

CATCHMENT AREA CONSULTATION MEETING – 20/11/13**LEVERHULME MEMORIAL SCHOOL, ISLE OF HARRIS**

Catriona Stewart: Good evening and welcome to this evening's meeting where we discuss the revision to the catchment boundary for Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott in Tarbert. My name is Catriona Stewart, I am Chair of Education and Children's Services Committee and with me tonight I have Mr Allan MacDonald from our Legal Services Department, Mr David Smart who is our Transport Manager, Mr Bernard Chisholm who is our Head of Resources and the very fine looking gentlemen to my extreme left here are Alex and Martin who are recording this evening's meeting and it is very important at this stage that you switch off your mobile phones, not just put them on silent or meeting [mode] because they interfere with the recording, that's simply why. We want to make sure that we don't have any interference. And when it comes to the stage that you are free to ask questions, you will be given the microphone so that we have an accurate recording of this evening's meeting and we would ask you that when it comes to that stage that you give your name so that we have a proper record for the meeting. Where as many of you I am sure are aware that as a result of review of the School's estate since 2007, we are in a situation where we have a number of anomalies because we have had refurbishment of some schools and we have had new schools built, we have had some closures and therefore we need to review the catchment areas to reflect what is best for these communities. That is basically the reason that we are here this evening. We are also very privileged to have at the back of the hall, from Education Scotland Mary Bell, so she is here as part of the consultation process. I am going to pass over to Mr Alan Macdonald who will go over procedure for this evening's meeting.

Mr Allan MacDonald: Thank you Chair. Feasgar Math. What I propose to do is simply go through the procedural aspects of the Proposal Document so I will just read through the document. This document has been issued as a result of the decision of the Comhairle to seek views on the proposals in this paper as noted here. The Proposal Document has been issued to consultees and published on the Comhairle website. I hope everyone has got a copy. One of the most important things in this document is the date, the deadline for your responses which is Wednesday 11 December 2013. So please get any comments that you have to make, get them in before then, 5pm on that day and there is an e-mail address there on the following page to make those responses or else you could write to the Chief Executive, that's another option. This is the public meeting, and you can also raise your concerns here and as Catriona said, if you wish to do so, if you are asking questions etc, give Martin a minute to come over with the mike and give your name etc because it is all going to be transcribed and that will be part of what is going to Education Scotland and thereafter goes into the Consultation Document. So, I will just go through these paragraphs. When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will be sent to Education Scotland by the Comhairle, Education Scotland will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Comhairle from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will further receive a summary of any oral representation made to the Comhairle at this meeting and a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a Report on the educational aspects of the proposal and this will be produced not later than 17 January 2014 after the Comhairle has sent them all representations and documents as mentioned above. In preparing the Report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such reasonable enquiries of such people there as they consider appropriate. So finally, in terms of the preparation the next stage would be once all your views are in etc, the next stage would be the preparation of a Consultation Report. The Comhairle will review the proposal having regarded the Education Scotland Report, the written representations that it has received and the oral representations made to it by a person at this public meeting. It will then prepare a consultation Report. The Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in the local papers. It will be available from the Comhairle website and the Comhairle Headquarters. If anyone has made written

representations during the consultation period this will also be informed about the Report. The paragraph goes on about the Report further. Ultimately it is that Consultation Report which you will have access to. The Consultation Report together with any other relevant documentation will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee on 15 April 2014 and then that Committee will make a recommendation, the recommendation will be subject to the approval of the Comhairle on 24 April 2014. So that is effectively the procedure. So as noted there, the meeting is an important part of that procedure.

Catriona Stewart: Thank you Allan. I will ask Mr Chisholm now to go over some of the more relevant parts of the Proposal Document.

