the access to and from the site and the design options which are available. There is also an issue of encouraging children to walk and cycle to school. You made the point about green space. Councillor Burns earlier stated his commitment to replace green space if we chose the park site. The point is well made. With regards to finance the point is that the Scottish Executive makes the decision on how to fund new schools. We have used capital funding before. We have used PPP routes. PPP has not brought design limitations. Funding limitations does this regardless of how it is financed. We could discuss PPP pros and cons all night however.

Question 10 – I disagree with the use of the park and on the ownership of the park. I believe it belongs to the people but if the City of Edinburgh Council does own it then when the decision is made would it be prepared to give the ownership of the remainder to the people of Portobello for perpetuity.

Question 11 – It is my assertion that the land is common good land and this represents a legal impediment to the Council's proposals. What are your views on that?

Question 12 – How will the City of Edinburgh Council come to a conclusion. Will there be weighting to the points made?

Answer 12 – Councillor Burns – It is not a science we have to consider the statistical elements, the outcome of the public consultations, the hundreds and thousands of e-mail responses and it is up to officers to make a report that is balanced and fair. We are saying that we encourage comments, the more comments, the better informed the Council can be.

Answer 11 – Roy Jobson – The question is a legal one. However the land is in the ownership of the City of Edinburgh Council. With regards to how the

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Council has been asked to reach a conclusion the answer is with difficulty. How is the factor weighted? It is not a numbers game and it is not a referendum. My job is to present arguments to the Council and the decision will be based on education arguments but also others such as green space etc. All options have positives and negatives. I will produce a balanced and fair report which makes a recommendation for the Council. The Council is aware of the issues and has to look at both sides in the provision of playing fields and sport facilities against the use of green space, the pros and cons of decanting against not decanting etc and so.

Answer 11 – Bill Miller – With regards to the Common Good Fund – land need not necessarily be owned by the Council but can be gifted by the Crown and examples of this in the city, the Meadows, Princes Street Gardens etc. Portobello Park is not in this category. It was purchased by the Council in the 1800s. It was not gifted. However, there was a condition in the title that it is used for recreational purposes. A change in the legislation in 2001 changed the condition. It is up to the community to decide if the change of use could be for the benefit of the community such as the provision of a school. In some ways all land is owned by the Council on behalf of the people.

Answer 10 – Councillor Burns – I do not know if that is legally possible. I do make a promise however to ask officers to get the legal view on the suggestion.

Question 13 – It is a shame that the community is divided to choose a school or choose a park. Portobello is a divided community – if you are viewed as voting for the green space then you are seen as against the school. Why can't we have both. Why do we have to choose? Is it due to a lack of sites or a lack of finance. Is the lack of finance why we have to build houses onto the park or the golf course. It is a high risk strategy and could be challenged by the Scottish Executive. There could be a Public Inquiry.

Question 14 – There is a high planning risk for these options. 2011/12 seems like pie in the sky. For new schools with the role change and what impact will this have in the design? If Labour wins the election can you guarantee no housing will be built in the area?

Question 15 – My question is about the health of children. We are currently in the grip of an obesity epidemic how will Option A help children. If we were to bus children how will they be able to access green space and playing fields?

Answer 13 – Councillor Burns – I agree I want both. I want a new school and I want green space. This whole process is driven by desire for a new school. It is not about putting houses on a golf course or a park. If Labour stays in, I can assure you we will not put houses there. With regards to obesity in the country it is true it is unsatisfactory to bus children to the Jack Kane Centre and end up using half of the period travelling hence the advantages in the existing site.

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Answer 13 – Roy Jobson – We all want a new school we are all agreed on that, the discussion is where the school should be. It is true that the community is divided there are large numbers in favour of the park site and large numbers against. This argument is for and against both options. If the park site is chosen then there is a risk in terms of planning permission and in terms of Public Inquiry. We have to go into this with our eyes open and this is why we have a cautious timetable. The question for the Council is not financial exclusively. The existing former high school site if retained could be more expensive due to the high decant costs but won't be highest priority in terms of funding bid. Yes we did look at a number of options with regards to the location. A key factor was size such as the school roll. We know the number of children up to 2017 we have projections of birth rate which has fallen in the city and across Scotland. We know numbers have fallen therefore the suggestion is to decrease the roll of the secondary school. With regard to the last point there is no doubt that the arrangements with regards to bussing children are inadequate. It does not only affect classes such as PE it also affects the availability of extra curricular activities.

Question 16 – I am worried that if Option A goes ahead pupils will be studying for highers in portacabins. This is not suitable at all.

Question 17 – Pupils lose half of their PE time through being bussed. We should learn from the mistakes of the past and think about the Portobello High School future and the future of pupils.

Question 18 – I have a question regarding the matrix. It seems to imply that for Jewel Park there is no access by bicycle pedestrian but it is located next to the cycle lanes! Also coming off Milton Road it is very busy. The matrix just seems inaccurate to me.

Answer 18 – Andrew Burns – You have the summary of a much larger document. The document is however freely available.

