

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee

26 May 2021

ABERNYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL – OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)
(Report No. 21/64)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

On 4 November 2020, Lifelong Learning Committee approved the scope and principles to be used to underpin an options appraisal to be developed for a potential catchment review for Abernyte Primary School and the possible addition of nursery provision to create a sustainable school roll ([Report No. 20/208 refers](#)).

This report notes that the school roll has risen recently, and the projected school roll is due to rise for session 2021/2022, to the extent that both classroom spaces will be required from August 2021. This will be the highest school roll at Abernyte Primary School since 2010. This report seeks approval of the recommendation from the options appraisal (Appendix A) to maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School, retain the existing catchment area and not include nursery provision within Abernyte Primary School.

1. BACKGROUND

School Estate Transformation – Abernyte Primary School

- 1.1 Lifelong Learning Committee had previously approved an assessment of a potential change to the catchment area at Abernyte Primary School on 21 March 2018 ([Report No. 18/86 refers](#)). That assessment sought to clarify whether a change to the catchment area would provide an increased and sustainable school roll for Abernyte Primary School. The outcome of that assessment was considered by Lifelong Learning Committee on 22 August 2018 ([Report No. 18/243 refers](#)).
- 1.2 On 26 August 2020, Lifelong Learning Committee considered a report which provided an overview of the decisions taken relating to the closure of Abernyte Primary School ([Report No. 20/142 \(REVISED\) refers](#)). Lifelong Learning Committee requested the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to bring back a scoping report for approval to Lifelong Learning Committee in November 2020 which outlined all possible options for a catchment review to build a sustainable school roll at the earliest opportunity, including looking at the possibility of a nursery.
- 1.3 On 4 November 2020, Lifelong Learning Committee approved the scope and principles to be used to underpin the options appraisal to be developed for a catchment review for Abernyte Primary School ([Report No. 20/208 refers](#)).

2. PRINCIPLES AND OPTIONS

2.1 The Lifelong Learning Committee report dated 4 November 2020 ([Report No. 20/208 refers](#)) detailed the principles and options which should be considered and investigated as part of the options appraisal.

2.2 Principles

The principles which should be considered are:

- Any option considered will not cause a detrimental impact to the school roll or sustainability of another small rural school of 70¹ pupils or fewer;
- Any option to be considered would contribute to a sustainable roll for Abernyte Primary School;
- Any option to be considered would relate to a catchment area geographically adjacent to Abernyte Primary School catchment area;
- Any option would not result in a pupil travelling through another primary school catchment area to reach their catchment school;
- Any option would not result in a significant increase in the travel time or distance for a pupil to reach their catchment school;
- There should be no adverse pupil impact in terms of educational benefit in accordance with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010; and
- There must be support from those parents/carers and pupils living in the affected catchment areas.

2.3 Options

The options considered are as follows:

- **Option 1** – Maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School, increase the catchment area of Abernyte Primary School and not include nursery provision within Abernyte Primary School;
- **Option 2** – Maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School, increase the catchment area of Abernyte Primary School and build a nursery on site;
- **Option 3** – Maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School, retain the existing catchment area of Abernyte Primary School and build a nursery on site;
- **Option 4** – Maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School, retain the existing catchment area and not include nursery provision within Abernyte Primary School;

¹ A small school is defined as 70 pupils or fewer in terms of the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) - Pupil Numbers: Scottish Government Pupil Census 2020. Pupils in Small Schools: Pupils in primary schools of less than 70, in settlements in Scottish Government urban/rural classifications 5 and 6. (Source: Scottish Government Education Analytical Services Directorate).

- **Option 5** – Reduce the school capacity of Abernyte Primary School to 20 or 24 pupils, include nursery provision within Abernyte Primary School and retain the existing catchment area; and
- **Option 6** – Reduce the school capacity of Abernyte Primary School to 20 or 24 pupils, include nursery provision within Abernyte Primary School and a limited increase to the catchment area of Abernyte Primary School.