Bernard Chisholm: Just to mention at the beginning, point out two corrections I should have mentioned. At 8.1 I think it is meant to say that we spread the catchment area there, we spelt Seilibost by the school spelling name not the village and we have put in [INAUDIBLE] [Marivig] instead of [Maraig]. Apologies for that. If you see any other corrections let us know. As most of you know, we had a consultation where many of the issues in relation to the education benefits etc had been discussed. Having concluded all of those consultations and parents made various choices and decisions were implemented. Clearly we are in a situation that for some parents they wish to make choices in different schools and in at least six school areas now [it] was necessary to [review] and reflect better choices that people wish to make and actually have quite an open discussion to see if people are comfortable with the way the [catchment areas] are now run and whether there should be any adjustments so that we can make alterations to our bus transport etc. So the key challenge for us here is that when decisions made to move Seilibost School in Seilibost existing catchment, the proposal was that it went into Sir E Scott. That be considered to be worthy for review and therefore a proposal must be made to adjust the catchment area of Seilibost School so that part of it would go to Sir E Scott and part to Leverhulme. The catchment areas in 8.1 outlined as I understand it the historic catchments for Leverhulme Memorial although I am aware that some children attended Tarbert School from different areas so it is really an opportunity for folk to be clear with us as to any views that they have of where the boundary area is, 8.1 there describes and the maps, I have some blown-up maps that have been prepared here. As part of this discussion we have also earlier today spoken to children in both schools affected, Sir E Scott and here and the staff. I am happy to share some of the information with you if you wish.

Catriona Stewart: Ok then thank you. Well I will open the meeting for questions from the floor and again if you would wait for the mike and just for the record state your name before you speak.

Caroline Chaffer: Good evening my name is Caroline Chaffer I am a parent and a member of the Parent Council here at Leverburgh. We have discussed this as a Parent Council and within the community and believe that actually the boundary should be inclusive of Seilibost and Luskentyre because Leverburgh is the only south bound school now and the opportunity for families to send their children to a south bound school should be made available as a choice. The fact that Seilibost was a south bound school also and unfortunately has been closed down, those children some chose to come to Leverburgh and some naturally went because of their age group up to Tarbert but we feel that it is a reasonable proposal to include Seilibost and Luskentyre.

Neil Campbell: Could I ask, is this consultation purely on changing the catchment area on the west side because I mean the description really talks about changing the catchment area from Northton Road end to Horsgabost but [in] the table of schools there appears to have been changes to some of the villages that they have moved catchment areas and I just wondered why wasn't that included in the consultation proposal?

Bernard Chisholm: As [INAUDIBLE] with the Leverhulme Memorial included on the east side those schools that historically in the catchment were held so the actual

change we were making was to the Seilibost catchment. However, the actual consultation [sought] any views from the community and as you may be aware or otherwise parents from the east side have made representation to us so that would be taken into consideration when we finalise the decision.

Neil Campbell: Just for the record could you clarify what the current catchment area from the east side is for Leverhulme?

Bernard Chisholm: Ok [INAUDIBLE] both villages outlined on the east side, so that meant that on the east side there at the moment we [INAUDIBLE]. That is the way that I understood it.

Neil Campbell: Although there are children from these villages currently going to Tarbert?

Bernard Chisholm: Yes.

Neil Campbell: And the proposal would be that Leverhulme would now be the school for these children?

Bernard Chisholm: It could be but remember we have had representations from those families too so we would take that into consideration in the discussion that we make. In the decision or recommendations we make to Committee. Sorry I should say it is open to parents in either catchment to come to either school consultation and also to in terms of written representations.

Catriona Stewart: I take it then that there are no more questions from the floor?

Unknown Female: We did discuss the fact that [INAUDIBLE] was possibly out with Leverhulme because to ask children to actually travel in [INAUDIBLE] actual physical mileage it is equal but the journey is far more demanding and through the winter period, you know, we appreciate that within creating a reasonable boundary basically [INAUDIBLE]. So yes, really we were thinking around Manish was a suitable stopping point.

Bernard Chisholm: It might not come as a surprise to know that in the discussions that we had in the other areas there was a general feeling that that seemed to be a reasonable boundary in that area. And I think we will take that information back to Committee and consider it with any other submissions that we have got. I should also say obviously although I didn't respond to your original comments they are being taken into consideration with all the others in relation to [the proposal].

