

Carloway – 9 June 2010

Prayer

First 22 seconds of recording inaudible.....have here in Carloway. We pray for those who have come tonight to speak to us and to consult with us on the issues that we have to look at and we pray Lord for wisdom and for grace for this evening. Thank you for the opportunity and we take all these things to yourself and we ask forgiveness for sins in Jesus' name amen

Introduction

Cllr Morag Munro

First of all then I would like to introduce all the people who are here with me tonight. I am Morag Munro, I am the Chair of the Committee of Education and Children's Services in the Comhairle and am a local councillor in Harris and Lochs. On my left is Councillor Catriona Stewart who is the Vice-Chair of Education, next to her is Robert Emmott who is Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, on my right is Joan Mackinnon the Director of Education and Children's Services and beside her is Derek Mackay who is clerking this meeting tonight and who is the Manager of Democratic Services with the Comhairle.

Also tonight we have Mr Doug Marr who is from Her Majesty's Inspectorate and we welcome him to this meeting. Your local councillors are here also and I don't need to introduce them to you. We are expecting Mr Bernard Chisholm, Head of Schools and Resources to join us later on.

In August 2007, the Comhairle decided to undertake a review of educational provision throughout the Western Isles. Since that time a number of informal consultations have been held with communities. As a result the Comhairle agreed to go to statutory consultation on the proposed closure and amalgamation of a number of schools. This meeting tonight is part of the formal consultation process for Carloway School. The purpose of this meeting is for you to hear more about the proposal, for you to ask your questions and to give your view. The aim of the authority is to provide our children with the best educational experiences and outcomes in modern learning environments suitable for 21st century needs within the resources that are available to us. I don't need to tell you the challenges that are facing the public sector not just local authorities but the whole public sector at the moment and for many years to come. The Comhairle are facing serious challenges. i.e. our school rolls have fallen to 3,681 from 6,246 in 30 years and in the last five years the pupil rolls have fallen by 333. Our education service is resourced according to pupil numbers and therefore our funding has decreased accordingly as our rolls fall.

We have 38 school buildings and 18 of these are in a poor condition. We are facing generally tightening financial constraints. There are pressure on other council services as well as education i.e. community care, roads and transport, waste services and so on - all are coming under pressure and we have the implementation of the curriculum for excellence.

We are in the process of building 6 new schools and that will mean that 44% of our pupils will be educated in new efficient learning environments in which to deliver the new curriculum. Our aim in line with the Scottish Government Schools Estate Strategy is for all our pupils to be educated in new or refurbished buildings by 2018. In order to achieve this we have to reduce the spare capacity that we have in our school estate.

I am now going to pass you over to Mr Derek Mackay who is going to over the procedure for the consultation – Derek.

Derek Mackay

Thank you Chairman. As Morag said my name is Derek Mackay the Democratic Services Manager with the Comhairle. Everyone should have received a copy of the proposal documents for Carloway School. If anyone wants a copy I have some spare copies here so if you would just indicate if you require a copy. Just help yourselves.

I would refer everyone to sections 2 and 3 of the proposal document that's

contained on pages 3, 4 and 5 and outlines the procedure which has been followed. I would also at this point refer you to paragraph 9.1, that's on page 10 and just to make a slight amendment and to confirm - in terms of section 12 of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010. Carloway is actually classed as a very remote rural school and the factors that have to be considered when considering a rural school are detailed in the consultation document on paragraph 9 – these have been addressed in there.

This document was produced following a decision of the Comhairle and it has been issued to seek the views of the community in relation to the proposals for Carloway School and this meeting is part of that initial consultation period which is due to end at 5.00pm on Wednesday 30 June 2010. You can respond directly to the consultation either to the Chief Executive in writing but there is also an area on the Comhairle's website which will receive e-mail responses - so you can respond either in writing or by e-mail. When you send in a response whether its written or by e-mail, we will aim to acknowledge that within three working days but if you haven't received an acknowledgement - if you get in touch with the Chief Executive's department we will confirm that we have received your representations.

Cllr Morag Munro Are you all hearing Derek? Right

Cllr Morag Munro You'll need to shout.

Derek Mackay Is that better - can everyone hear me now? Can everyone hear me up at the back?

Just to make sure everyone's heard me, I'll start again. As I said you should all have received a copy of the proposal documents and spare copies are making their way round here tonight and I would refer everyone to sections 2 and 3 of the documents which are contained on pages 3, 4 and 5. That outlines the procedure that will be followed. I would also refer you to page 10, paragraph 9.1 and I would clarify that in terms of Section 12 of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 Carloway is classed as a very remote rural school and the factors that have to be considered when considering a rural school are detailed in paragraph 9. The proposal document was produced following a decision of the Comhairle and has been issued to seek the views of the community in relation to the proposals for Carloway School and this meeting is part of that initial consultation period and this is due to end at 5.00pm on Wednesday 30 June 2010. You may respond to that consultation directly to the Chief Executive in writing but there is also an area on the Comhairle's website where you can send in e-mail responses. We will endeavour to acknowledge all responses within three working days but if within that time if you haven't received a response if you get in touch with the Chief Executive's department and we will confirm that we have actually received your response.

Reference has also been made tonight to a note that is being made of this meeting. We will be producing a transcript of the meeting and that is why the microphones are here and we will be recording everything. It is important to speak clearly when you are making any points and I would ask to aid the production of the transcript, if you could say your name before you make your point, that will help when we produce the transcript. There will be a roving mike so if you put up your hand when you want to speak and then wait until the mike gets to you and then say your name and we'll record your points.

My main purpose here tonight is to take a note of the questions and the responses and to provide a back-up service to that transcript but I'm also here to take a note of any questions that we are unable to answer here tonight. I will take a note of these throughout the evening and if there are any such questions I will summarise these at the end of the meeting just make sure I've got them all and we will get a response to you as quickly as possible. If you could indicate who the response should go to – should it go directly to the individuals or should we feed it back through the parent council. If you could indicate that by the end of the evening, that would be helpful. Copies of the transcripts will

also be available on request – if anyone wants to obtain a copy, you can do that by again contacting the Chief Executive at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwick Road. It will take us a few days to produce the transcript following this meeting but if anyone wants a transcript either speak to me tonight before I leave or get in touch with the Chief Executive over the next few days.

The procedure to be followed as part of the proposal document is as follows: once comments have been received, the proposal documents together with any representations that have been received by the Comhairle will be forwarded to HMIE who will then have until 20 August to prepare their own report in relation to the proposals. Officers of the Comhairle will then have the opportunity to review HMIE's report and prepare what is called the consultation report. Up until now you have been dealing with the proposal documents. There will be a further consultation report. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in local newspapers. It will be available on the Comhairle website and from the Comhairle headquarters as well as at the affected schools free of charge. Anyone who has made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report. This consultation report will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee at their meeting in late October in 2010 and following that a recommendation will be made to the full council in the first week in November 2010. It is at this stage that the Comhairle will make a decision on whether or not it is to close Carloway School. From that date Scottish Ministers have six weeks in which to call in the proposals if they have any concerns about any aspects. The Comhairle will not be able to implement any proposals within that six week period but the estimated date of implementation of any closure for Carloway School is June 2010.

In producing the consultation report the Comhairle is required to take account of all the consultation responses together with any comments made by HMIE and that's obviously quite a detailed process. There is also a legal requirement that the Comhairle will carry out an equalities impact assessment in relation to the proposals and again anything that comes out of this evening will contribute to the preparation of that assessment. I'm happy to take any questions about the procedure.

Cllr Morag Munro Can I just say before we go onto questions. I should have said at the start, if you have mobile phones can you switch them off because apparently they interfere with the recording so if anybody has a mobile phone if you would kindly switch them off before we go on to take questions.

