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**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: Monday 7 November 2022**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Dargavel Primary School Capacity**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The new Dargavel Primary School [DPS] opened in January 2022. Over the course of this session the rate of admissions to the new school was higher than expected. As a result, a review of the forecast roll projection was carried out to assess the adequacy of the existing school capacity to meet future demand.
- 1.2. The findings from the preliminary phase of the review based on the existing school roll, known pre-school population within the school catchment area and potential future pace of house completions across the Dargavel development, provided clear preliminary conclusions that the existing school capacity would be materially insufficient to meet the future demand profile of the catchment area. Consequently, the review has progressed, at pace, resulting in a full refresh of the modelling approach to provide an updated assessment of the forecast roll projection for the Dargavel catchment.
- 1.3. At over a planned 4,000 houses, Dargavel represents the first standalone new housing development of this scale. In recognition of this, the approach to reviewing the roll projections has included engagement with other local authorities with significant experience of managing the delivery of new school provision as part of similar scaled developments, including experience attained from mature developments over 20 years old. This engagement process has supported a greater understanding of available evidence to inform and support the modelling of the likely scale and profile of the future emerging demand from a development such as Dargavel. Based on the preliminary review and this peer engagement process, it has been concluded that the original methodology used to model and project the roll for this new primary school was inadequate and has significantly understated the scale of primary school capacity required to support primary education provision within the new Dargavel catchment.

- 1.4. After applying a revised modelling approach, it is now estimated a potential future requirement to accommodate circa 1100 pupils at the peak of pupil intake for the catchment area. This number is estimated to fall to circa 1000 pupils thereafter as the numbers stabilise and the development matures over the long term. This forecast is informed by long term patterns across Renfrewshire's wider catchment areas but also critically by the patterns evidenced by other local authorities who have experience in largescale developments over long periods of time.
- 1.5. The existing school was designed with significant flexibility, additional classrooms and break out space. In this context, and utilising the recommended upper Government space ratio of 1.7m<sup>2</sup> per child, with an appropriate teacher pupil ratio, the existing school has a potential capacity of 609 pupils. However, in recognition of a number of specific characteristics associated with the design features of the school and to fully support and protect a quality learning and teaching environment, it would be a preference to not exceed 90% of this maximum capacity which equates to 548 pupils.
- 1.6. The current school roll is 463 and it is estimated that this will rise to a figure of circa 600-620 pupils in August 2023. This significant increase takes account of; the pace of new build houses becoming occupied; the number of 4 year olds that we know already live in the catchment area; and the smaller amount of Primary 7 children who will leave for secondary.
- 1.7. To address this increase, immediate action is required to deliver an interim capacity solution. It is recommended that six new modular classrooms should be situated on the school grounds from August 2023. The modular classrooms are expected to cost approximately £2million. In the future, these modular classrooms will be available to support requirements that are anticipated in the future as part of wider school estate management planning and are therefore anticipated to have a longer active life beyond fulfilling the immediate needs at DPS.
- 1.8. Detailed analysis is taking place to determine and assess options for delivery of a permanent solution to increase primary school capacity for Dargavel village. It is anticipated at this stage a report and recommendations in this regard will be presented to board in the early part of next year.
- 1.9. The Council's involvement in the development of planning for the delivery of the Dargavel development, including the assessment and modelling of the required education provision extends back over a significant number of years. Establishing the underlying reasons for the clear deficiency in the school capacity planning is at this stage not immediately clear. Consequently, a full internal review has been instructed by the Chief Executive to establish and understand why original calculations were incorrect and what lessons must be learned.

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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Members of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board are asked to:

- agree to the interim solution of six new modular classrooms being procured and in place for August 2023;
  - note that a further report outlining options for a permanent solution to be brought to board in the early part of next year; and
  - note that a full review will be carried out to determine the underlying reasons for the errors made in initial calculations determining the school capacity of Dargavel Primary School and that the findings from this review will be brought back to an appropriate future board.
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### **3. Background**

#### **3.1 Development of the current school**

- 3.1.1. Planning permission is in place for 4,291 homes at Dargavel Village. At the time of writing this report, 2,162 homes have been built.
- 3.1.2. In April 2016, Children's Services were asked to respond to the impact that the new housing at Dargavel Village would have on educational infrastructure. This was at the time the Council was considering a new planning proposal which would extend the Dargavel Village development to 4,000 homes.
- 3.1.3. The analysis carried out by council officers at this time reflected the approach normally adopted for estimating the impact of new housing developments within an existing catchment area with an established school. This was Renfrewshire Council's first experience in dealing with a development of a size and scale which necessitated new and additional educational establishments. At this time, this assessment process projected that the school roll would not exceed 430 pupils.
- 3.1.4. In 2018, a planning obligation arrangement was made with the landowner BAE Systems for them to provide a new primary school. Based on the projected school roll, a double stream school was requested. The existing school was designed with significant flexibility, additional classrooms and break out space. In this context and utilising the recommended upper Government space ratio of 1.7m<sup>2</sup> per child, with an appropriate teacher pupil ratio, the existing school has a potential capacity of 609 pupils. However, in recognition a number of specific characteristics associated with the design features of the school and to fully support and protect a quality learning and teaching environment, it would be a preference to not exceed 90% of this maximum capacity which equates to 548 pupils
- 3.1.5. The current school roll is 463.

#### **3.2. Review of the roll projection model for Dargavel Primary School**

- 3.2.1. The Head Teacher at DPS highlighted to the Central Education Team that there was a higher than expected rate of admissions through the school term. The projected roll was reviewed and from initial analysis it was concluded that the original projection was materially underestimated and inconsistent with the scale and significant pace of housebuilding in the area.