Unknown Female: The other point that we also wanted to make was that families that would be affected within these boundary, extreme boundary areas where it would create a grey area say at Luskentyre. A family might decide to go either way and in those cases transport then has a major part to play in that and we would like to see more flexibility on transport costs for families. We are not talking about a huge amount of people that would contest having to pay their children's transport to whichever school that they decided. So some flexibility we would feel is necessary to give parents a choice.

David Smart: We have got contracts going out to tender at the moment and the specifications generally aren't changing so for instance from Rodal to Manish and all the way up, there is a bus going to Sir E Scott and that is remaining there. Similarly we have got a bus coming down in a southerly direction Rodal heading towards Leverhulme. No change there at all. The only changes that have been made in anticipation of this boundary change on the west side is for, it is one of our contracts it does Borrisdale, Strond and Northton at the moment, there is an option to extend it to the Horgabost boundary line, so that is all, basically the transport is all sitting ready and waiting on a decision. But you also mentioned about flexibility on payment, it is probably more for Bernard to say, but pupils who are already attending out with the catchment area will still be given free transport during their term in school. Is that [correct]?

Bernard Chisholm: [INAUDIBLE] But I think the point that you are making was that if we were outside the boundary like, slightly outside, what flexibility could the transport policy give to helping them make their decision.

Unknown Female: Yes.

Bernard Chisholm: That is really covered by the school transport policy and part of the reason to have this discussion on school catchment is that having settled on where the schools are, and decided on the boundaries, anyone from this point forward would be captured by that policy, so it is a subsidised bus route if it runs. But if a placing request would have to be made it is a parental responsibility then. [INAUDIBLE.]

Unknown Female: But that is my point. That families that would be right on that boundary line, would be in Leverburgh catchment but decided that they want to send their children to Tarbert or vice versa but were literally within that kind off, boundary.

Catriona Stewart: Policy would have to apply.

Unknown Female: There is no flexibility on that what so ever?

Catriona Stewart: No.

Bernard Chisholm: Whenever the parents find themselves in that area, the Council has an appeals process. So if a parent for example I was quite concerned when we were drawing the boundaries, because you know what is going to happen, someone is going to build a house that straddles it in some way or something is going to happen. You worry that where these things occur and so we very occasionally people will end up on where they build or other circumstances and there is an appeals process which the Council has set in place so that consideration can be given to issues of building, issues with transport, issues of hardship etc and so the policy sets the framework which we as officers [follow] but not infrequently when appeals are undertaken Members will come to a view based on all the information for that particular decision. So it would not be the case to suggest that the policy never allows an exception but it does require to go in front of an appeals panel.

Catriona Stewart: Thank you.

Neil Campbell: It's Neil Campbell again. Could I just refer to section 7.1 in the document. Just slightly take issue with the statement there. The School estate review ensured that Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott School could accommodate current and future pupil numbers and provide improved school estate. You obviously know what is coming next. As part of the review Seilibost was closed which was a Category B and the pupils have been transferred to a Category C school. I would just like to ask what are the plans to upgrade leverhulme to a Category B or higher.

Bernard Chisholm: Just to say, you know that the Council will bring forward proposals made that the capital programme has been set up now where two new elements to it which are [INAUDIBLE] and Leverhulme. I will be close to the figures but they were due to go up in front of Committee this series round. Councillors indicated when the Capital Budget was set that there would be a priority list for those schools as a receiving school and a sum of money was set aside for these receiving schools. There is also the Capital Programme and apart from being asked to prioritise schools for that, clearly Leverhulme Category C is one of the priority schools and certainly you may have seen something in the press in the last fortnight. Scottish Government has given us a grant funding of some half a million pounds over a couple of years to help also. So all of that information is going up to this Committee series so after the Committee Series the Council will hopefully be in a position but Cllr Stewart will be more up to date with that but we hope to be in a position then to bring forward the list to the communities of priority schools and the work that we are doing but

clearly Leverhulme is high on that order. Money has been recommended to be set aside under the budget headings and I hope to see that work.