Kenny Campbell Kenny Campbell prospective parent of a child who will be going to Carloway in two years time and member of the Parent Council. Regarding the transcript, we've only got until 30 June to respond to this meeting. How quickly are we going to get a copy of this transcript. We are bearing in mind the experience we had at the last conversation when we asked for all sorts of feedback. We were supposed to get feedback on school condition and feedback on what happened at each individual table discussion and we didn't receive any of that.

Derek Mackay We will endeavour to get the transcript for you as quickly as possible. I'll be taking the recording of that with me tonight and a member of staff in my section will be starting to work on that at 9.00am tomorrow morning. Obviously it depends how much there is on the transcript and how much work – someone will be starting on that first thing in the morning and we will endeavour to get that out to anyone who wants it as quickly as possible.

Cllr Morag Munro Any other questions on procedure?

In that case, I would like to pass over to the Director of Education who will go through the proposal document.

Joan Mackinnon Thank you very much Councillor Munro and good evening everybody. Can everybody hear me?

We are here tonight because of the main issues which Councillor Munro has outlined for us. The facts are that rolls in the Western Isles over the last 30 years have fallen as described by Mrs Munro and if you take the roll at Carloway school as it is today it has fallen over 40% over the last 8 years. This pattern is repeated throughout the islands and so clearly we have more schools than we need and that is really why we are here tonight because we are endeavouring to deliver an education service across the Western Isles that is as equitable as we can make it for all pupils. Our aim is to have all pupils educated in good buildings getting good experiences that will enhance learning and teaching. Why are we in Carloway? We are here with a school that has spare capacity. The school is currently running at about 32% capacity and within 5 miles of Carloway School is Sgoil Shawbost which also has spare capacity; again operating at 32% of its full potential.

We are at a very exciting time in Scottish education in terms of the implementation of the new curriculum. Teachers and pupils at Carloway School have been engaging with the outcomes and experiences and have been - since they were first published and this has also been happening at Sgoil Shawbost. However, we believe that a large staff group at this time will be beneficial to pupils and larger peer groupings will also bring advantages.

If I can draw your attention now to the proposal document and just explain a little bit about it. The first part of the proposal document is common to - you may know that we are doing - engaging in about 11 of these consultations at the moment and the first paragraphs in the document are common to all of the proposals that we are making because at section 2, as Mr Mackay has already said, that just explains the process and then when we move to section 3, it talks about the public meetings which we'll be having in every place and then 4, 5, 6 and 7 cover the rationale and the aspirations that the Comhairle has and also sets out some key factors that have lead us to engaging in this process. When we reach section 8, this is the bit that is particular to Carloway school and proposed amalgamation into Shawbost. This is called the Educational Benefit Statement and I want to make it absolutely clear that there are educational benefits at Carloway school without a doubt. I have a long and happy connection with Carloway school since I came into the education service about 20 years ago - I've had a lot of contact with the school and I have the utmost respect for its head teacher and its teachers and there are benefits attached to Carloway school. However, for the purposes of the proposal document we are concentrating on Shawbost school so that is not to say that we are saying that Shawbost school has this and Carloway school doesn't - that's the context for this paragraph and it sets out there the various issues that we were considering when we were thinking about pupil's amalgamating into Shawbost school. I'd just like to draw your attention to what I would say is the summary at 8.14 and just to outline to you the reasons that we think that an amalgamation - that I think that an amalgamation would be beneficial for pupils and for teachers. There would be increased opportunities for pupils, there would be greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching, there would be greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet learning needs. Obviously the more staff you have the more skills that you have amongst the staff group and therefore greater flexibility and a larger staff will offer a wider range of expertise resulting in increased opportunities for sharing effective practice - easier to have more collegiate support and a wider range of learning and teaching approaches and there would be more management to support and promote school improvement. That is a summary of the reasons that we are proposing this proposal.

If I can just draw your attention to the section 9 which are the factors affecting rural schools. Rural schools have been designated into different categories by the Scottish Government from urban rural to very remote and rural and all the schools in the Western are described as very remote rural but it doesn't affect the way you deal with rurality in terms of the legislation. The things that we have to think about were viable alternatives to closure, the likely effects of the local community and about travelling arrangements etc, etc. Then we have at section at 10 which is other factors looking at pupil costs, staffing and suchlike.

I don't want to tire you or say any more at the moment. I know that we want to hear what you've got to say and we will endeavour to answer any questions that you may have and as Mr Mackay said, if we are unable to do that we will get back to you and if I can just pick up on Mr Campbell's comment - apologies Mr Campbell for anything that you had expected and that we didn't fulfil - sorry

Kenny Campbell

It was not expected - I was told.....

Joan Mackinnon

I apologise for that but I know that through this process tonight because everything is recorded the answers will come back. If I can just say that this is the fifth of these, it takes about 5 days maybe to do the transcript. Can I just clarify, was that a request for the transcript that you were making? Would that be to the Chair or to the secretary?

Kenny Campbell

The Chair or the Secretary - details

Cllr Morag Munro

I just want to open the meeting now out to questions or comment from yourselves but again if I could remind you if you would please wait for the mike to come to you and give your name for the sake of the recording, thank you.

No questions..... lady down the front

Diane Macarthur

My name is Diane Macarthur and I am the parent of a child in Carloway, Shawbost and the Nicolson Institute. In 9.5 of your proposal you mention the Outer Hebrides Migration Study and state that you do not believe that the closure of Carloway school would significantly impact on the significant key factors needed for sustainable communities. However, the study then goes on to suggest certain measure to promote population growth in the islands – such as stabilising the number of women of childbearing age and suggests the need to increase in migration in under 45s and reduce the number of 16-24 year olds leaving the island. Then surely this proposal to close rural schools conflicts with this objective. The closure of Carloway school could contribute to further depopulation. How can we keep, let alone attract people into the area with no services to offer them. Surely this is a viscous cycle of service cuts leading to more depopulation in rural areas. Should we not be concentrating on filling rural schools, not closing them. How do you propose to do this, repopulate an area where you are taking away services?

Joan Mackinnon

There were a number of questions there and I might not answer them all but I'll start and you can point me in the right direction if I am missing any issue that you wish me to raise with you.

We believe tha the fact that a school - a community has a school does not of itself ensure that there are children in the school and we have ample evidence to back that. I am not going to start quoting places just now but we have places where we have schools and we have no children and equally well we have communities where there used to be schools - there are no schools there now and yet they are very vibrant economically areas. The school is not a driver and that is what the migration study pointed out to that too. Having a school was on the list but it was way down the list of priorities if you like.

Diane Macarthur

The study highlights a shift in population towards larger settlements, particularly Stornoway and stated the declining population of some communities will threaten the viability of services. That is what we are saying here. We are aware of families that will move out of the area if we loose a school and we cannot see how we can attract families into an area which does not have services to offer them.

Joan Mackinnon

I take your point but can you then - I know you can't explain why the roll has fallen by 40% in 8 years albeit the fact that the school is here has not ensured that the role has remained stable and that is the challenge for us - you something about, how can you attract young families to the area? There is a school here and that is the challenge that we are facing. It doesn't give me any

pleasure or anybody here to be in the situation where we are considering amalgamating schools. We are just facing reality that our rolls have fallen consistently over 30 years – year on year they are dropping and as Mrs Munro said the funding that the local authority gets is directly related to the number of pupils that are in our schools. Really its just the fact that we have more schools than we need and we are just looking to reduce the estate to what we need in order to deliver good education which we think will attract people here as it has always done.

