

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: Thursday 24 August 2023

Report by: Interim Chief Education Officer

Heading: Education Provision Dargavel

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a further update on education provision in Dargavel.
- 1.2 Work has progressed to ensure the six new modular classrooms previously agreed were installed at Dargavel Primary School for the beginning of the new school session, meeting its immediate capacity needs.
- 1.3 Discussions between BAE (Dargavel landowner) and Council officers to secure a site for the new primary school within the Dargavel masterplan development are at an advanced stage and will be subject to reports to both the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Board and Planning and Climate Policy Board.
- 1.4 As previously advised, Officers are developing options should additional future primary capacity be required over and above the second primary school in Dargavel. As detailed in the main body of the report, such options will need to be flexible and able to respond to a range of potential scenarios in terms of peaks in potential demand versus that potential demand levelling off. As part of progressing options, it is intended to engage with families in the early part of this school session, and using feedback to inform what is presented to a future Board.
- 1.5 The Board at its meeting in May, agreed an extension to Park Mains High School to increase its capacity up to 2000 pupils, informed by a roll projection exercise which was supported by the Council's data analytics consultants. Since then, key stakeholders have continued to seek further clarity on the rationale for this decision. This report provides additional background information and data upon which the recommendations in the previous Board report were based, and which will be used to inform further ongoing engagement with key stakeholder groups.

- 1.6 Beyond managing the immediate investment programme to meet the needs emerging from the impact of the Dargavel Village development, along with existing investment in a new Paisley Grammar School and planned investment in a new Thorn Primary, the Council is required to consider the long term learning needs of all communities in Renfrewshire and, in that context, the consequential long term future investment requirements in the overall learning estate. To that end, Officers have commenced a programme to develop a long-term Learning Estate Strategy and Management Plan. This programme of work will be a significantly more substantial and involved exercise in contrast to previous school estate planning and consequently is likely to take some time to complete over the course of the medium term. It will, however, provide a strategic foundation from which the Council will be better placed to understand the scale and timing of key investment needs and interventions that will be required across the learning estate over the very long term. The nature of this strategic long term programme will, by necessity, be required to be responsive to both the management of long term condition and suitability of the estate but also appropriately reflective of shifting long term demand profiles, influenced by demographic change and changes across the Renfrewshire area in relation to housing supply.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that Members note the content of the report.
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3. Background

- 3.1 At the May meeting of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board a report was provided on education provision in Dargavel. That report is available [here](#).

The Board agreed:

- (a) To note that the six new modular classrooms continue to be expected to be in place at Dargavel Primary School for August 2023;
- (b) That the planning figure for the new primary school for 800 pupils be approved;
- (c) That planning for an extension to Park Mains High School to accommodate an additional 400 pupils be approved;
- (d) That any changes to the above planning assumptions that may be required as a result of ongoing discussions with BAE would be reported back to this Policy Board and that the planning figure of 400 be capped at total capacity for Park Mains High School of 2000; and

(e) That modelling and planning of any possible future secondary capacity demand for the catchment area will be considered within the context of the wider Renfrewshire council school estate management plan.

3.2 This report provides an update following on from the above decision and further developments.

4. Meeting immediate capacity needs

4.1 The previously agreed six new modular classrooms at Dargavel Primary School are now in place and operational for the new school session and generally feedback has been positive.

4.2 The report to the Policy Board in May flagged the risk that the current increased demand for places at Dargavel Primary School could breach its increased capacity come August 2024. At this stage, and based on known data, that remains an expectation. It was also noted that in such circumstances there would be a requirement to apply the Council's admissions policy, and pupils who are not allocated a space through the process will be directed to another school. The most appropriate alternative is Bishopton Primary, which is the nearest primary school and currently has surplus capacity.

4.3 As previously reported, the associated ballot process for spaces will take place in January 2024 ahead of the August 2024 intake. Plans are in place to support that process and allow families appropriate time to make any necessary plans.