2.4 Other Factors for Consideration

The report detailed that in developing the options appraisal, the following factors would also be investigated:

- Impact on the capacity and school environment of Abernyte Primary School as a result of including nursery provision within the school;
- Impact on the capacity and school environment of Abernyte Primary School as a result of a catchment review affecting the school;
- Impact on other schools adjacent to Abernyte Primary School catchment area considered as part of a catchment review;
- Impact on the Early Learning and Childcare provision for the Carse of Gowrie as a result of including nursery provision within the school; and
- Financial impact and Best Value.

3. PROJECTED/HISTORIC SCHOOL ROLLS

- 3.1 The current school roll at Abernyte Primary School is 12² pupils. Table 1 below details the projected school roll at Abernyte Primary School.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Abernyte Capacity	44	44	44	44
Abernyte Roll	20	20	18	18

Table 1 – Projected School Roll.

- 3.2 The projected school roll for August 2021 includes 5 catchment children currently registered to start at the school in P1 as well as 4 placing requests that have been received. The projected roll detailed in Table 1 also includes catchment children due to start at the school in P1 between August 2022 and August 2024. This information is provided by the NHS and relates to the number of under-fives registered at a GP practice for addresses in a catchment area.
- 3.3 Based on these projections, it is likely that there will be the requirement for both classroom spaces to operate at the school in the next four years as the school roll is projected to exceed 17 pupils.

² School Roll correct at 1 April 2021.

3.4 Table 2 below details the historic school roll at pupil census each year.

Primary Classes	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Capacity	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
Pupils	21	15	15	14	11	8	7	5	6	10	7

Table 2 – Historic School Roll.

4. ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Selection of Catchment Areas for Engagement

4.2 An analysis of a number of the principles approved in the 4 November 2020 report was undertaken in order to determine which catchment areas would be included in the review.

4.3 The outcome of the analysis of the principles contained within the options appraisal (Appendix A) demonstrates that only the areas to the north of the A90 in the Inchtute Primary School and Longforgan Primary School catchment areas fell within the scope of a catchment review.

4.4 Engagement Process

4.5 Officers sought to engage with parents/carers in the identified areas to the north of the A90 in the Inchtute Primary School and Longforgan Primary School catchment areas to ascertain their views about a potential change to the catchment areas. Letters were issued to approximately 500 households in the catchment areas involved in the pre-consultation exercise. All parents/carers living in these areas were asked to complete an online questionnaire if they had primary school age children and/or children under the age of five. The options appraisal provides detailed information on the outcome of this engagement.

4.6 Questionnaire Response

4.7 Table 3 below shows the number of children for whom responses were received. It also shows the number of children living in the catchment area that are known to the Council.

Catchment Area	Primary School age children attending PKC schools	Primary School age children attending PKC schools Responses	Children under the age of five	Children under the age of five Responses
Abernyte Primary School	15	9	9	7
Inchtute Primary School (north of A90)	11	0	11	3
Longforgan Primary School (north of A90)	20	9	13	5

Table 3 – Questionnaire Response.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Increasing Abernyte Primary School Catchment Area

The purpose of increasing the Abernyte Primary School catchment area would be to meet the principle of building a sustainable school roll. One of the principles agreed, would be that any change to a catchment area would need the support of parents/carers living in the affected catchment area.

5.2 School Roll

The pupil roll at Abernyte Primary School has increased and will require the use of both classroom spaces from academic session 2021/22. It is anticipated that both classroom spaces will be required for at least the next four years to accommodate the projected school roll. Projections are not available beyond 2024/25 as they are based on actual children living in the catchment area.

Table 4 below details the projected school roll at Abernyte Primary School without a catchment change.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Abernyte Capacity	44	44	44	44
Abernyte Roll	20	20	18	18

Table 4 – Projected School Roll.

5.3 Parent/Carer Views

From the responses received, there is no evidence of support from parents/carers of any current primary school age children living in Longforgan Primary School catchment area (north of the A90) and Inchtute Primary School catchment area (north of the A90) to move their children to Abernyte Primary School. This is not unexpected, and in general, it is the wishes of the parents of the under-fives who will influence whether the school roll will increase as a result of a catchment review.

Based on the responses received from parents/carers of children under the age of five living in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area, 6 out of 9 children would attend their catchment school in future years.