- Diane Macarthur We are looking at regenerating this area – to repopulate and in the migration study it stated that more than 1 in 5 businesses surveyed identified a negative effect on their business related to population change.
- Joan Mackinnon I would be really interested to know what you are doing because that would be interesting for us.
- Diane Macarthur As a community we are looking.....
- Joan Mackinnon Are there businesses starting up?
- Diane Macarthur We have list of businesses in the area and some new businesses in the area.
- Joan Mackinnon You've had a mill here for a very long time of course. One would have thought it might have generated a stable pupil generation but it hasn't of itself.
- Stephen Macdonald Stephen Macdonald Chair of the Parent Council here in Carloway with a child in Carloway school - 2 children in Carloway school and 1 in Breascleite Croileagan. Just to raise a point that a year and a half ago we were told by the council that we had no children in Carloway under the age of 5 so we did our own surveys and that and parents who knew we had children the age of 5 – to find out that we have at least 15 under the age of 5. Just recently finding out yesterday that Shawbost Croileagan is at capacity, Breascleite Croileagan is now at full capacity for August this year for the new tern 2010/11. We have children in these communities now who have no provision of education under the age of 5. You talk about sustainable communities, how on earth are we going to give education to these children under the age of 5? How are we going to sustain communities when we say to families – don't bother coming to Carloway because there's no education for you here – no croileagan or education provision under the age of 5 – go to Stornoway because that is where all the money is going. That's where everything seems to be going into - so what do we say to families who are coming here? Families that want to also when their children grow up, we want them to return home to maybe fulfil businesses or things like that. Where do we go with all these things?
- Joan Mackinnon Stephen, you wouldn't say don't come to Carloway
- Stephen Macdonald But that's what the council is saying
- Joan Mackinnon No, no we're not saying that. Come to Carloway because you will get an education, your children will get a good education. If Carloway closes they will have good education in Shawbost. That's not any different to saying don't come to Tolsta Chaolais, because there's no school in Tolsta Chaolais.
- Stephen Macdonald What do we say to our children who are under 5? What do we say to those families?
- Joan Mackinnon We have a statutory obligation to provide pre-school obligation for 3-5 year olds
- Stephen Macdonald You're not doing it just now
- Joan Mackinnon My colleague Mr Chisholm
- Stephen Macdonald Oh we've heard about Bernard because Bernard was the one actually who said to us a year and a half..... we have no children under the age of 5 here. Now

that was a year and a half ago and we've been fighting for this croileagan to boost the numbers in the school like you say, while we've got all these things in Carloway and yet the numbers aren't going up. We've had families to have had to go Breascleite and Shawbost because there is no croileagan provision here and if we had these families here the school roll would be going up significantly and there would be no need to go outwith Carloway for these reasons.

Joan Mackinnon I'll allow Mr Chisholm to speak for himself

Bernard Chisholm As most of you will know there was a croileagan provision here in Carloway – a pre-school provision here in Carloway a number of years ago run by a voluntary committee.

Stephen Macdonald Can we just deal with today and the facts of today because we all know that rolls go up and rolls go down but where we are today is.....

Joan Mackinnon I think what Bernard has to say is relevant

Bernard Chisholm I appreciate that you may have heard it all before but that's because in trying to help to find a solution we have to keep coming back to look at the problem. A number of years ago the croileagan hadn't got the children and made a decision to close, not by the council, not by myself, the early years partnership or anything else – that was the decision. On that basis, some children, some parents had gone to Breascleite and elsewhere. The parent council asked if I could look at establishing a croileagan. The situation for us is that we need approximately 15 young people to be in any croileagan or pre-school, largely it's the kind of number please let me finish.

The situation in Carloway – sorry before people talk about lies to me - the situation in Carloway was relatively simple. I was asked at the parent council and I myself discussed it and suggested if there were ways that we could make that more viable with small numbers and the way we could have done that was to get in the school, managed by the Headteacher and get the care commission to look at a situation in which if we had 7-8 children we could run it with 1 staff. That is what we looked at. What we've done since then is repeatedly look with the parents in Carloway to identify – do we have that population? Now we had not had that population. I was recently told that we had that sort of population and I was happy to look at that on that basis and as an early years partnership we were happy to work with the Care Commission to look at that being a unique and a very tailored situation to this position here. However, when we looked at the numbers, currently what I've got of parents who would register here is 4-5 and on an occasional day 6. We know that there are some parents who are registered in Breascleite but I know that some of these parents are not intent on registering here in pre-school. The situation on the pre-school in Carloway is simple – if there are 7 people who are able to enrol their children in pre-school education on the basis that I previously told you in the school with the Headteacher, we can look at that but I don't have that number of children enrolled and I've checked again today and we don't have it. All I'm saying to you was if your figure is 7 or 8 and you can enrol that number we can look at that bespoke solution. There's no issue with that and there never has been.

Stephen Macdonald Thanks for your issue. In January we presented these numbers to you, again two months later we presented them again to you and then you came back to us and said but we need to do our own survey. Now you've done your own survey and you came back with a figure of 4 or 5. We've had 7 or 8.

Bernard Chisholm Can I respond? We got a figure of 7 the day after; the office contacted us to say that the numbers might not be quite accurate. We then contacted the families and the figures that I've got at present is 5, 6 and on 1 day 4. That's the figures we've got. Now folks if somebody can give me the enrolment figures that shows its 7 of 3-5 year olds and that these people are willing to be registered here and not in Breascleite or elsewhere then we have something

we can go on but that's not the figures we get enrolled with the childcare partnership.

Stephen Macdonald Something to go on – we've heard a year ago in January, two months ago – it's the same old story Bernard, it's the same story. We have these numbers and we'll get these numbers and we're going to hear the same thing here again.

Cllr Morag Munro Ok can I just intervene here? You've got an assurance from - as Chair of the Education Committee – Director of Education, all of us round this table the assurance that you've got is that if there are 7 or more children enrolled for pre-school in Carloway that we will look at pre-school in Carloway.

Joan Mackinnon 3-4 year olds

Cllr Morag Munro 3-4 year olds – ok – so you've got that assurance now.

Stephen Macdonald Inaudible Its not saying we're going to get this going so that families don't have to go elsewhere – we've been looking at his for how long now?

Cllr Morag Munro Well you've got the assurance from us tonight from us round this table that we will and we will come back to you with a decision very soon. If you can bring these numbers to us.

Stephen Macdonald Yes we'll do that again

Cllr Morag Munro As long as they are enrolled, and that they will attend a facility in Carloway

Kareen Macleod Kareen Macleod – I would just like to clarify with Bernard – when you came out to consult to close the playgroup three years ago I was chair of the croileagan at that point and there weren't any children but you also spoke that we needed this magic number which at that point was 10 and we didn't have that number. In these three years there's 15 children under school age. If Carloway is to deliver Curriculum for Excellence to its full potential, the children in Carloway need to be in a pre-school in this are from 3 carrying on right on up the school.

Bernard Chisholm You are right. At the time that I came we didn't have the children and it had to close. The situation from then until now as you will know is that the actual running of the pre-school we're covered by numbers, we're covered by the income that we receive. It actually takes today something in the order of 15 or 16 for us to run a croileagan. We are quite happy to look at it given that we can get that agreement with the Care Commission which we are confident we can work on. We are happy to look at these things but genuinely folks it takes people who are enrolled and we can't prescribe that. People have to enrol their children – very confident that if we get the enrolment we can look at it.

Kareen Macleod How can you ask people to enrol in the croileagan when you know - I don't have any child in croileagan – my daughter is in school but how can you ask people to commit to enrolling their child in a pre-school when one minute its on, then its off, then its on again and you conduct your own survey.

