

Rezoning of Balmedie School catchment at Blackdog

Public Meeting

10 November 2022

- 1. Councillor Owen opened the meeting with welcome and introductions** with the minute being taken by Kelly Tennant.

Officers present: Anne Marie Davies Macleod (Interim Head of Resources & Performance), Vincent Docherty (Head of Education), Rachael Goldring (Learning Estates Team Leader), Kelly Tennant (Learning Estates Officer)

- 2. Overview of consultation**

Vincent Docherty gave an overview of the proposal and how we have arrived at this stage.

The proposal currently under consultation is the rezoning of Balmedie School catchment at Blackdog. This proposal is solely focused on the primary school catchment of Balmedie school and not the secondary school catchments.

The current catchment zone for Balmedie School dates back to Grampian Reginal Council (GRC) and when GRC was divided into Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray Councils there were some anomalies of catchment areas and council boundaries. Blackdog falls into one of these anomalies.

The current Balmedie school catchment runs through the settlement of Blackdog splitting houses and postcodes. This means that houses to the north of the settlement are zoned for Balmedie School within Aberdeenshire Council and houses to south of the settlement are zoned for Scotstown School in Aberdeen City Council.

As the settlement has grown due to the new housing, there have been a number of queries from families living within the settlement of Blackdog expressing uncertainty on catchment areas.

In May 2022, Aberdeenshire Council carried out an informal survey for the residents of Blackdog to gain their views on the current primary school catchment areas and the majority of respondents believe they should be zoned for Balmedie School.

Aberdeenshire Council are proposing to rezone the catchment area for Balmedie School and align with the Aberdeenshire Council Boundary. There are maps around the room showing the current catchment area and the proposed catchment for Balmedie School.

This proposal will apply to all new primary age pupils moving into the settlement of Blackdog or the new cohort of P1 pupils from August 2023. There will be no requirement for existing primary pupils to move schools if this proposal is approved.

The consultation is taking place under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and will run until 6 January 2023.

If the proposed changes are approved at Education & Children's Services Committee, they will be implemented in August 2023.

3. Councillor Owen opened the floor to questions

Belhelvie Community Council Member – What is the capacity of Balmedie just now, I believe it is about 80% capacity?

Rachael Goldring – The roll is currently 396 with is around 80% capacity and Balmedie School has an overall capacity of 484.

Belhelvie Community Council Member – There is a lot of house building within the area, which will already put pressure on the roll.

Rachael Goldring – This proposal is bringing around 2 streets into the Balmedie School catchment, some streets are already within Balmedie School. This proposal will bring roundabout an additional 3 children per year. The house building within Balmedie is currently being looked at separately.

Belhelvie Community Council Member – Don't you think you should look at putting on an extension?

Rachael Goldring – This is not what we are discussion tonight, we are here to discuss the rezoning of Balmedie School at Blackdog.

Community Council Member – There may be families already at Scotstown, will they have the option to attend Balmedie School. For example they may have a child in P4 and another sibling going into P1, can they move schools or stay at the same school?

Rachael Goldring – Pupils who are within Scotstown School can stay, we are in discussions with Aberdeen City Council so siblings can join the school through the Aberdeen City Councils Placing Request policy. Also transport will continue for pupils of Scotstown School. We do not expect any existing pupils to move schools and this reflects the comments in the informal survey. Some families reported they were at Scotstown and wanted to stay there, others attend Balmedie through placing requests and want to remain.

Belhelvie Community Council Member – Are you thinking of rezoning the secondary Schools?

Rachael Goldring – We have a good working relationship with Aberdeen City Council colleagues and currently both Councils are happy with the set up. This is not on the table at present.

Parent – We live about 2 roads away from the catchment. My child attends Balmedie School through out of zone but she always asks to go on the bus with her friends and it is hard to explain to a 5 year old why she can't. To a 5 year old this is her views and she just wants to go on the bus.

Rachael Goldring – Absolutely, pupils views are vital to this. There is a section on the survey which she can complete with your help which gains children's views.

Community Council Member – So will her child be able to get the bus next year?

Rachael Goldring – Yes, she will be entitled to go on the bus through School transport.

Belhelvie Community Council Member – The bone of the contention is the holidays are always different with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, will this be looked at?

Councillor Owen – We are not here to discuss this tonight but when I was appointed as Councillor, I always wanted that done but this is something that we could not change.

Community Council Member – In terms of housing at Bridge of Don, there is housing going up opposite B&Q, what catchment would that be?

Rachael Goldring – We are not completely sure of the City catchment areas but think it would be zoned to Bridge of Don Academy.

Anne Marie Davies Macleod – There is a map on the Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council which can show you the School boundaries.

Councillor Owen – We will be watching it very carefully but for this, there is a lot of anomalies within School catchments and that is what this is but we will be keeping an eye on the bigger picture.

Rachael Goldring – We have a good relationship with the city and regular conversations with them so we would be aware if they would like to look at the secondary catchments so this would not come as a shock for us and Aberdeenshire Council would be aware before they do anything.

4. Councillor Owen identified next steps

The consultation period will run until 6 January 2023. Any comments you wish to make on the proposal need to be submitted by 4pm on Friday 6 January 2023.

Comments can be submitted in writing, either my email or post – full contact details are on the posters around the room. Alternatively, we would encourage

you to give your opinions via the online survey. The link to this is also on the posters, along with the QR codes that will take you straight to it.

We are also involving pupils in our discussions, and we will be in touch with the Head Teacher to work with pupils to gain their views on the proposals.

Once the consultation is over, all written submissions, minutes of this meeting and pupil discussions will be provided to Education Scotland for their considerations. Education Scotland will produce a report on the consultation. This report along with our own report on the consultation will be presented to Formartine Area Committee and then Education & Children's Services Committee for a decision. We will publish our report shortly before it goes to Committee.

5. **Councillor Owen closed the meeting** and thanked everyone for attending.