Catriona Stewart: Yes, I have to say I am very aware that this is a category C school and the programme of works that are required to the school estate was actually passed by Committee yesterday. It will be confirmed by the Comhairle hopefully next week and then officers from both Technical Services Department and the Education and Children's Services Department will be sitting down to itemise exactly what work requires to be done in the various schools and there is a piece of work to be done but the Comhairle has made a commitment that by 2018 for instance, that all it's schools will be in Category B or above in accordance with the desires of Scottish Government. So you will see, not just in the longer term but in the short term, you know you will be made aware of the plans that are being drawn up for refurbishment of part of the school.

Bernard Chisholm: I should say on that, some of the staff may be aware but we did have all the schools after the consultation and all of them were subject to a condition survey again. A full list of the items has comprised quite an extensive report. It was also looked at under the DDA Disability Act requirements and we also looked under suitability and the Committee considered School Estate Management which was the aspirations from the teaching side together with those conditions that were raised. What Technical Services have been working with us on is trying to look at the type of works in terms of making sure we are approaching them in a way that is dealing with the biggest things first. New windows etc and then working down the INAUDIBLE. We would hope after Thursday that once Council has ratified this we would start to share that.

Catriona Stewart: I would think that as a senior officer of the authority the Head Teacher would be made aware of the programme of works that are to be drawn up and she in turn should be able to inform the Parent Council of timelines involved in the works that have been scheduled. So keep asking.

Unknown Female: I obviously just want to make the point obviously that Sir E Scott is a brand new school so all focus should be now Leverhulme. [INAUDIBLE]. The outside of the building for instance, if new parents or new families moving into the school come to see it at the moment and stand outside, it looks pretty awful and if they go to Tarbert they have a new school. We want to make the school more appealing to all families.

Catriona Stewart: I think everybody would like to have a new school.

Unknown Female: Not a brand new school, just even to have it painted.

Catriona Stewart: We only managed six and hopefully we will have seven. As I said to you, we are looking at the works that required to be done to the school.

Bernard Chisholm: [INAUDIBLE]. I think it would be fair to kind of assume that on the receiving of school budgets, Sir E Scott would not likely draw significantly on that. Leverhulme might manage to do a bit better and the only other thing I would like to be able to do is get rid of these, but I am struggling with that.

Catriona Stewart: INAUDIBLE

Catriona Stewart: Does anybody have anymore questions? Well, as was laid out in the beginning of the meeting a copy of this Proposal Document was sent to Education Scotland and we are very happy for the representation here today. Again Education Scotland will receive a summary of any oral representation made to the Comhairle and at the meeting here and a copy of any relevant documentation. Education Scotland has then until 17 January 2014 after they've received all the representations and documentations to prepare a report which will ensure that they have all the actual important information that they require. The Comhairle will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it had received and

any oral representations made to it by any person at a public meeting. Then a Consultation Report will be prepared. This Report will be available in electronic and printed formats and it will be advertised in all the local papers. And it will be available on the Comhairle website, from the Comhairle buildings and both Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott, Tarbert free of charge. Anyone who has made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the Report. The Report will include a record on the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting, the authority's response to the Education Scotland Report as well as any written or oral representations received together with a copy of the Education Scotland Report and any other relevant information including details of any alleged inaccuracies and how they have been handled. The Report will also contain a statement explaining how it complied with the requirement to review the proposal in light of the Education Scotland Report and representations made, both written and oral that it received. The Consultation Report will be published at least three weeks prior to the Comhairle making a decision. This Consultation Report together with any other relevant documentation will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee on 15 April 2014. This Committee will make a recommendation which will be subject to the approval of the Comhairle on 24 April 2014. The date that should be most clear in your minds at this stage is the closing date for any representations you wish to make to the Comhairle and that date is Wednesday 11 December 2013 at 5pm. Any representations should be made to Mr Malcolm Burr, the Chief Executive. You can do it in written form by writing to the Comhairle Buildings on Sandwick Road or by e-mail at schoolsconsultation@cne-siar.gov.uk. I hope that I have got that right. It is in the Proposal Document. I thank you all for your attendance this evening and trust that you will make your written representations before the 5pm deadline. Thank you all very much for coming out this evening.