Bernard Chisholm That is inaccurate. The situation is that we've always been consistent around the 7 and 8. We've contacted people, we don't get that figure. If people can show me that – I've come from speaking tonight in a situation where there are folk enrolled elsewhere from Carloway. That person wouldn't be enrolling in Carloway even if I set the croileagan up. So folks if the names are there and they can do it, as I've said before we will look at it but they've not been there.

Cllr Morag Munro Any other questions

Malcolm Macarthur Malcolm Macarthur – I'm looking at the back page of the booklet here and its going through the finance of the school and I'm looking at the school transport which is £39,247. We have for 11 pupils 9 of which I think - 1 of them takes a minibus from Tolsta Chaolais, the other take public transport. Would it be

possible to explain how we can come to a figure of £39,247 when 95% are taking public transport and of that 5 of them are within a 1 mile radius – so they're paying for that. Just to briefly break down how these figures 'cause there's a number of figures here that don't seem to be tallying up.

Robert Emmott I can partly answer that question and I'll have to follow it up with additional information. The costs of public transport – we have an integrated transport system so the costs of public transport and school transport are shared. The cost of providing the bus that takes the children to the school from wherever they are – if they are a public service as well they are split 50/50.

Calum Macarthur The £39,000 for the transport budget for the service run is paid by this Carloway school is what you are saying - for 9 pupils who are travelling less than an mile within the are and also pay for their transport.

Robert Emmott I don't know the details of the individual transport here – the best thing – I mean we can get you the details of what the cost of the public transport here and how it is split between the school and between public transport. Is that according to your figures - 11 who are entitled to free school transport. The transport is provided - I can get the figures for you - I don't have the detail of it here. The 39,000 will reflect the share of the costs that are allocated to education.

Calum Macarthur That seems an awful expense with checking up on these figures with a local company who had the same run – he has actually stated that this amount of money covers for 60% of the transport cost for travelling pupils from Shawbost to Stornoway every day for a year.

Robert Emmott I'm not familiar with the details but I'm quire happy to get that information and provide it to you.

Calum Macarthur If you can get these figures to us that would be - the figures just don't seem to be tallying up.

Robert Emmott Its no problem providing it. All of our public - all of our bus services are put out to tender so that they are priced on a competitive basis but what I will do is I'll come back with a detailed breakdown of the transport school – I'm happy to do that.

Cllr Morag Munro It has to be said that transport costs are expensive – a huge expense for the education department – huge transport costs.

Robert Emmott The overall costs for Education is about £2M in the islands it is a significant cost in providing the service but I will contact you with the details - it's a fair question Chair.

Stephen Macdonald Just to say that if that costing is significantly higher it is going to put costs per head of child per school so much higher as well and since my child doesn't get a private limousine every day – he actually takes his bike every day which is good for health and all these things – I'm thinking of the cost – if it is right £39,000 if you are taking our children from Carloway to Shawbost and all the added expense with no health benefits whatsoever because they would be in a minibus for an hour there and an hour back or whatever its going to be. Can you explain the costings for that and what you propose the costings will be if for just 11 children it is 39,000 – how would you work out the sums for that.

Robert Emmott We've got a figure for the additional cost of transport from here to Shawbost of about £7,000 but again what I can do is provide you with a breakdown of that as part of the answer to the other question.

Stephen Macdonald I don't want to get back to the private limousine thing again but isn't the numbers just not adding up and surely coming here to the final consultations, surely we should have these figures because what the council are saying to us is – the costing per head of pupil is so much higher than everywhere else and

you are coming with these wild figures to say that this is the cost of transport and then to say its an additional £7,000 to take out children to Shawbost for a whole. Surely you should be a wee bit more prepared coming to parents and as a community who really anxious an concerned about our school – our community as a whole. We need to have answers – send them in the post to us isn't going to help us. We have a document that we need to submit on 30 June at 5 o'clock – we need all the information today so that we can start writing this document tomorrow.

Robert Emmott I think we can come back to that very quickly with that additional information – but that's our estimate of what it will cost to provide an additional service for 190 days of the year to and from here. If you start breaking it down to the cost per day its pretty consistent what we pay for services but I'm happy to come back and I'm happy to come back just as quickly as we can with that information.

Cllr Morag Munro Any other questions - points of view

Danny Lawrence I'm Danny Lawrence and I'm just a member of the community here. I'm just wondering whether you've costed everything out like your pensions or redundancies for the teachers that you'll get rid of into the moving of the children from school to school?

Robert Emmott Just to be clear – you're talking about – have we included the costs of any redundancies we might make on account on changing the schools.

Danny Lawrence No, no – your intention is to close about 50% of the schools is what I'm hearing – so that means you will lose a lot of teachers and other staff and I'm just wondering where the funding is going to come from for that.

Robert Emmott The vast majority - its very difficult to - I don't want to be talking about individual members of staff here in this but the changes within the teaching establishment for schools - I mean there's constant changes going on, on a year to year basis that reflect the changing numbers of pupils in individual schools. The authority has just gone through an exercise to try and produce savings through the early retirement of teachers which will create some movement in the profession for the redeployment of teachers. In all the exercises we have been through so far, I don't think – maybe the Director will put me right - we have got to the stage where we have had to make teachers redundant and we have worked very hard to redeploy them and to use temporary staff where necessary so that we are not in a position where we are having to make people redundant. I thin if it did reach the stage where we did have to make people redundant you would have to recognise there would be some up-front costs in doing that. Clearly what's important to us is the ongoing recurring savings on the long-term basis that are achieved from reducing the number of schools.

The savings that area achieved in relation to Carloway are probably in the order of £180,000 on a recurring basis and obviously it will change from year to year depending on how the costs in the school change and that is a material consideration for the authority in deciding on the decision but its only one of the factors which has to be borne in mind when we are looking at deciding about the educational provision. I can't speak about any individual teachers in any schools – I don't think that will be right. In some cases there may some additional costs but I think across the whole estate we manage our teachers across the whole school estate – we would hope that we could manage that without having to make compulsory redundancies.

Danny Lawrence The other question I would like to raise is the alternatives – you said you would look at all the alternatives for this school not to close – could you just let us know what all the other alternatives that you've looked at?

Joan Mackinnon The only other alternative would have been to have kept the school open and to have increased its roll.

Danny Lawrence Well surely that would have been a better way to come and have a consultation with us now rather than make the decision

Joan Mackinnon We haven't made a decision – I'm sorry – we have not made a decision

Danny Lawrence I just though you said you had. It seem to me that you have made a decision but

Cllr Morag Munro I think there's a very long process before we can arrive at a decision. There's a long consultation process – a consultation document has to be written and we have to take into account all your representations both oral and written. We'll have to take into account the HM Inspectors Report and all of that and even at the end of the whole process and we decide as a Comhairle to close any school we then have to notify the Scottish Government Ministers who will then decide whether or not to call any decision in so there is a long process to go through before any decision can be arrived at.

Danny Lawrence My last point – I have just remembered – when I looked in the document there it seems to think that from school to school from here to Shawbost school I four miles in your document - its actually nearly six miles so I would just like that to go on record to say could you amend that please?

Joan Mackinnon Could you indicate where we've written four miles?

Danny Lawrence Its certainly in the document – were it says four miles.

