

**Public Consultation Meeting
Relocation of Anna Ritchie School
20 January 2021
6pm – Microsoft Teams**

Aberdeenshire Council Officers present:

Anne-Marie Davies Macleod (Interim Head of Service), Maxine Booth (Quality Improvement Manager), Rachael Goldring (Learning Estates Team Leader), Mark Mitchell (Estates Programme Manager), Anna Zadka-Labus (Learning Estates Officer), Gail Dick (Learning Estates Officer), Gemma Dacre (Learning Estates Officer), Kelly Tennant (Learning Estates Officer), Amanda Roe (Buchan Area Manager), Sharon Ferguson (Head Teacher)

Elected Members present: Cllr Gillian Owen (Chair), Cllr Rosemary Bruce, Cllr Anne Simpson, Cllr Norman Smith, Cllr Dianne Beagrie, Cllr Iain Sutherland, Cllr Stephen Calder, Cllr Alan Fakley, Cllr Anne Allan, Cllr Alison Evison

HMI Inspectors present: Gary Johnstone, Liz Angus, Alison Macdonald, Emma Mcfarlane

Sixteen members of the public attended the meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Owen introduced herself and welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced the Aberdeenshire Council Officers and Elected Members present and laid out the format of the meeting.

Cllr Owen explained that all attendees would be muted until the questions section, once it has started all attendees that have questions would be asked to click the 'Raise Hand' button on their device or type a question in the comment box. They would then be called out to unmute themselves and to ask their question.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the face-to-face meeting have been cancelled. Cllr Owen assured that, depending on when the restrictions are eased, we will assess whether an in-person meeting can take place.

Cllr Owen remained that the meeting will be minuted and will be made public as part of the consultation.

2. Consultation Overview

Anne-Marie Davies Macleod outlined the proposal and the key facts.

The proposal currently under statutory consultation is the relocation of Anna Ritchie School to the new Peterhead Community Campus. This consultation proposes to discontinue education provision at the existing Anna Ritchie School with effect from July 2025. Existing and future pupils of Anna Ritchie School should continue their education at the new Peterhead Community Campus located at Kinmundy from August 2025. These are the current planned completion dates.

This proposal has emerged from identifying opportunities for school provision in the Peterhead area following a wider engagement process on the secondary school. The aim is to relocate Anna Ritchie School to a purpose-built all-through 4-18 years facility to provide a co-located Community Resource Hub.

The replacement Anna Ritchie School will be delivered using the accommodation model developed for St Andrew's School at Inverurie Community Campus and will be fully accessible and specially designed and equipped with modern solutions to meet specific needs and ensure that the best learning opportunity is afforded to every Anna Ritchie School pupil.

Work continues to define specific requirements for pupils with complex additional needs, this involves reviewing existing accommodation and interviewing officers, school management and staff to develop a brief for the design. A follow up workshop on the design will then be discussed and tested before being finalised. Parents and staff will be given an opportunity to review and discuss the proposed plans and to consider opportunities and challenges.

This consultation is taking place under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and will run until 26 February 2021.

The council believe that the measures proposed will enhance the provision of Additional Support Needs specialist education in the Peterhead and Mintlaw clusters.

Cllr Owen handed over to Maxine Booth who presented a PowerPoint Presentation with some photographs of the newly built St Andrew's School within Inverurie Community Campus.

Maxine Booth talked through the slides. Although, St Andrew's is attached to the Inverurie Community Campus, it has a separate entrance with own parking facility. It has standard spacious and fully accessible classrooms, height adjustable sinks and benches, a sensory room, play rooms with hoists throughout the building, a number of changing places, fully enclosed outdoor areas with overhang to provide shielding for the pupils and a hydrotherapy pool. All of the spaces currently at Anna Ritchie School and more will be placed in the new facility.

3. Questions from the floor

Cllr Owen welcomed questions from the floor and asked participants to state their name and interest in the meeting to aid the minute taking process. Attendees were reminded to use 'Raise Hand' and 'Unmute' buttons when asking their questions.

Cllr Beagrie said that it was interesting to see an overview of St Andrew's Inverurie. As a representative on Education & Children's Services Committee and a Councillor for Peterhead North and Rattray ward it helped to hear someone talk about the success of Inverurie Community Campus. Cllr Beagrie queried if the slides will be available online for people to view?