8 children under the age of five, out of a possible 24, known to the Council from Longforgan Primary School catchment area (north of the A90) and Inchtute Primary School catchment area (north of the A90) were represented in the responses from families. The parents/carers of 16 children under five, from those areas known to the Council, did not respond.

The responses received from parents/carers of children under the age of five from the Longforgan and Inchtute Primary School (north of the A90) catchments were as follows:

- Parents/Carers of 4 out of 5 children under the age of five that responded (out of a possible 13 children under five) from Longforgan Primary School catchment area (north of the A90) were not in favour of a catchment review; and
- Parent/carers of all 3 children under the age of five that responded (out of a possible 11 children under five) from Inchtute Primary School catchment area (north of A90) were in favour of a catchment review.

As detailed above, two thirds of children from the areas being considered for a catchment change were not represented by a response from their parents/carers. It is, therefore, not possible to say that the principle of support from parents/carers has been evidenced.

5.4 Introducing a Nursery to Abernyte Primary School

The main factor in considering the implementation of nursery provision was to determine whether implementing a nursery provision, with or without a catchment review, could create a sustainable school roll at Abernyte Primary School.

5.5 Existing Nursery Provision – Carse of Gowrie Community

Abernyte Primary School is within the Carse of Gowrie Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Community. Table 5 below indicates that there is sufficient existing capacity within the Carse of Gowrie ELC community.

	Total number of childcare hours available (per annum)	Total number of childcare hours of childcare taken (per annum)
Carse of Gowrie ELC³	225,720	191,520

Table 5 – Existing nursery provision in Carse of Gowrie ELC Community.

5.6 Nursery Provision – Feasibility Studies

The options appraisal details the outcome of the high-level feasibility studies undertaken to consider nursery provision at Abernyte Primary School. These potential options were as identified in the scoping report approved by Lifelong Learning Committee on 4 November 2020 ([Report No 20/208 refers](#)). The feasibility studies were undertaken in relation to:

- Existing school building;
- Extension to school building; and
- Standalone nursery building.

Table 6 below details the indicative capital costs for nursery provision. Further information is contained in the options appraisal including costs associated with upgrading the building which is needed to progress with all of

³ Information correct at 4 March 2021.

the options above. It should be noted that an integrated nursery has been explored in the options appraisal as a means of using the existing building. This would see the nursery children sharing the same classroom space as early years primary school children.

It should be noted that there are likely to be decant costs associated with any of the options, however, these costs are not available at this point in the process.

Nursery Location	Indicative Capital Cost
Existing school building (Integrated Nursery)	£1.138M
Extension to existing school building	£1.868M
Standalone nursery building	£2.163M ⁴

Table 6 – Nursery capital costs

Table 7 below details the indicative annual revenue costs for nursery provision based on current prices. All of the options would require one Early Childhood Practitioner and one part-time Play Assistant. Note that the estimated property costs are for rates, cleaning/facilities management, energy and water. They do not include annual building maintenance costs.

Nursery Location	Staff Costs	Property/Supplies Costs	Total Cost
Existing school building (integrated nursery)	£38,800	£1,500	£40,300
Extension to existing school building	£38,800	£11,500	£50,300
Standalone nursery building	£38,800	£22,500	£61,300

Table 7 Nursery annual revenue costs

5.7 Nursery Provision – Parent/Carer Views

The options appraisal highlights, from the responses received, that implementing nursery provision would not encourage parents to send their children to Abernyte Primary School. Parents who would enrol their children in the school would do so regardless of a nursery, and parents who would not enrol their children at the school, would not be attracted by a nursery. Based on the responses received from parents/carers, introducing nursery provision at the school would not therefore meet the principle of creating a sustainable school roll.

⁴ The capital costs could be less if the main building was not refurbished. Details are contained in appendix 3 of the options appraisal.

5.8 Alternative Options

As part of the pre-consultation exercise, parents/carers were invited to suggest any alternative options to the catchment review or nursery provision that the Council may not have considered.

Three additional proposed alternative options were received. These were:

- Close the existing Abernyte Primary School and children could attend an Abernyte Primary School that is located at Errol Primary School;
- Children living in the Inchtute Primary School catchment area (north of A90) that wanted to attend Abernyte Primary School as the result of a placing request could be provided with free transport; and
- The option of a forest nursery was suggested by the Abernyte Primary School Parent Council.