Joan Mackinnon Sorry – 8.11 - yes it should be five

I checked with Transportation and from school to school they say five miles. Sorry – for the purposes of the change. We are intending to move the children from Carloway School to Shawbost School, that's the distance. The extra distance that children will have to travel

Malcolm Macarthur Malcolm Macarthur – in your document it states that there will be - there was one booking for the school and by the school closing there'll be no impact on the community. Now, that one booking is probably right but that's the only thing that's right because once you close this school, we almost automatically close this community centre and we have it on record stating that it wouldn't be viable to keep the community centre open if we lose the income coming from the education department. Now that only affects the community centre it affects nearly every part of the community from youth clubs to the play park out next door because once the community centre goes, the association collapses. The insurance then wouldn't be covered to keep the play park open – it affects every group that's in Carloway from gardening clubs and joiners club. It affects the football club in some of their fundraising. There's the churches that use the community centre for their own praise nights and fundraising events. It stops – in the winter just now we have the children having individual bookings for the community centre – it keeps them occupied – so with the one booking you have for the school we have 210 bookings for the community centre plus.... In the one thing – you're not taking any impact on the community on your document whereas we'd like to know how you can answer that one. You haven't looked into it properly is what we are saying.

Joan Mackinnon The school isn't used for lets I take it because that's our information and we use the school weekly for gym so that would be 40 lets a year – 40 weeks.

Molcom Macarthur Uses it for gym and drama and a number of things. What I'm saying is, it doesn't matter how many times you use it it's the income it takes in that it affects - you take the income that the education put into the community centre – the association will fold.

Joan Mackinnon You must be charging us an awful lot.

Molcolm Macarthur Listen – it doesn't matter what it charges – that doesn't come into it. The fact that the figures actually speak for themselves. If you take the income it affects the grant money that the community association get for the lets that we are losing through the school as well – so in all, we're losing quite a bit. It might not be as much as Breasclete, it might not be as much as Shawbost but it affects the community centre and the community centre itself might fold.

Joan Mackinnon I take your point.

Alex MacDonald Alex Macdonald, local councillor. I'm surprised that its one let per year because I think the cattle show alone use it for more than one day per annum.

We use the school

Cllr Morag Munro What we are saying is that the school uses the hall

Alex Macdonald What I was going to raise anyway was that in 2007 you say that was when you had a look at the school estate survey and the school was considered to be Condition C. Are you aware that since then new toilets have been provided, new cladding has been added to the annexe and I think it would be useful for the panel to have a look at the school themselves and give an assessment. I don't know if it will be open after the meeting or not but I don't think the school is in a C class condition and then again much has been made of capacity. If the annexe were discontinued, or the use of it were discontinued, that would significantly reduce capacity and the community centre could be used for any additional requirements as it is in Breasclete.

Cllr Morag Munro Thank you Convener for that. Somebody up at the back Kenny

Mr Boyd Hi good afternoon my name is Mr Boyd. I have three children at the school currently and I have a few points I'd like to raise. First of all before I raise any other points. One of our major decisions to move to the island and specifically to the area, was the fact that there was a school there and it was the provision for the children and that accounted for about 75-80% of our reason to move here. I think that I am or myself, my wife and our family are representative of the kind of people that you are now going to alienate in any rural regeneration programmes that the council may run. You are going to alienate us – families that may want to move to the area, may want to move away from big cities. Just by closing the school you are ripping the heart out of a community that whilst we have only been here a short time, we've fallen in love with for want of a better way of putting it – I just wanted to say that - just to make a point that we are the demographic that you are going to alienate by even just a hint of proposing to close the school – you're already putting people off wanting to come her and that is a severe effect you are going to have on the community for something for which you completely glossed over in this document of... two paragraphs that might have a likely effect on the local community is pointless really.

Anyway the other points I wanted to raise – or the first question is: do you have guidelines on the demographics that you have to use in order to assess future rolls? I've noticed that you've used seven years in this document. Are you given specific guidelines or do you just make them up?

Joan Mackinnon There are no specific guidelines – we just have to look at them – you would do it yourself if you have to plan. You look to see what's happened and you look at trends and then you look and see how far ahead of you, you can see. There aren't guidelines as such, you just use the information that you've got and the intelligence that you have around population trends and pupil rolls.

Mr Boyd Ok

Cllr Morag Munro We also use our own Sustainable Development Department to assist us with these statistics.

- Mr Boyd Ok – so you just picked a figure of seven years. Who came to the decision for seven years and how and why?
- Joan Mackinnon We could have gone back thirty years but we just thought we keep a rolling programme - every year we drop one off and look at another one – so we just look at seven years probably because primary school child's life is seven years and it's probably as basic as that. We could go back ten, we could go back twenty, we could go back thirty. There is nothing significant or magical about the seven.
- Mr Boyd Honestly I just wanted to establish that before I continued. I thought that that might be the reason – P1-P7 that's why you chosen 7 – that's great. I've seen the figures – I have asked for Mrs Gunn to supply them to me but I didn't give her enough notice for this meeting but I have seen them within the last six months and they show a demographic trend that represents highs and lows of which we are now in a low over the last thirty five years that come almost as low as this – yet at no point in this time can I find any indication that you were going to close the school because the rolls were that low. Surely at that point in time you wouldn't have been able to predict that the following year or the following two years the roll was going to double as you can't now.
- Cllr Morag Munro We have to work with the statistics, the figures that we have at the moment and it's very difficult to predict population trends. We can only assume looking back that the trend we are seeing that that is the assumption that we have to make. We do have specific numbers for pre-school children in the islands and the one thing that we have discovered over the last thirty years is that every single year the population – our school population has decreased every year on the whole overall. There have been changes within various schools and various communities. Some have gone up and some have gone down but on the whole, the trend has been downward for the past thirty years, year on year unfortunately.
- Mr Boyd Now you are sitting there arguing over the last thirty year period and comparing the last thirty years of the whole of the island yet when you use specific figures, you are only using seven. For you see our - it's a mismatch – you either use one set of figures for the whole thing or you use the other one. You can't use the two and then expect people to fall for it.
- Cllr Morag Munro The thirty years is a general figure that you are being given as a background information. Can I respond to something you said earlier? You were saying that we are alienating people. I'm very sorry if you feel that – certainly that is not our intention. Our intention is to provide in our islands a sustainable education service for all our children and for what we know from the situation that we have at the moment is that we cannot provide our children with the best possible education service as we are.
- Mr Boyd I would say from a very personal point of view with our children in particular that by moving here and having our children now educated at this school. It has had a significant impact on them – overall from an educational point of view being in a school such as this and now you are going to – well you are proposing to throw them back into an environment which we desperately escaped three years ago.
- Cllr Morag Munro I think it has to be said that Shawbost is not that far away and it's also not a large school so I would hope that Shawbost would have the same ethos that Carloway has and that the children would be very happy there I would hope.
- Mr Boyd Looking to the future then and as you say, you can't see into the future and see what the rolls are going to do. The current capacity of Shawbost school can – I think it's around 75 for primary as it stands at the moment with S1 and S2 provision there as well. Is that correct?
- Joan Mackinnon 83

Mr Boyd 83 – ok – since none of us can see into the future, you have to take the current figures so with 33 with your current proposals – you are proposing to close Bragar School, Carloway School – yeah – and move these pupils to Shawbost. Now that would exceed their current maximum capacity – yes! We’ve already calculated the figures at 90.

Joan Mackinnon Its not 90. it would be 83 next August if they were all going together but the rolls are going to drop in the next two year.

Mr Boydand if suddenly, the school populations exceeds – out of these three areas which the past thirty years has shown that it can in the blink of an eyelid. If in two years time your proposals are taken through, what is your provision then?

Joan Mackinnon We would have to deal with that when that arose. That would be a happy position to be in actually.

Cllr Catriona Stewart Sadly, all the statistics that we have quoted to you tonight show that the trend unfortunately is not increasing overall and its is very sad for all of us here, it’s a downward trend.

Annie Macleod My name is Annie Macleod. I left Carloway School a few years ago and I have still got a brother in Carloway School. He’s in P6 and he’s got two more years. If all the children moved to Shawbost, what difference is it going to make on the education in Carloway – in Shawbost because I think its really good in Carloway and its really good in Shawbost so what difference is it going to make for the children?