5 Next steps for primary provision in Dargavel

5.1 Discussions between BAE Systems (Dargavel landowner) and Council Officers to secure a site for the new primary school within the Dargavel masterplan development are at an advanced stage. In this respect, proposed heads of terms for the transfer of land to Council ownership will be subject to a report to the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board. The proposed land transfer comprises an 8.5 acre site to accommodate the new school and circa 1.5 acres of land adjacent to the existing Dargavel Primary School to provide scope for increased flexibility within the school site over the longer term. In addition, a report will also be presented to the Planning and Climate Policy Board to set out proposed changes to the Dargavel masterplan and section 75 agreement to reflect the revised land agreement. On the assumption recommendations associated with both reports are approved after consideration by the respective boards, this will allow appropriate conclusion of legal missives and provide certainty over land availability to support the Council to deliver the new school and have increased flexibility in respect to the existing school site.

5.2 To ensure a full understanding of space planning and utilisation requirements, a space planning package has been issued to tender and a preferred contractor has been identified with award pending, and this work will be progressed over the coming months to support the detailed design process.

- 5.3 A review of BAE System's land remediation scope has been undertaken and it has been identified that the optimal approach will be to defer full site ground investigation until BAE handover the site to Renfrewshire Council following the completion of certified remediation in December 2024.
- 5.4 In relation to the delivery route for the new school, officers have been assessing options to deliver through a traditional Council led procurement and delivery model, similar to that adopted for the new Paisley Grammar School and also utilising Hub West (Scotland) which the Council has most recently used to procure and deliver the Paisley Learning and Cultural Hub.
- 5.5 Officers have been in active dialogue with Hub West Scotland (HWS), in relation to indicative project cost and programme which may provide an accelerated route to market and potentially a tighter delivery timeline.
- 5.6 In parallel, officers are currently progressing arrangements to support the issue of tenders associated with appointment of multi disciplinary design team, consultant packages and Principal Contractor which is required as part of a traditional procurement route.
- 5.7 Identification of the preferred procurement and delivery route will take account of anticipated programme, interface implications with the BAE associated remediation and infrastructure programme, appropriate engagement timelines with the local community, as well as wider resourcing demands within the Council.
- 5.8 The draft programme for delivery of the new school is currently estimated to support an August 2027 school start date. As work progresses to refine the procurement and delivery programme, this anticipated delivery date will be increasingly firmed up and all opportunities will be explored where practicable and achievable to accelerate this operational date.

6. Planning for potential additional primary capacity demands

- 6.1 The report to Board in May advised that an options appraisal had commenced to determine viable opportunities that would be available to the Council, should additional future capacity within Dargavel Village be required in the long-term.
- 6.2 This work is being progressed recognising the longer term risk presented through the projection work completed with Edge Analytics, which identified potential upper end scenarios where long term demand within Dargavel Village for the two primary schools could emerge as high as circa 1,500 pupils.
- 6.3 It is recognised that over the long term, large scale housing developments, such as Dargavel Village, will progress through a natural lifecycle in relation to associated education demand. This will result in a likely peak in demand with a gradual reduction towards a lower mature long term level as housing reaches circa 20 years in age. Given the scale of Dargavel Village and that it will take circa 20 years to fully complete the development itself, the period of the peak demand may plateau for a medium term period. Developing a greater understanding of the likely shape and timing of both the peak and mature demand profile within the village over the very long term will be

informed by both the longer term projection modelling being developed with Edge Analytics, along with actual data that will emerge over the coming years. This actual data will be very closely monitored and increasingly provide greater confidence of the scale and timing of any additional demand that may have to be addressed beyond that which can be provided once the second primary school is operational within Dargavel village.

- 6.4 In line with best practice and national guidance which exists in England, Developing additional capacity options will require to provide flexibility to respond to a range of potential scenarios. This includes scenarios both in terms of the scale of additional physical capacity required, but also recognising the need to manage efficiently and effectively the scale and likely period of a temporary peak or plateau of demand. It will be important that in positioning itself to respond, the Council does so with the best possible information and intelligence that will be available at the point in time and not plan to deliver interventions which would ultimately result in over-provision of permanent capacity over the long term.
- 6.5 In this context two broad options have been identified:
- *Extending capacity of the existing Dargavel Primary School (sufficient land supply through an extended school site is expected to be secured to future proof this option through the land agreement with BAE Systems).*
 - *Use of the surplus capacity at Bishopton Primary School on a permanent basis.*
- 6.6 As part of progressing this work it is intended to engage with families in the early part of this school session in advance of returning to Board with a more detailed options appraisal to be considered.