Maxine Booth said yes and explained that ThingLink virtual presentation has been distributed to Anna Ritchie parents/carers already and that it will also be distributed online.

Cllr Beagrie said that it will be beneficial for people who haven't been able to visit St Andrew's School. Cllr Beagrie wanted to know if there will be opportunities for other parents to visit St Andrew's School once the COVID restrictions are lifted? She explained that Cllr Judy Whyte gave an insight to the problems and concerns parents had with St Andrew's which was useful.

Maxine Booth replied that further visits will be available.

Cllr Simpson wanted to know if there were, as well as parents, any Anna Ritchie staff members at the meeting?

Sharon Ferguson replied that the Anna Ritchie staff were all invited and members of staff were attending the meeting.

Cllr Simpson encouraged questions from the staff.

Sharon Ferguson explained that all the staff had access to the ThingLink and the school made sure that anything issued to parents were also issued to the staff.

Cllr Owen clarified that this meeting is available to every single stakeholder and encouraged further questions.

Parent expressed his concerns surrounding the plan. Not being wholly opposed, seeing positives for both, Anna Ritchie and the Academy pupils, but he was concerned about outside space available to Anna Ritchie pupils. Having a large, open and safe spaces for the pupils at the current site, he wanted to know if a similar size of an open space will be available at the new site?

Maxine Booth welcomed the question and said that this is a very important topic. The whole campus outdoors will be a huge aspect for the scope and there will be as many learning spaces as possible, not just tarmac. This has been missed out in some of other new builds, but the council want to get this right. COVID has forced the need to use outdoors more effectively.

Parent said that looking at maps, the site borders with housing sites on three sides. As there is a large area available, he wanted to know if there are plans for more development on those remaining sides around the campus site?

Maxine Booth answered that the grounds are extensive and the council want to secure as much as possible for sport fields. Position of the school is just illustrative right now, there are no exact plans as yet to where the sport fields will be located. Entire field of Kinmundy allocated for the campus is for the campus. Nursery building is already on the South end of the site. Another area which is a part of the masterplan and housing development site are not a part of the campus site.

Cllr Fakley welcomed this consultation and the efforts the service has gone through to deliver it during challenging times. He wanted to know what opportunities will stakeholders have after tonight to provide feedback?

Maxine Booth explained that an online survey remains open and reminded that a link to the survey is available in the meeting comment bar. Comments can be written and sent to the service through email or posting to Gordon House, Inverurie. There is also an option of posting to any Peterhead school, adhering to the COVID restrictions. The service was working hard to make this as inclusive as possible. Once the consultation is completed stakeholders will be involved in the design process and how the building is going to look. There will still be opportunities for participation and for the consultation, there are lots of ways for people to get involved.

Cllr Smith thanked for the consultation and welcomed this way forward. As Maxine Booth has already answered partially to his question, Cllr Smith still wanted to know if, once plans are in place, there will be an opportunity for parents and others to get involved will have an opportunity to view the plans, to see what is to be on the ground? Assumption is that it will be similar to Inverurie.

Maxine Booth reiterated the need to work with parents and staff on the journey until design is closed down. Stakeholders must feel comfortable with what is happening. St Andrew's is a starting point, but Anna Ritchie won't be a complete replica as the design needs to fit the site, children needs and parents and community expectations.

Cllr Calder asked if open spaces and green areas around the campus will be discrete to the school and not open to the mainstream pupils from the campus. Will this area be solely for access for the Anna Ritchie pupils?

Maxine Booth answered yes, the area will be separate and discrete. Children using both Anna Ritchie and primary or secondary will have access to other grounds, but the access to the ground will be separate, not right through it, designed sensitively which is what parents asked for during the initial meetings.

Cllr Owen asked Anne-Marie Davies Macleod to add anything to the St Andrew's School experience.