Cllr Morag Munro Well as you say it is really good in Carloway and we accept that and we certainly appreciate you saying that and recognising what a good school Carloway is but Shawbost is also a good school so I would hope that it wouldn’t make any difference to the children’s education because they would be going from a good school to a good school with better facilities.

Annie Macleod But Carloway is just as good. The teachers there are really good as well.

Kenny Campbell Kenny Campbell again. I was just wondering what your provisions are for the potential if S1/S2 doesn’t close. What is going to happen to our schools? What is going to be the provision because surely your - everything depends on S1/S2 closing.

Cllr Morag Munro I wouldn’t say that everything depends on S1/S2 closing. Our strategy at the moment involves rationalising our schools and closing our S1/S2s but we cannot make any real plans until a decision is made.

Kenny Campbell So you have not anticipated – its just that it seems in your document - you are stating that our children from Carloway if they go to Shawbost, they will be having this fantastically enhanced educational experience which just seems in the realms of fantasy – particularly so if S1/S2 doesn’t close - so I’m wondering why you’re using the only way they can have some kind of enhanced educational experience is if S1/S2 closes. If S1/S2 doesn’t close, their experience is going to be extremely negated.

Cllr Morag Munro They would still have access to the facilities at Shawbost School even though the S1/S2 didn’t close. They would still have access to the swimming pool for example and all the other educational facilities that there are. That would be an enhancement in their experience.

Kareen Macleod Kareen Macleod. They already have a session down at the swimming pool so that’s no benefit. They already go there for part of their PE curriculum.

Cllr Morag Munro Thank you. There is somebody over here who hasn’t spoken yet.

Eleanor Mall Hello, I’m Eleanor Mall and I’m the parent of two pre-school children. I just want to make reference to 8.9 of your document that talks about if the kids

move to Shawbost – there'll be more opportunity for pupils to participate in competitive sports and a wider range of activities. When we were having a discussion in this hall a few months back you said that the Comhairle had already made the decision to withdraw all funding for extra curricular activities as of next year – I was wondering how you could justify using that as a point in your favour for moving to Shawbost and also if our children had to be bussed back at a certain time every nigh – how could they actually take part in these activities anyway?

Joan Mackinnon If I could deal with the last point first. If children want to remain behind and this has happened in other schools. The schools usually make some arrangements either to arrange for children to get passes onto the service bus or lay on transport. That has happened before and as far as extra curricular activities goes, schools have managed to provide extra curricular activities by using the McCrone Agreement, the thirty five hours that staff must work and they have – teachers have offered half an hour for ten weeks of their time which is part of their contract time to offer extra curricular activities – so there are ways around the issue that there might not be the funding that there has been up till this point.

Eleanor Mall I would also just like to bring up factors relating to the Scottish Executive document released in 2008 – Safeguarding our Rural Schools – I know you have mentioned a couple of times that you don't think the school is the hub of the community and the main factor in sustaining rural communities but actually, time and time again, in the Scottish Executive's document it actually contradicts that. Section 1.16 of this document says that "maintaining the provision of accessible school and nursery education in small rural communities can make a significant contribution to regeneration efforts and to long term sustainability of local communities. New families can be attracted to the area while those who are already there are more likely to stay. Conversely the closure of rural schools can be make an area less attractive to the young families who are often the lifeblood of rural communities". It also mentions that in areas when they don't have a shop or a post office, the school is the children's centre and the focal point for the community and I would argue that that is the case here.

Cllr Morag Munro Thank you for that

Malcolm Macarthur Do we have a cost per pupil in Carloway? Do we have a figure for it? I think its £11,204 we've got her – now we've got a joint Head between Bragar and Carloway. That has affected the cost per pupil to Carloway where Carloway didn't ask to be joint Head with Bragar it was the council who came to Carloway and by - the council have - by doing this have added a considerable amount onto our cost per pupil by sharing our Headteacher with Bragar because we now have a Headteacher – I'm sorry Shona – we now have a Headteacher who heads Bragar and Carloway but we've taken in an extra teacher to cover her roll as a teacher in Carloway. Am I right in stating?

Joan Mackinnon Yes, Shona did have a class commitment time and so that is being covered by a teacher – I accept that.

???????????? So that increases our cost per pupil along with the £39,000 for every mile, for every pupil as well. You know, these figures are adding up to - it stinks.

Joan Mackinnon We're not making this proposal on the basis of the cost per pupil at Carloway school – the basis on which we are making this proposal – you are absolutely entitled to your view – I'm just telling you that that is not the bottom line. That is not why

????????????money is the bottom line for the council. We could actually cut the running cost of Carloway school by giving us back our Headteacher.

Joan Mackinnon Money is a material factor, or course it is. Everybody in here would have to be blind and deaf not to know that in the last few days. Money is going to be increasingly a factor but I can tell you that even if we did not have this current

financial crisis facing us all, we would still be here with this proposal because we're looking to provide education for all the pupils in the Western Isles in the number of schools that we need, not more than we need.

- Mr Boyd Mr Boyd again – you opened – just to redress what we just said now. You opened by stating that you know with financial issues were one of the big factors and now you are just saying that it isn't a factor or it isn't the main factor but you opened by saying it was. Can you explain why the contradiction now?
- Cllr Morag Munro What the Director has said is supposing we didn't have these financial problems, we would still be looking at providing an optimum number of schools in the Western Isles in order to provide the best possible education for all our pupils. We would still be looking at this even although we didn't have the financial constraints that are facing us.
- Mr Boyd I'm remiss to say – I don't think that – if you were to take finances – if finances were absolutely no consideration whatsoever, I truly believe that we would not be having this consultation right now and to sit there and say that – I don't believe that for a second, I'm sorry.
- Cllr Morag Munro The Comhairle made a decision in August 2007 to have a review of all its educational provision throughout the Western Isles and that was ahead of the serious challenges that we now have, so this decision was actually made almost three years ago now when the situation was not as bad as it is now.
- Mr Boyd Coming back to something that you mentioned earlier that I had forgotten about. Bearing in mind that a large part of this is a fiscal decision, why are you building five new schools and not just upgrading the ones that you have? Surely, the better fiscal decision is to upgrade schools, not upset communities. I don't see that there can be any real difference in costing.
- Cllr Morag Munro Actually there is a difference in the environment. A lot of our schools in the Western Isles are quite old schools. In fact we had a seminar where a member of Learning Teaching Scotland I think gave a presentation and what he said was if Rumpelstiltskin was asleep and woke up the only thing he would recognise would be our schools because they hadn't changed since he went to sleep and in the Western Isles we have a lot of old schools that are not geared to the educational environment that we need nowadays. Before the schools project was set up it was looked at whether it would be cheaper or better or possible to refurbish some of the schools and the eventual decision which was made after looking very closely at all the options was that new build was a better option.
- Joan Mackinnon If I could just add to that. One of the real challenges that have faced the council over the last twenty or whatever years is the fact that they have never had the money to have a planned maintenance programme for their schools. What the new school build will have in it as an integral part of it is a thirty year planned maintenance programme. That will be five schools that will be looked after and kept at optimum condition for thirty years – really that's the only way - if you were to build a house and ignore its maintenance issues until there was a hole in the roof or whatever, it wouldn't be very good use of your management of your own home. I think its incumbent on the council to be good and prudent managers of its estate and this is us taking steps forward to ensuring tha that is indeed the case.
- Mr Boyd Is this a decision that has just come about in the last three years? Did I hear you correctly – or you mentioned a twenty year period where this is happening so its taken you twenty years to talk about a coming up with a planned maintenance scheme for your stock of schools and properties.
- Cllr Morag Munro We've been talking about this schools project since December 2002. That was when we originally put in our expression of interest and I have to say that one of the new schools is the Nicolson Institute which covers the whole of Lewis; every single pupil in Lewis will eventually go to the Nicolson Institute and I think

Joan Mackinnon We're very happy to share the condition surveys with you.