Answer 17 – Roy Jobson – Your view of decanting is accurate – the question about exams is very important. If pupils have to go to a different building for exams it can be an unpleasant experience.

Answer 18 – Rachael Simmonds – With regard to the sites in the matrix we did visit the sites on a number of occasions and often several times a day. The matrix does not provide the answer but gives an opinion on these factors. We are not saying there is no cycle path next to it we are saying it is not central in the catchment area.

Question 19 – With regards to Option A would you consider shared facilities with Holyrood High School? I don't mean a shared campus but shared facilities such as the gym, labs, workshops etc. There would be obvious benefits to both schools.

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Question 20 – I oppose the previous point. My point is about the quality of education. Over the years Portobello High School has improved as the roll has decreased. A new build will provide everything. This is a fantastic opportunity to consider what kind of education we want in the future, it is now just about a completion date. The proposals will cause disruption either way and that it is unfortunate. However, we need to be more visionary. The option includes the downsizing of the school. Previously the size of the school was one of the greatest faults of Portobello High School and this will have an impact when we come to decant. The quality of education has been hampered by the size of the school. In England there are examples of one large school being rebuilt as two or three smaller schools. If we were to follow this option we could also look at brown site options.

Question 21 – My point is about the importance of being able to walk or cycle to school. This is not just an environmental issue but a health issue and this is as important as the provision of sporting facilities. It is important to build a new site to enable us to have easier access by cycle or foot. The Council should also take the opportunity to consider cycling and for access in a wider catchment area. Can you tell which of the three options is best suited to improving cycle/foot access.

Answer 21 – Councillor Burns – I do not know which is best. Even if one is a better option there are other requirements to consider. You will know that I am a key supporter and it is not the only consideration. I would agree that building and fabric is not all. The quality of teaching in Portobello High School is very good but a new build could bring something to the community. It would not mean instant results and you would still need a high quality of teaching but it would bring something additional.

Answer 19 – Roy Jobson – With regards to the shared facilities the answer is no. Holyrood High School will be rebuilt as a PPP Phase 2. We have ratios of pupil space. The higher number of pupils the larger number of space and you end up with a bigger Holyrood High School and a smaller Portobello High School. It is not practical.

Answer 20 – Roy Jobson – Correct – good buildings do not equal good schools. Quality of teaching and learning are important and can make a significant difference. If you go to new schools here you see clear evidence of change. In the Pilton area, Craigmillar, in the primary schools there is a lack of vandalism and improved behaviour. There is pride in a new building. There was examples of this and lots of potential advantages in doing this. We can decide what kind of education we want. Part of the advantage of using a decent size site is the freedom of design. It gives us the opportunity to think about other long-term aims, what the best arrangements and how do we learn from the past. There are lots of new technologies and we can be far more flexible these days than in the past. With regard to the decreasing school size. This is

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important and it is part of the consultation. The birth rate is decreasing. Proposals would build in a margin for out of district pupils but it would largely be for the catchment area pupils. There has been some considerable research into educational attainment and which is best – small school or large school. However, there have been no real conclusions. Small schools have less pupils therefore less teachers, larger schools have pastoral care issues. Part of the answer is the nature of the community.

Answer 21 – Roy Jobson – It is very important to consider the impact on cycle and foot usage and access to the site via cycling. However, I cannot answer which option gives the best access. It is a classic question in the consultation process and it is one that will have to be worked on and an answer provided for the Council.

Question 22 – I am a local resident and frequently use the park. I understand that it is common good land. Do you factor the cost of land when you do your sums. It has to go to common good fund.

Question 23 – The park serves the whole community from young to old and is not just a walking park. The decision whether to build at the top or the bottom will have an impact on the land. The golf course will just not be the same.

Question 24 – A recent study at Glasgow University showed the correlation of teacher unhappiness to pupil unhappiness. If teachers were unhappy it is more likely that the kids ended up doing drink and drugs. Will you take this into account? For example, in the case of the decant it could take three years. If you do end up doing this then there will be an eight year affect on morale. It would be more sensible to spend the money allocated for decanting on the actual school.

Answer 23 – Councillor Burns – There will be losses whichever option we chose. However I shall just repeat my commitment. We will replace green space. I accept the points.

Answer 22 – Ian Perry – This came up at the second meeting. I think it was a lawyer or a QC who made the assertion. We went and looked at it with our QC. Our advice was that it is not. Since then we have had no comeback which makes me assume that our QC is correct. With regards to green space - whichever option we choose one school has to move. It will have to be in a green field site. No one asked us about brown field sites. If we use green field land it will be replaced. We give that undertaking.

Answer 23 – Roy Jobson – I take the point on the impact on the park and on the community. Equally it is true that if we decant it will have an impact. I take the point with regards to morale on pupils and teachers. The point of using funds for decanting on the school is not an option. When we bid, we bid for more than we need. The Scottish Executive do not tell us how to spend the

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money the more money spent on decant the less we have to spend on the schools.