7. Secondary school provision

- 7.1 At the Board meeting in May, members approved plans to deliver a 400 pupil extension to the capacity of Park Mains High School, and to cap that school's capacity at the new 2000 capacity figure provided by the extension.
- 7.2 Engagement with a range of stakeholders since that decision was taken, has flagged a strong desire for a greater understanding of the underlying data and projections that underpinned that recommendation. Information in this regard has been shared with a wide range of stakeholders and it is planned for further engagement sessions to be carried out-with parent councils and relevant community groups following the summer break period to reinforce, share and communicate the data underlying and supporting that decision.
- 7.3 As previously advised, Edge Analytics have modelled the projection of the school roll through until 2033-34 which is shown below (Table 1). The first model is based on their standard model output and the second is an updated version of their model based on the actual number of S1 registrations at the time of calculation.

- 7.4 Edge Analytics 'standard model' projections are currently running higher than confirmed live data. While Edge projections indicate an August 23 school roll of 1480, the actual pupil roll for August 23 is projected at 1455 (this will be confirmed when schools return), which is much closer to the revised model (S1 Adjusted). This demonstrates that continual review of live data will be required to fully assess future demand and to allow a continual process of updating the projection model.
- 7.5 Park Mains High School – like other secondary schools – accommodates pupils who arrived from 'non-feeder' primary schools (placing requests and those from denominational primary schools in the catchment area). Recent analysis has shown the average number of Park Mains pupils who have arrived from 'non-feeder schools' to be 160, accounting for around 10% of the recent total school roll.
- 7.6 There is potential to manage admission from 'non-feeder' schools to ensure capacity for feeder primary schools in the long term. Over time, this could reduce the proportion of pupils in receipt of discretionary provision at Park Mains High School.
- 7.7 The 'standard Edge model' and 'Adjusted Edge scenario' detailed in Table 1 assume a continuation of non-feeder pupils arriving into S1 in future years. The 'Adjusted Edge scenario' indicates that in 2033/34, demand is projected to be less than the 2000 capacity.
- 7.8 The remaining rows show the impact of excluding 'non-feeder' pupils from Park Mains projections. This will take several years to fully track through, with enrolled pupils from 'feeder' and 'non-feeder' schools leaving the school, replaced only by those attending 'feeder' primaries. Table 1 serves to illustrate an approximate number of pupils who would require places at Park Mains in the given years, should 'non-feeder' provision be removed from these calculations.

Table 1

Scenario	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34
Standard Edge model	1,419	1,426	1,440	1,480	1,531	1,589	1,640	1,686	1,732	1,802	1,903	1,985	2,072	2,134
Standard Edge model excluding placing requests/denominational placements	1259	1266	1280	1320	1371	1429	1480	1526	1572	1642	1743	1825	1912	1974
Adjusted Edge scenario	1,419	1,426	1,440	1,453	1,476	1,505	1,524	1,543	1,568	1,629	1,718	1,791	1,868	1,923
Standard Edge model excluding placing requests/denominational placement(Approx 160 pupils)	1259	1266	1280	1293	1316	1345	1364	1383	1408	1469	1558	1631	1708	1763

- 7.9 The underlying background data within Edge Analytics modelling demonstrates that while the future secondary yield from Dargavel will increase as the development progresses towards completion over the next 10 year period, the yield from the other towns and villages within the Park Mains High School catchment is forecast to decline, even after accounting for known and planned areas of new house development. This declining long term demand from other areas, along with the planned extended capacity, is projected to provide confidence of sufficient secondary capacity over this time period.