Anne-Marie Davies Macleod emphasised that the Authority has a commitment to work with stakeholders and the new school will be a success of all involved. She reminded that she was involved from the start of the statutory consultation for the St Andrew's School relocation. The discussion with stakeholders started from identifying what spaces were required, in terms of classrooms, utility spaces, sensory rooms or soft play areas. Traditional school builds have traditional classrooms, utility spaces or cupboards converted in sensory rooms. The Council wanted a blank slate to start with to design state of the art learning spaces, soft play, rebound therapy or life skills spaces. The process started from mapping out learning requirements to the space and kept coming back to the table. Consultants were brought in who looked at sensory spaces and scoped out various options and a range of useful resources, such as dark or light sensory. The Council worked very closely with school staff and Parent Council, Pupil Council and other stakeholders. It was a long and very involved and intimate process.

Parent said that he is aware that sometimes public buildings may have some size restrictions and he wanted to know if there are any plans already to look to the future to accommodate future requirements? He said that Ellon Academy is already approaching capacity and asked if there will be a scope for extensions or spare space to expand into in the future if need be?

Rachael Goldring explained that with regards to the capacity of the academy itself, plans are based on School Roll Forecasts and allocated housing in Peterhead area which generates pupils in coming years. The size of it will be sufficient for requirements of the future and spaces in the design will allow for flexibility in changes to the curriculum. In terms of Anna Ritchie, the space of the building would be an uplift on what currently is available at the school, and all the additional rooms and flexible space will be future proofed. Ellon Academy is still well within the capacity, as designed with a capacity of 1300 and sitting at around 1100 at the moment.

Cllr Beagrie thanked for participating. With so many councillors and officers it can be intimidating, so Cllr Beagrie has encouraged parents to comment and ask questions, as this is important to make their views known.

Cllr Owen asked Sharon Ferguson if a further meeting at another time of a day would allow more parents to attend the meeting?

Sharon Ferguson explained that it can be hard for some parents to attend a meeting after school hours due to childcare issues, but at the moment having a meeting during the day may not help either. During initial consultations at the big meetings parents were reluctant to come forward anyway, preferring attending smaller meetings held at the school. Once COVID restrictions are lifted smaller face to face meetings at the school might be useful. Due to the restrictions only a small group of three parents visited St Andrew's School at Inverurie Community Campus last year, but when allowed, more visits might generate more questions.

Maxine Booth assured that these will be taken on board.

Cllr Simpson asked if facilities in the academy will be available to the Anna Ritchie pupils and if they will be disability friendly?

Maxine Booth assured that everything will be available for the use of Anna Ritchie pupils and staff. Adhering to Accessibility Strategy and Accessibility Brief facilities will be accessible to all pupils, staff and community members.

Parent asked if the community campus will be open in an evening for community clubs?

Anne-Marie Davies Macleod replied that community facilities within the campus will be available through the letting system.

Maxine Booth explained that the community building will be available for the community use as it is in Inverurie. Community facilities will be open throughout the day, evening and school holidays.

Parent wanted to know if there will be an opportunity for inclusion of the Anna Ritchie School children within after school clubs, weekend clubs or other general clubs?

Maxine Booth answered that it is incredibly important for children to be involved in those clubs out with their school day.

Parent asked if playgrounds will be separate and if they will be kept safe from older children attending the campus. She was concerned about bullying and that other children may not know how to handle a sensitive situation when for example an Anna Ritchie pupil has a meltdown.

Maxine Booth explained that right from the very beginning parents expressed they worry that children are going to be overlooked or that they won't have their safe outdoor space. Maxine reassured that this has been taken on board. Anna Ritchie will be a single storey and the campus will be more than that, but through early discussions with different design teams, consultations with parents/carers, staff and other stakeholders, the new school will be designed in a way to avoid the overlooking aspects that worry parents.

4. Next Steps

Cllr Owen reminded that comments can be submitted in writing to Learning Estates, Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie AB51 3WA, or by email to learningestates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. Alternatively, comments can be sent to the nearest school, adhering to COVID guidelines.

Cllr Owen encouraged consultees to take part in the consultation and give their opinions via the online survey. The link to this questionnaire is on the Education consultation page on the Aberdeenshire Council website or in the comments bar.

Pupils will be involved in discussions and head teachers will be asked to work with pupils to gain their views on the proposal.

Once the consultation period is over, all written submissions, minutes of this meeting and pupil discussions will be provided to Education Scotland for their consideration. Education Scotland will produce a report on the consultation. A final report on the consultation will be presented at Buchan Area Committee and Education & Children's Services Committee for a decision.

5. Close

Cllr Owen thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.