Malcolm Macarthur We've asked for that at the conversations and we've asked for lots of other things at the conversations – we've sent you documents and we haven't received anything from you.

Joan Mackinnon I'm very sorry that you didn't because we've sent out many of these condition surveys following the consultation and I take full responsibility for that and I do apologise and we will copy the condition surveys for Carloway and Breasclete to you tomorrow and get it into the post to you. We have nothing to hide, the condition surveys were done by an independent firm of consultants who came across and did all the schools. They used the same criteria for all the schools and what came out of that survey is what we're using and you can have these documents and you can look at them yourselves.

Malcolm Macarthur Would it be an idea to – like Mr MacDonald had asked earlier on – would it be possible to get a re-classification since there has been significant works done on Carloway to see if they are up to the same sort of standards?

Joan Mackinnon I suppose we would have to ask these people to come back and do the exact same thing and I don't know if that is possible but we can look at it.

Malcolm Macarthur ...and also would we be - all the questions that were asked at the conversations – would it be possible to get an answer to all these questions at the same time giving us time when we need it for the final part of the consultation.

Joan Mackinnon I'm just looking here at the list of questions that we have and just checking with you. Does the receiving school have the capacity to include Bragar pupils, or does it require closure of S1/S"? I thought that was answered that night because I recall saying – “yes it does have capacity”. That wasn't something that required an answer after that.

Malcolm Macarthur Are you going to give us an answer or not? You told us that we were going to get an answer to all our questions - inaudible - we haven't received any answers.

Joan Mackinnon As I say I apologise for it. I can't change that now – I can't change that.

???????????????? Inaudible - so that we can prepare a document for the next stage.

Joan Mackinnon We have no reason to keep any information that you require from you and it was never our intention to keep information from you either I can assure you of that.

Cllr Morag Munro Have you not received any communication?

Joan Mackinnon We have sent you Mr Carmichael; I have an e-mail that

David Carmichael If you want to take issue on that - when I ask specific questions but I had to reply three times to yourself and Donna Smith to get the answers ambiguous – inaudible - a lot of the figures are based on redundancies which you have got to keep a certain degree of confidentiality about – but it is based on reducing staffing numbers. Am I correct?

Joan Mackinnon Overall eventually it is but I can tell you it is not based on redundancies.

???????????????? But, but to answer that David Carmichael - inaudible – the Shawbost Parent Council so the answers you've been giving to David are only relating to Shawbost - inaudible

Joan Mackinnon Ok I accept that, I'm sorry.

Stephen Macdonald Not to change it too much but just to get back to Bernard. Just before you came in Bernard we had mentioned that Breasclete and Shawbost we've heard croileagan capacity is maximum for 2010/11 and I'm just wondering what provision the council – that as the first part of the question – you obviously know about this and you've obviously put things in place so could you tell us how you are going to provide for Carloway and Breasclete families, and all these places for under 5s for 2010/11.

Bernard Chisholm On the enrolments we've currently got with the childcare partnership unless someone is going to tell me different tonight on the enrolment we've got, we've still got a place if not more in Shawbost. It is full in Breasclete, we have Carloway parents enrolled in that – we don't therefore currently have information that any child is without a place. That's the situation that we have at the moment.

Kenny Campbell Kenny Campbell again. I can tell you as of tonight, there is a child in Carloway who does not have provision.

Bernard Chisholm Without having the details if I just – and a reference without name - but if somebody wants to speak to me after I look at - I certainly know that as a consequence – I think I'm right – is that an all day provision by any chance Kenny – was that likely caused by displacement from another provider

Kenny Campbell Little Teddies

Bernard Chisholm Little Teddies – my understanding and I've yet to be clear on that in terms of - is it still looking - is the individual looking for all day place which we don't have and if they are we are still looking at that as part of the displacement for Little Teddies but I'm happy to take that up with the individual if they are here tonight.

Kenny Campbell Ok – thank you

Cllr Morag Munro Are there any other questions?

Kareen Macleod Kareen Macleod – I'm just wondering if Carloway School closes and the children transfer to Shawbost School in Summer 2012 - the class sizes if Shawbost and Bragar and Carloway are to be together – will it be composite classes, will it be individual P1-P7 classes? How are you planning to implement that?

Joan Mackinnon Can I answer that? I was looking at the rolls as they are just now. What we do know is that the rolls are going to fall over the next couple of years. The number that we are working with, the maximum would be what we would have in August 2010 and if the schools were going together; currently in Carloway next session a one class group P1-7 with eighteen in it and a Gaidhlig class – that's the way it is in Carloway in August. If Carloway and Shawbost were coming together you would have two class groups, a P1-4 with thirteen in it and a P5-7 with eighteen in it - that's the way it would be and if the three schools were going to be together as from August you'd have a P1-3 with nineteen, a P4/5 with twenty four and a P6/7 with twenty two – that's the way it would look but we know that the numbers would be less than that.

Tormod Macleod Hello, I'm Tormod Macleod, I used to go to school here. I'm actually leaving for further education after - onto the mainland. While I was in school in Carloway there was quite a large number in this school and I was wanting to come back here eventually – how can I do that if this community is dead?

Cllr Morag Munro I think it will be up to the likes of yourself to come back and ensure that the community is not dead. I think that is what we are needing, young people to come back to our islands – right through our islands.

????????? Inaudible

Cllr Morag Munro But there is a school near you – even if this one closes.

????????? You said in the last comment that you were going to have a class of twenty two in Shawbost in 2010. How do you expect to do that when there is barely enough room for twenty right now. In the English room and the Gaidhlig room right now there is barely enough room for twenty people, how do you expect to do that?

Joan Mackinnon There are other rooms in Shawbost School that can be used it doesn't have to be the rooms that are currently used by the Gaidhlig class or the English class. The school is the school and the rooms are there to be used the best way that we need to depending on the pupil population.

Cllr Morag Munro Do you have another question?

Kenny Campbell Kenny Campbell again. I'm raising a concern for a number of parents with pre-school children in that what is the transport provision going to involve for the children to go to Shawbost? At present there is a privately laid on minibus – we are certainly concerned that the likes of P1s are going to be going on some sort of minibus unsupervised. I wonder what your thoughts are on what the provision is going to be.

Joan Mackinnon What happens currently if there's a P1 child in Tolsta Chaolais? What happens currently?

Kenny Campbell They go on a minibus to here.

Joan Mackinnon They would just carry on. Instead of coming off in Carloway, they would carry on to Shawbost.

Kenny Campbell So there would be no supervision on the minibuses so if the driver takes ill with all these.....

Joan Mackinnon Is that currently what happens as well?

Kenny Campbell I don't know, I'm not in charge of this.

Joan Mackinnon There is no supervision but that is the case now for the children who are coming to Carloway school from whatever the catchment area is – it would be the same for children living in Carloway and going to Shawbost.

Kenny Campbell So you are stating that it would be unsupervised transport

Joan Mackinnon It is unsupervised transport that we have.

Kenny Campbell You don't have a duty of care towards children then in respect that if a driver becomes ill or they've got all these small children on a bus I just wonder what happens - you accidents and things that we've heard about recently....

Joan Mackinnon As you can you imagine, many, many of the pupils in our school travel to school by bus and we do not have supervision on the buses other than the driver.