- 7.10 It is recognised that over the longer term, from the mid 2030s and heading towards 2040, the full impact on the secondary sector from Dargavel Village will become more evident in Park Mains High School. It is recognised that as this develops, there will remain a potential risk for the 2000 capacity at Park Mains High School to be insufficient over the much longer term.
- 7.11 Much greater certainty of the actual long term trajectory will be increasingly secured as the Council moves towards the end of this decade and actual primary data increasingly emerges. This reflects the fact that as the actual number of primary school pupils in the associated school system (including Dargavel) becomes increasingly certain, this provides a much clearer pipeline of primary school pupils that will arrive in secondary for up to seven years ahead.
- 7.12 Therefore, as the Council moves towards the end of this decade, careful monitoring of all the associated actual data will be critical to continue to inform and feed into longer term forecasts. This will provide a clearer indication at that point if the Council will potentially be required to plan for any additional requirement towards the middle to the end of the following decade.
- 7.13 Such a decision if required, would be incorporated into the Council's strategic longer term Learning Estate Planning and Investment programme which is discussed below. This strategic long term planning work will consider future demand profiles, school capacities and key investment requirements associated with secondary school provision across Renfrewshire. This will include secondary schools within the estate which have significant lifecycle investment requirements and/or potential replacement needs following mid-life refurbishments that commenced around 20 years ago including Gryffe High School, Renfrew High School, Trinity High School, Johnstone High School and Castlehead High School.
- 7.14 Members will be aware that over recent months there has been suggestion from members of the Dargavel & Bishopton community for the provision of a new secondary school in Bishopton/Dargavel to serve the western part of the existing Park Mains catchment area as an alternative to expanding Park Mains High School to meet future growth in demand. Such an option has not previously been presented to the Board for consideration on the basis it would create very significant inefficiencies in the school estate and have significant additional financial consequences for the Council.
- 7.15 A proposal to develop an additional secondary provision within the existing Park Mains catchment specifically for Dargavel, Bishopton, Langbank would leave the current [un-extended] Park Mains High School significantly under-occupied. This would create a significant imbalance in the overall school estate, leading to an overall inefficiency in the delivery of education (particularly within the context of the residual Park Mains High School roll), as well as significant additional financial costs for the Council.
- 7.16 To demonstrate this impact, the table below, outlines the projected occupancy of Park Mains High School if those pupils from the feeder primary schools in the Western part of the current catchment (Langbank PS, Dargavel PS, Bishopton PS) attended an alternative new secondary school.

Table 2

Capacity: 1591								
Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Other feeder schools	850	830	800	770	725	675	670	660
Occupancy	53%	52%	50%	48%	45%	42%	42%	41%
Placing requests and primary denominational children from area	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160
Occupancy	63%	62%	60%	58%	56%	52%	52%	52%

- 7.17 In addition to creating significant unoccupied secondary school capacity at Park Mains High School, there would also be material direct financial consequences for the Council to address, of both a capital and a revenue nature.

Capital Costs

- 7.18 As previously reported to members, it is estimated that the extension to Park Mains High School will cost in the region of £27 million - £30 million with BAE Systems obliged under the existing S.75 agreement to pay for in effect half of this cost (reflecting an obligation to pay for additional capacity requirements for up to a cap of 200 pupils). Utilising the recognised Scottish Futures Trust cost matrix the high level potential cost of a new secondary school is estimated to exceed £90 million.
- 7.19 It is also important to note that the Council does not own additional land in the area that would support delivery of a secondary school and therefore there would potentially be further costs associated with site acquisition.
- 7.20 Assuming BAE Systems would be agreeable to allow their established contribution to be directed towards a new school, the net additional capital costs for the Council to meet would potentially be in excess of £60 million (ie the Council would require to fund a net cost of £75 million as opposed to £15 million for the extension to Park Mains). This would potentially incur up to £4.0 million per year in prudential borrowing costs. Given the scale of investment requirement that exists across the Council's wider school estate, this additional cost would ultimately draw investment capacity away from other potential future projects which the Council may identify as being key priorities.

Revenue Costs

- 7.21 From a revenue perspective, it is assessed that broadly the Council would incur additional net annual revenue costs from operating an additional secondary school.
- 7.22 Removing costs associated with providing school transport for children from Bishopton and Dargavel is estimated to save eventually in the region of £0.8 million. This, however, would be offset by additional net school management costs of £1.1 million that would be incurred from having both Park Mains High School and a new additional secondary school.