- 3.2.2. Due to the significant difference between the original roll projection and the figures provided by this initial analysis, the Director of Children's Services asked for a further preliminary review and a full breakdown of the calculations used to derive updated figures.
- 3.2.3. The new preliminary calculations included the number of known three and four year olds who are living in the catchment area and who are expected to transition into primary one in August 23 and August 24. This preliminary exercise demonstrated a clear expectation that the capacity of the existing school would be breached over the short term and therefore the immediate need for action to progress securing an appropriate temporary arrangement pending a longer term permanent solution.
- 3.2.4. The Director and Head of Service also engaged with a number of other local authorities to better understand their processes/models within the context of new large scale developments which necessitated additional schools. These councils have experience in delivering large scale developments through to maturity. This engagement process has supported a greater understanding of available evidence to inform and support the modelling of the likely scale and profile of future projected demand from the Dargavel catchment as development continues in the coming years.
- 3.2.5. Analysis has projected a school roll for the next two school sessions in the first instance. The projected figures are showing a school roll of circa 600-620 in August 2023 and circa 685 – 705 in August 2024.

### **3.3. Implications and recommended solution for Dargavel Primary School**

- 3.3.1. Based on the figures outlined in 3.2.5, there is a requirement to deliver an appropriate interim solution for August 2023.
- 3.3.2. The preferred solution is to install six new modular classrooms at DPS, with a capacity for up to 198 pupils. This will be carried out over the summer break in order to minimise any disruption to pupils, although there may be a requirement for some preparatory works to be carried out before the school breaks for summer. Officers have already commenced the process of developing bespoke design solution options and soft market testing to ensure market availability. Preliminary procurement processes have also commenced without obligation in recognition of the timescales involved.
- 3.3.3. The Head Teacher has been consulted on the addition of the new modular classrooms and is confident this will provide a positive solution for the school and will support continued high-quality learning and teaching to take place.
- 3.3.4. It should be noted that the modular classrooms are intended as an interim measure to ensure suitable capacity on site at DPS until such time as a longer-term solution is developed and secured. These modular classrooms will be available to support requirements that are anticipated in the future as part of wider estate management planning and are therefore anticipated to have a longer active life beyond fulfilling the immediate needs at DPS.

## **Other implications on the school estate**

### **3.4. Non-denominational secondary education**

- 3.4.1. The non-denominational secondary school for the DPS catchment is Park Mains High School in Erskine. The anticipated capacity challenges related to the Dargavel Village development were flagged to elected members in the Report: “Developing the School Estate Management Plan (SEMP 2020)”, in May 2019. This report advised that roll projection was suggesting that housing development at Dargavel Village and other sites in Erskine would put pressure on accommodation at Park Mains High School. Necessary adjustments are being progressed as part of the School Estate Management Plan.

### **3.5. Denominational secondary education**

- 3.5.1. The denominational secondary school for the DPS catchment is Trinity High School in Renfrew. There are no future capacity issues at the school.

### **3.6. Denominational primary provision**

- 3.6.1. Initial revised projections for St John Bosco (SJB) indicate that there is a potential for the school capacity to be reached in future years. This will be reviewed on an annual basis. The wider campus, which includes Bargarran Primary, a non-denominational school, has the flexibility to create additional denominational space if required. In this context any required adjustments can be identified and addressed as part of the normal course of business.

### **3.7. Early years**

- 3.7.1. Within Early Learning and Childcare parents have a flexibility to select which establishment their child attends – as a result of that flexibility there is not the same demand pressure on the Dargavel ELC setting. The suitability of the ELC provision will be kept under ongoing review – we are scoping options for the future should the demand pressure increase.

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## **4. Conclusion and next steps**

- 4.1. With board's approval, progress the interim solution of purchasing, planning and installation of the new modular classroom units within Dargavel primary School to meet the immediate demands of increased pupil roll for August 2023 and 2024.
- 4.2. Complete the detailed analysis of projected school roll for the Dargavel village through to the completion of the planned house building. This will include a robust rationale for the methodology being employed.
- 4.3. Carry out a detailed Options Appraisal for a permanent solution – a report on that exercise to come to Board in the early part of 2023.

- 4.4. Regarding the circumstances which led to the roll projections providing for an under-capacity school, the Chief Executive has instructed a review into the matter which will begin in January 2023, with a future report to come back to Board once the review concludes.
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## **Implications of this report**

### **1. Financial Implications**

There are significant financial implications in relation to the issues highlighted within the report, in both capital and ongoing revenue terms. The purchase and installation of modular classrooms for Dargavel Primary School will incur a capital cost estimated to be in the region of £2m, however this cost is subject to potential variation given the current volatile construction market. Provision for this cost will require to be incorporated into the 2023/24 capital plan. This cost does not include any provision for modular classrooms at Park Mains High School. In addition, there will be increased revenue costs of operating the modular classrooms related to facilities management, utilities and additional teaching and classroom support staff. These additional costs are currently being collated, with provision requiring to be incorporated into the 2023/24 base revenue budget.

### **2. HR and Organisational Development Implications**

None.

### **3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications**

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### **4. Legal Implications**

None.

### **5. Property/Assets Implications**

### **6. Information Technology Implications**

None.

### **7. Equality and Human Rights Implications**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health and Safety Implications**  
None.
9. **Procurement Implications**  
None.
10. **Risk Implications**  
None.
11. **Privacy Impact**  
None.
12. **COSLA Policy Position**  
None.
13. **Climate Risk**  
None.

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### **List of Background Papers**

- (a) None.
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