Question 25 – You have given two assurances tonight. One was that if the green field sites are used up you will replace them. If you can do this why not just put the school there in the first place? The secondary issue is about houses. Nobody believes you. If you are elected and houses appear can we expect you to resign?

Question 26 – It is well known that the east of the city will lose the Meadowbank facility. Will Option C replace some of the facilities being lost from there?

Question 27 – The matter is a political question. I would like to ask what your preferred option is? Also, the decision to stall until after the elections this is an old Labour tactic.

Answer 26 – Andrew Burns – I honestly do not have any preferred options. As I have said I am not from this side of town. I see this as a strength. I am open-minded and I want all the comments in front of me before I can make a decision. I genuinely do not have a preferred option. With regards to the decision-making process the decision will be made on 21 December by Council at a public meeting. The papers will be available from 14 December and the Council **will** make a decision. Once the decision is made, officers will apply to the Scottish Executive for funding. I do not know when green field sites will be replaced but we will replace any green space used. A number of sites were looked at and a number were unfeasible but we will replace green field sites. With regards to the provision of houses – what can I do? This administration will not be putting houses on the park.

Answer 27 – Roy Jobson – I am not a politician I am an officer of the Council. I have to report to the Council and my report will clearly state that we are not building houses. With regard to green space I do not honestly know. Council would ask us to find green space. The existing schools' site is a possibility. There are rumours that it has been sold but it is not, it is available. It depends on the funding package. With regards to Meadowbank the school is not a replacement for the facilities at Meadowbank. This is entirely separate. Clearly it is going to be a new school it will have facilities and these facilities will be available for community use but it will not be a replacement.

Question 28 – My question is about the green space sites as well. What processes are in place to examine the validity of any petitions and can we put in counter petitions? My concerns are about a number of points being made and a number of petitions are misleading. It is not about saving all the green space from Portobello. Can we be assured that close scrutiny will be made to all petitions.

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Question 29 – My question is on the effect on residents. Did you factor in the number of claims under the Change of Use Act that you will get by the residents affected by it.

Answer 28 – Roy Jobson – The issue of green space is obviously a heated subject. I have to say that it has been a civilised debate tonight and I am thankful. We do take the concerns raised on board. Yes, we will seek to scrutinise and I will provide an analysis in the report. Councillor Burns mentioned earlier about the processes, that there will be a report to Council. It is a public document issued a week in advance and members of the public are free to make deputations to talk about areas of concern in the report.

Answer 29 – Bill Millar – With regards to the Change of Use Act I haven't heard of such an Act. Change of Use is a planning condition. If you put a school in a park then yes that is a change of use and it is part of the planning application. If the Council applies then it is up to the Executive to determine the application and this could go to Public Inquiry.

Question 30 – Two years ago there was a public meeting at Lismore when the authority was trying to close Lismore Primary School. This was voted down narrowly by the Council. We have talked about falling school rolls tonight one obvious possibility is to close Lismore. It is a site adjacent to St John's. Also there is no assurances with regard to houses on Bingham Park.

Question 31 – We need a new school and this is something we all agree on. If we build on the park then will there be a community facility. Any new build should maximise the safety of children. It should be built to ensure a sustainable journey to school and to ensure safety for the pupils.

Answer 30 – Ian Perry – We are not putting houses there. We have a good track record of involving community in our planning processes and I give my assurances that community involvement will take place if we get funding.

Answer 30 – Roy Jobson – With regard to Lismore there are no proposals for housing at Bingham Park. The Council voted not to close Lismore. That is a matter of public record. The numbers are still declining there. We are looking at the falling school rolls throughout the city and report will go to Council next year. It is a very complicated and complex situation. There is no connection with regard to St John's as this is a denominational school. With regards to Question 31 we have a good track record. The key is in involving people. When it comes to the stage of planning consultation it will include issues such as access and traffic. We always seek to involve parents, teachers, the Board, community, and pupils. We have a good track record in doing this.

Question 32 – My concerns are is this is knee jerk reaction. The big picture is the provision for education across the city, especially in south Edinburgh. There are three schools do we still require them? If we don't the solution is clear and

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currently Holyrood High School sits on the Cavalry Park site. It does not have to. Holyrood High School could move to the Castlebrae site and the site at Cavalry Park could be used for Portobello High School. This is a social economic educational solution which provides the best provision.

Question 33 – Youngsters only get one chance at education are we prepared to compromise children's access to the best education we can give them.

Answer 33 – Andrew Burns – No, we are not prepared to. We want public involvement in the process and we want to move forward.

Answer 32 – Roy Jobson – The answer is yes. Do we need three schools, yes. We have looked at the figures, Holyrood is the non-denominational school and we looked at the other two options. The redevelopment of the South East Wedge means there will be more children and we have looked into the options you suggest but we do not think it will work. With regards to question 33 there are a number of issues we have to weigh up. There are balances but we do want decent facilities, playing fields etc. We do want the best.

Closing Address

Councillor Burns thanked everyone attending for contributing to a considered and measured debate and reminded them that they were still able to write in at any point up to the end of October to let their views be known.