The options appraisal details in Section 9 that none of these options were considered to be feasible or did not meet the principle of contributing towards a sustainable school.

5.9 Summary of Analysis

Current Position

The school roll is currently 12 pupils and is projected to increase to 20 pupils in session 2021/22, including pupils enrolled at the school as a result of successful placing requests.

This increase in roll from academic session 2021/22 requires the second classroom space to be used. The use of both classroom spaces is projected to be required for at least the next four years.

Table 2, in section 3 above, highlights the projected roll is the highest pupil roll at Abernyte Primary School since 2010.

Principles

The agreed principles included that any option to be considered would contribute to a sustainable roll for Abernyte Primary School and that there must be support from those parents/carers and pupils living in the affected catchment areas.

Catchment Review

- The options appraisal concludes that, based on the responses received, a catchment review should not be progressed on the basis that if a catchment review took place, the number of children who would attend the school, based on responses received, would not contribute to a sustainable school roll;

Note that the options appraisal also considered including only the postcode area(s) within the Inchtute Primary School catchment area (north of A90) where parents/carers live that responded to the online questionnaire;

- The principle of parental support for a catchment review has not been evidenced for either of the catchment areas considered. Responses were received for 8 children out of a possible 24 children aged under five, and of these, there were only 4 children whose parents/carers responded in favour of a change to the catchment area;
- The school roll has increased and for 2021/22 will be higher than it has been since 2010; and
- Based on the responses received, feedback from the majority of parents/carers of children under five living in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area indicated that their children will be enrolled at their catchment school in future years.

Nursery Provision

The options appraisal concludes that nursery provision should not be implemented at Abernyte Primary School on the basis that:

- Based on the responses received from parents/carers introducing nursery provision at the school would not meet the principle of creating a sustainable school roll. Parents who would enrol their children in the school would do so regardless of a nursery, and parents who would not enrol their children at the school, would not be attracted by a nursery; and
- An additional factor which the Council would have to take in to consideration is the impact on business sustainability of funded providers, ie childminders and private nurseries, within the Carse of Gowrie ELC community and other nearby ELC communities, if additional nursery provision was to be made available, when there was no requirement for additional capacity.

Options

Table 8 below provides a summary of the analysis of the options as detailed in the options appraisal (appendix A).

Proposal	Outcome	Impact
Reduce the school capacity of Abernyte Primary School to 20 or 24 pupils.	The projected roll for Abernyte Primary School indicates that both teaching spaces are required up to August 2024/25. The capacity of the school could not be reduced to 20 or 24 pupils in these circumstances. It is recommended that the capacity of Abernyte Primary School is not reduced.	Options 5 and 6 reduce the capacity of Abernyte Primary School therefore they are discounted.

<p>Increase the catchment area of Abernyte Primary School.</p>	<p>There is insufficient response from parents/carers in the Inchtire and Longforgan Primary School catchment areas north of the A90 to evidence support from the majority of parents for a catchment change. In addition, the number of children who would attend the school, based on responses received, would not contribute to a sustainable school roll.</p> <p>The school roll at Abernyte has increased and is the highest it has been since 2010. Also, the response from parents/carers of children under five years old living in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area would contribute towards a sustainable school roll</p> <p>It is not recommended that the catchment of Abernyte Primary School is increased.</p>	<p>Options 1 and 2 increase the catchment area of Abernyte Primary School therefore they are discounted.</p>
<p>Introduce a nursery.</p>	<p>The responses from parents detailed in the options appraisal indicated those that would send their children to the school, would do so without a nursery. Those who would not send their children to the school would still not do so if there was a nursery. Therefore, a nursery would not contribute towards the creation of a sustainable school roll. There is sufficient capacity in the Carse of Gowrie ELC community, and consideration would also have to be given to any impact on the business sustainability for funded partner providers ie child minders and private nurseries if additional capacity is created.</p> <p>It is not recommended that a nursery is introduced.</p>	<p>Option 3 includes the option to build a nursery on site. This option can therefore be discounted.</p>
<p>Maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils, retain the existing catchment area and do not introduce nursery provision.</p>	<p>The projected roll for Abernyte Primary School indicates that both teaching spaces are required up to August 2024/25. The capacity of the school could not be reduced to 20 or 24 pupils in these circumstances.</p> <p>There is insufficient response from parents/carers in the Inchtire and Longforgan Primary School catchment areas north of the A90 to evidence support from the majority of parents for a catchment change.</p> <p>The school roll at Abernyte Primary School has increased and is the highest it has been since 2010. Also, the response from parents/carers of children under five years old living in the Abernyte Primary School catchment area would contribute towards a sustainable school roll.</p>	<p>Option 4 is accepted.</p>