Cllr Morag Munro This is actually an issue that has come up in quite a number of the conversations and consultations that we have and we have said that we will look at it because we recognise that parents have very real concerns on this issue and it is something that we've been hearing and its something that we've agreed needs to be looked at.

Bernard Chisholm Can I say Kenny also, throughout from the Butt to Barra we have children from primary 1 who do travel. I have to say that we have contracts with a lot of providers and the contract does stipulate within it requirement s of care, seatbelts etc. qualifications of drivers etc - they are tight - nobody – its not just anybody you can put in a minibus – there are requirements and we have a

long track record of safety both in terms of the service but also to - I think most parents would recognise of the bus contracts – people give a service – there is a care service - they just drive the bus and therefore for all our children we've got a long track record of a very safe

?????????/

Inaudible I have to disagree with that. Most of the children get on service buses to and from the school and travelling on the service buses involves – passengers – its far from quality service.

Cllr Morag Munro

Thank you – as I said this is an issue that has come up and its one that we've agreed needs a relook at.

Fiona Bruce

Hello, Fiona Bruce again. As the health visitor I'm visiting quite a number of isolated families – not particularly in Carloway but through Ness and the West Side and I'm just wondering what transport provision there would be for croileagans in Shawbost and Breasclate because I know a lot of parents could walk if it was in Carloway with all the health benefits fighting the Lewis wind and all that implies – but transport is a huge issue for parents as I'm sure you're aware especially when they don't have extended family support on the island.

Bernard Chisholm

We don't provide transport for pre-school and we don't provide it for the access in getting there. In some specific situations where there may be specific needs or circumstances, there is a small grant that we can look at through the early years but that is the position throughout the islands and pre school children often live in areas well beyond what would be reasonable to go up to and parents do have that responsibility.

?????????

Inaudible

Cllr Catriona Stewart

Can you wait until the mike comes because it won't pick up.

Fiona Bruce

We're talking about improving services for children and I'm highlighting transport as a real issue for families.

Bernard Chisholm

I accept that

Kareen Macleod

Its just two points. If you are planning to transfer the children from Carloway School to Shawbost in 2010, accommodation should be made in Shawbost for these children going to croileagan – should they not be going to croileagan in Shawbost rather than croileagan in Breasclate because that's – is that not the learning community to go that way and not the other way. My other point is your class sizes – the Shawbost school rooms in the primary and the secondary are quite small and you speak about having twenty four in a composite class. I think

Cllr Morag Munro

Twenty two at the moment but these numbers are going down so we reckon it will be less.

Kareen Macleod

Even if it was twenty or eighteen – surely the rooms are smaller – when you work with pre-school you have a square – well you have an area per child – surely that comes into primary school as well.

Joan Mackinnon

The classes in Shawbost can take composite classes up to twenty five.

Cllr Morag Munro

Are there any other questions or points of view?

Steve Macleod

Steve Macleod, I'm a pupil of Carloway School and I'm just wondering if these schools do close like Carloway and not just Carloway I'm referring to – other schools you know – what will they be used as afterwards? What will the service be?

Cllr Morag Munro

The Comhairle have a policy on disposing of surplus property and that means

that whenever a property becomes vacant it is first offered to other departments of the Comhairle to see if they've got a need for it. It is then offered to the registered social landlord and after that if they don't want it, it is then offered to the community and the community - and if the community were interested in taking over any buildings they would require to have a business plan in place or to tell us what they would use it for because we don't want to see buildings left to fall into disrepair. If the community were not interested in it, it would then have to be sold on the open market, that is the Comhairle's policy.

Norman Mackenzie You talk about the potential size of classes in Shawbost school if Carloway School and Bragar amalgamated - being 25:1, teacher pupil ration. Currently in Carloway school the ratio is much smaller and much better and more conducive to more individual attention and better education for children in primary school. How can you state that the education they're going to get with these higher pupil/teacher ratios is going to be as good or even better than what they're currently getting?

Joan Mackinnon I would professionally say that a mixed group of two or three classes of twenty pupils in it is much better than a class of P1-7 with eighteen pupils in it. That is an extremely challenging task for the teacher to ensure that every pupil's needs are met and that they have a rich experience when you're teaching children as young as five along with children who are eleven.

Annie Macleod I really don't think there's enough room in the classes for twenty five pupils. The primary classes - I think they're just way too small for that amount of pupils.

Joan Mackinnon Thank you for that.

Cllr Morag Munro Are there any other questions then? If there are no more questions, I would like to thank you all for your contributions and before I close I would like to ask Derek to summarise some of the questions that you've asked and some of the information that we've agreed to come back to you with. Derek can you summarise please?

Derek Mackay To summarise the information that we will be looking to come back to you with. The Director of Finance and Corporate Resources agreed to provide further information in relation to the integrated transport and the splits between the public and the school runs and we'll also get you the breakdown in costs for the additional costs to take children to Shawbost.

You had also requested the conditions surveys for Carloway and Breascleite Schools and it was agreed that these would come out to you. That's all the information that I took a note of - the additional information that you did not have at present - is that correct?

Cllr Morag Munro Were there any other bits of information that Derek doesn't have a note of?

Joan Mackinnon The transcript

???????????? Inaudible..... answers of the conversations

Joan Mackinnon Is there somebody that I can clarify that these were with please?

???????????? You took notes from all the discussion tables and said you were going to summarise them and send them out to us.

Joan Mackinnon Just the questions that were on the summary - that's fine.

Cllr Morag Munro I apologise that these didn't go out to you. I was under the impression that they had in fact gone out and I apologise if they haven't gone out.

????????? When we get the transport request we just clarify in your document whether

you're including the secondary children in going to the Nicolson and would make sure it's the ones going from Carloway in the area – coming to this school and not any other school.

Derek Mackay Can I just clarify that this information – do you want this to return this through the Parent Council?

Just to confirm that a copy of the transcript will automatically go to the parent council as soon as that is finished.

Alex Macdonald Alex Macdonald - I don't think we're interested in the 2007 condition survey, I think we'd like to see an up-to-date one. There's no point in giving us one that's three years old.

Cllr Morag Munro As Convener, that will be an onerous responsibility to make sure that the Comhairle does that.

Joan Mackinnon Can I just confirm that you do want to see the 2007 condition surveys for Breasclete and this school?

Cllr Morag Munro I would just like to close then by reminding you what the process is from now on in. The Comhairle will review the proposal having regard to the HMIE Report, written representations that it has received and oral representations made to it by any at this public meeting and as you know there will be a verbatim transcript of this meeting that will go along with the Report to the Comhairle.

A consultation report will then be prepared. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be printed in local newspapers. The Report will be available on the Comhairle website and from Comhairle offices as well as at the schools concerned and these of course will be free of charge. The Consultation Report together with any other relevant documentation will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee who will then make a recommendation that will be taken to the Comhairle for approval. Should the Comhairle decide to close the school at this stage it is required to notify the Scottish Ministers of the decision to provide them with a copy of the proposal document and the consultation report in accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 within six working days of the decision of the Comhairle.

Scottish Ministers have a six week period from that date, from the date of the final decision by the Comhairle that is, to decide if they will call in the proposal and until the Comhairle know the outcome of the six week call in process: until we know the outcome, the Comhairle cannot proceed with implementation of any proposal. The deadline date for the submit of written submissions is 5.00pm on 30 June 2010 and these should be sent to Mr Malcolm Burr, Chief Executive, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwick Road, Stornoway or can be sent electronically to: schoolconsultations@cne-siar.gov.uk and that e-mail address is in your consultation documents. I would urge you to put in written submissions. I recognise that not everybody feels able to speak at a public meeting and if there is anybody who hasn't had their say I would urge you to put your representations in writing to us by the agreed date.

Thank you very much indeed for your contributions this evening.