

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL16 December 2020Report by Director of Environment and Director of EducationNEILSTON LEARNING AND LEISURE CAMPUSANDWIDER REGENERATION UPDATE REPORT**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with an update in relation to the progress of the project to deliver the Neilston Learning and Leisure Campus, Leisure and Well-Being Centre and wider regeneration proposals.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Council:-
- (a) notes that despite working practices being impacted by the Covid pandemic, to date the project team has undertaken much development work to progress the Learning Campus, including design consultation
  - (b) notes the existing provision of £30.4 million within the General Fund Capital Programme;
  - (c) approves the proposal that phase one of the project to provide the new Learning Campus (Neilston and St Thomas primary schools, Madras Family Centre and library) at an estimated cost of £28 million is prioritised in terms of the available £30.4 million and is progressed as set out in the report;
  - (d) notes the shortfall of potentially around £9.6 million for the remaining elements of the project relating to improvements in leisure, well-being and wider regeneration and that a further report regarding these remaining elements will be submitted to the Council for consideration in February 2021.

**BACKGROUND AND REPORT**

3. The current Capital Plan approved on 27 February 2020 makes provision of £30.4m for Learning and Leisure in Neilston. This was to take forward a campus development comprising new build replacements for Neilston Primary, St Thomas' Primary, Madras Family Centre, a new Library and improved Leisure facilities.

4. Capital costs were developed based on the feasibility study undertaken at the time of the schools' consultation (results approved in October 2018), for the preferred option site with around £25m for the new learning facilities and around £5m for the new leisure facilities (pool and possibly a gym and associated leisure facilities) and library on the same site at Neilston Primary/Madras Family Centre. Currently, the main phasing is £1 million in 2020/21, £11 million in 2021/22, £15 million in 2022/23 and £3 million in 2023/24.

5. As noted in a report to Cabinet in March 2020, the Learning and Leisure campus is now being developed as a two stage two site approach. The first phase is the building of a Learning Campus on the Neilston Primary/Madras site comprising the two schools, family centre and library. The second phase developed on the site of St Thomas' Primary when it is vacated after the new Learning Campus is open is to provide a Leisure and Wellbeing Centre focused around a new swimming pool, gym and associated leisure/community facilities. Regeneration projects will also be developed.

6. As advised in the Cabinet report the two site approach provides a less cramped more open solution for learning and the community with associated wider regeneration benefits including the potential to attract appropriate health/therapy services at a later date.

7. The March 2020 Cabinet report noted that the provision of £30.4M is likely to be insufficient for the full extent of the revised development.

### **PHASE ONE "THE LEARNING CAMPUS"**

8. East Renfrewshire is recognised throughout Scotland for the quality of its education provision and the high performance of its schools and such success has contributed to a subsequent growth in the number of pupils in schools and children in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) establishments. The quality of Education provided within East Renfrewshire is also a significant factor in its desirability as a place to live and is important to economic growth and the development and sustainability of communities.

9. In developing the educational estate the Council has recognised that a quality built environment based on an inclusive learning estate at the heart of the community signals the value it places on learning from early years through school and beyond, and the experiences of all who use the facilities. Such investment has helped deliver the national and local priority of excellence and equity for all learners, and supports staff to excel and communities to thrive.

10. The project management and design team was appointed in June 2020 with project managers Currie and Brown leading the team which incorporates architect BDP, the designers of the most recent East Renfrewshire schools. Despite working practices being impacted by the Covid pandemic, to date the team has undertaken much development work to progress the Learning Campus, including design consultation, which is already well underway with children, staff and the Parent Councils and is informing the design the architects are developing.

11. The current indicative programme for the Learning Campus targets November 2021 for construction start with completion in June 2023. This target completion date is dependent upon an absence of unforeseen complications and an assumption that Covid will not significantly continue to hamper development.

12. Given construction work is due to start on site in November 2021 it is expected that by this time the virus will be under some control and in any event contractors will have adapted building methods to enable them to better manage onsite operations. However, there remains the risk of a further construction industry shutdown if the situation deteriorates either nationally or locally. In addition there are risks associated with materials supply and labour efficiency which could impact on construction programme and costs.

13. Energy efficiency is a key driver in maximising the available contribution from the Scottish Futures Trust's (SFT). This is a new requirement and involves meeting very ambitious energy targets, which necessitates specific design input and introduces additional costs unknown at the time of the original cost estimate.

14. The topography of the site is challenging and initial investigations have shown a need to allow for additional costs over the original estimate for this aspect of the development.

15. Recognising these additional costs, the team undertook a value engineering exercise. Whilst still meeting the integrity of the project, including maintaining the quality built environments that our communities want and have come to expect as they value the whole East Renfrewshire experience, the team have reduced the briefed campus floor area and external provision delivering efficiencies. Throughout the process the team will continue to look for further opportunities to derive further efficiencies. However, the net effect, taking into account further recent independent advice from Hub West Scotland on a range of options has resulted in a likely indicative cost of around £28M (including contingencies) for the Learning Campus (phase one). This is not the final cost and until the contract is tendered and let the cost may vary.

16. It is important to recognise that this element of the project is time dependent in relation to SFT revenue incentives and has to be delivered by 2024 at the latest.

17. For that reason it is proposed that this element of the project is prioritised within the existing available capital provision of £30.4 million.