	<p>The responses from parents detailed in the options appraisal indicated those that would send their children to the school, would do so without a nursery. Those who would not send their children to the school would still not do so if there was a nursery. Therefore, a nursery would not contribute towards the creation of a sustainable school roll.</p> <p>It is recommended that the school capacity is maintained at 44, the existing catchment area is retained and that a nursery is not introduced.</p>	
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Table 8 – Summary of Options

The analysis recommends Option 4. Option 4 is to maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School, retain the existing catchment area and not include nursery provision within Abernyte Primary School.

5.10 Educational Benefits Statement

An educational benefits statement has not been developed as no changes are proposed.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The options appraisal detailed in Appendix A has considered whether a catchment review or the introduction of a nursery would create a sustainable school roll for Abernyte Primary School. The analysis of these potential changes was based on principles agreed by this committee on 4 November 2020.
- 6.2 The options appraisal ruled out a number of school catchments on the basis of the principles. Officers contacted approximately 500 households within the two areas which remained in order to seek the views of parents/carers on a potential catchment review and introduction of a nursery.
- 6.3 The options appraisal has not recommended a catchment review on the basis that the principle of support from parents/carers was not evidenced and the number of children who would attend the school, based on responses received, would not contribute to a sustainable school roll. The recommendation is also based on the recently increased roll and that parents/carers of children living in the catchment area have indicated in their responses that their children will attend Abernyte Primary School in future years.
- 6.4 The introduction of a nursery was not recommended in the options appraisal because, based on the responses from parents/carers, it would not contribute to a sustainable school roll. The majority of parents/carers who responded to the questionnaire indicated that a nursery would not influence their decision to enrol their children at Abernyte Primary School. In addition, if additional nursery provision was made available where there was no requirement, there

could be an impact on the business sustainability of funded providers, ie childminders and private nurseries.

6.5 Alternative options suggested during the engagement were reviewed but were not considered as feasible or did not contribute to a sustainable school roll. Option 4 is the recommended outcome of the options appraisal. Option 4 is to maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School, retain the existing catchment area and not include nursery provision within Abernyte Primary School.

6.6 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Notes the school roll has risen recently and the projected school roll is due to rise again for session 2021/2022 at Abernyte Primary School. The school roll will be the highest it has been since 2010;
- (ii) Approves the recommendation of the options appraisal to maintain a school capacity of 44 pupils at Abernyte Primary School and retain the existing catchment area; and
- (iii) Notes that the introduction of nursery provision is not required at Abernyte Primary School at this time.

Author

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Carol Taylor	Service Manager (Resource Management)	Committee@pkc.gov.uk 01738 475000

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Sheena Devlin	Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)	14 May 2021

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes/None
Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	No
Workforce	No
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	No
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	No
Strategic Environmental Assessment	No
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	No
Legal and Governance	No
Risk	No
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to all of these objectives.

Corporate Plan

1.2 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to all of these objectives.

1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Vision, Values and Priorities in respect of the following key Priority area:

- Learning and Achievement

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 There are no financial implications other than those noted in the main body of the report.

Workforce

2.2 There are no workforce implications other than those noted in the main body of the report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 There are no asset management implications other than those noted in the main body of the report.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section reflects that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

Sustainability

3.3 n/a

Legal and Governance

3.4 N/A

3.5 N/A

Risk

3.6 N/A

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The Head of Finance, the Head of Legal and Governance and the Head of Property Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

4.2 The options appraisal details the consultation which has been carried out in the development of this report.

5. Communication

5.1 A communication plan was prepared which supported effective communication and engagement with stakeholders.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

3. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Abernyte Primary School Options Appraisal