## **PHASE TWO “THE LEISURE AND WELL BEING CENTRE” and Further “TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION”**

18. Phase two has been labelled the “Leisure and Wellbeing Centre” focused around the new swimming facilities and located on the site of St Thomas’ primary school.

19. The current proposal envisages a modern pool comprising a new four lane pool and small learner pool replacing the existing old 6 lane pool, changing village, gym, office, reception and foyer area along with a flexible sub-divisible community meeting room and a new car park. The pool provision will be both more efficient than the existing provision and present better opportunities to generate income. However, these proposals are currently being developed further.

20. No on-site investigations have been undertaken at St Thomas’ into sub-surface bearing capacity, drainage or utilities at this stage but design work is ongoing and preliminary layouts and budget cost options for the facilities described above will be available in due course.

21. A floor plan was prepared and a cost generated in house to provide a guide. This is not a full feasibility study and on-site investigations as noted above are being undertaken to get a fuller picture. However, recent feasibility calculations suggest this phase could cost around £8.5M.

22. Originally consideration was given to including a health element within this phase including new local health and social care facilities. However, the NHS has not made any provision in its capital plan and therefore it is proposed that this element will not proceed at this time, albeit given the timing of this element of the project, there may be an opportunity to factor this in at a later date, offering opportunity to realise the more holistic approach envisaged.

23. Between the sites of St Thomas’ and Neilston Primary schools sits the village centre. This comprises a number of public and historic buildings, areas of open land and essential street infrastructure such as street crossings. A transformational opportunity exists to better shape some of this infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and to ensure that Neilston continues as a thriving village that is both fit for a modern future but retains its village charm.

24. The full list of potential regeneration activities could possibly include civic realm access between Pig Square and the new Leisure and Wellbeing Centre linking the Learning Campus through to this part of the village; a new civic square on main street, a pedestrian crossing review across the village, main street shopfront signage & painting initiative, planter improvement scheme throughout the village centre and using some of the current buildings such as Glen Halls in a different way such as, for example, sheltered or affordable accommodation. In addition, there are opportunities to explore how the site of the existing library and swimming pool could be used.

25. It should be noted that the sum within the approved capital plan of £30.4M was based on the original Learning and Leisure in Neilston project and did not include for wider regeneration.

26. The regeneration aspects will be developed in partnership with the Council's Economic Development team, Education Department and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust and in collaboration with residents, local community groups, Community Councils, Trusts and local businesses to ensure the projects are a true reflection of the needs and wishes of the community and to ensure local support, buy-in and success.

27. Initial financial provision of £3.5M would permit the Council to progress these regeneration ambitions. It should be noted that such financial provision will also potentially enable the Council to secure match funding from a range of external sources and thus increase the scope and outcomes from the regeneration opportunities available. In turn this could lever in further private sector investment into the village. As such this represents a once in a generation opportunity to continue the transformation of Neilston into a thriving village.

28. The potential additional cost for both the leisure and well-being centre and additional regeneration projects is currently estimated at around £12 million (£8.5 million plus £3.5 million as outlined above).

29. If the Learning Campus could be delivered for £28 million within the existing provision of £30.4 million this would leave an unallocated balance of £2.4 million. If that balance could be redirected towards the well-being centre and further regeneration proposals estimated at £12 million then that would reduce the potential shortfall to £9.6 million. In addition there may be an opportunity to generate capital receipts to offset the shortfall.

30. Work is ongoing with regard to the well-being and additional regeneration elements. It is proposed that a further report will be submitted on these elements to the Council for consideration in February 2021.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

31. As noted the current capital plan includes £30.4M for the original Learning and Leisure Campus for Neilston.

33. It should be noted that construction inflation, either since 2018 or in the next 12-18 months will have had or will have an impact. Furthermore, construction inflation may increase further as a result of both BREXIT and COVID. The current economic conditions are possibly the most uncertain that the United Kingdom has experienced since 1945. As a result predicted costings are subject to change. Moreover, the costings provided above are desk top calculations and do not take into account ground conditions or any unusual abnormalities that may be encountered.

34. Given the likely need for £28M for the Learning Campus, £8.5M for the Leisure and Wellbeing Centre and £3.5M for town centre regeneration, an indicative total cost is estimated at £40 million. This is an additional potential funding requirement of £9.6M. However, as stated this will be the subject of a further report to the Council.

## **CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

35. The three strands of the full Neilston developments to see a new Learning Campus, a Leisure and Wellbeing Centre and wider regeneration improvements will be the product of a collaboration between the various departments of the Council including partners in the Trust. Extensive consultation has already been undertaken and this engagement continues as the team develop the Learning Campus. In addition consultation with the local community and services users will be central to all the strands of the project to ensure success.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

36. There are no equalities staffing implications associated with this report at this point in time. However, there will be IT implications as the SFT revenue incentive is dependent on a set level of IT provision throughout the new facilities.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

37. As outlined, the developments proposed at Neilston are a once in a generation opportunity to improve learning, leisure and wellbeing for the residents of Neilston, and nearby Uplawmoor, whilst at the same time regenerating around the village square. This plan will help support economic growth and sustainable communities.

38. This plan will be taken forward in phases the first being the realisation of the new Learning Campus.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Further information can be obtained from: Andrew Cahill Director of Environment or Mark Ratter Director of Education.

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