- 7.23 Further the operational running costs associated with Park Mains High School would continue to be incurred despite being significantly underoccupied with new running costs associated with the new secondary to be incurred. This net growth in running costs are estimated to be in the region of £1.2 million.
- 7.24 In total therefore, the estimated net additional annual costs, including borrowing costs, related to an additional high school in the Dargavel area would be in the region of £5.5 million.
- 7.25 Such a direction of travel would therefore cut directly across the Council's statutory obligation to deliver best value for Renfrewshire and directly contradict the obligation to achieve efficient use of existing capacity across the Council's wider school estate, as well as creating an inevitable consequential impact on the Council's capacity to invest in other priority areas of the school estate as outlined above.
- 7.26 Given the ongoing engagement with stakeholders and ongoing interest in this particular suggestion, it is anticipated that this background information will be shared and discussed with stakeholders.

8. Review of the school estate

- 8.1 Beyond managing the immediate investment programme to meet the needs emerging from the impact of the Dargavel Village development along with the existing major investment programme in a new Paisley Grammar School and planned investment in a new Thorn Primary, the Council is required to consider the long term needs of all communities in Renfrewshire, and in that context, the consequential long term future investment priorities across the overall learning estate.
- 8.2 To that end, officers have commenced a programme to develop a long-term Learning Estate Strategy and Management Plan. This programme of work will be a significantly more substantial and involved exercise in contrast to previous school estate planning, seeking to develop a strategic view of what the potential phased investment requirements are for the learning estate over the next 20 – 25 years, the anticipated priorities and key changes and opportunities within the estate planning that may need to be considered and planned for as well as the potential cost and financial planning considerations that would be associated with delivering over the very long term a strategic programme of investment.
- 8.3 Consequently, it is recognised that from the current position, it is likely to take an extended period of time to develop this initial strategic outlook which will require to be invested in moving forward by the Council to ensure it remains current and valid.
- 8.4 Despite the challenging requirements to deliver a strategic outlook of this nature, it is recognised that it will provide the Council with effective foundations from which the Council will be better placed to understand and articulate the scale and timing of key strategic investment needs and interventions that will be required across the learning estate over the long term.

- 8.5 The nature of this strategic long term planning exercise will by necessity be required to be responsive to both the management of long term condition and suitability of the existing estate but also appropriately reflective of shifting long term demand profiles, influenced by demographic change and changes across the Renfrewshire area in relation to future housing supply – much of which over the long term is not at this stage visible even as potential development sites.
- 8.6 Consequently, this strategic planning programme requires to be underpinned by a range of foundation baseline datasets and information which at present the Council either does not have or which is not in an up to date position, and will therefore require to be developed and secured as the first priority. This will include:
- Up to date asset condition and sufficiency assessments associated with the existing school estate underpinned by updated surveys along with updated capacity and roll assessments.
 - A long term projection of the likely change in scale and shape of education demand across Renfrewshire, broken down to individual school catchment level. This is a substantial piece of long term projection work that will need to be informed by live data sets, the potential impact of projected long term demographic trends that are likely to impact on Renfrewshire as well as Scotland as a whole, as well as more local understanding of likely future housing development patterns and net migration growth anticipated as well as over the much longer term areas of potential housing growth that may yet emerge in the future strategic planning context.
 - Understanding over the long term the potential lifespan of existing schools and/or requirements for major lifecycle refurbishments taking into account likely planned cyclical lifecycle maintenance by the Council.
- 8.7 As outlined above, this represents a significant programme of work that will require significant officer resource, supplemented by commissioned expertise and capacity to support key workstreams as well as strong corporate collaboration and programme governance arrangements. It is anticipated that regular updates will be provided to the board as this work progresses over what is anticipated will be over the medium term period.

Implications of this report

- 1. Financial**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 2. HR and Organisational Development**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 3. Legal**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.

- 4. Property/Assets**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 5. Information Technology**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 8. Health and Safety**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 9. Procurement**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 10. Risk**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 11. Privacy Impact**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 12. Cosla Policy Position**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.
- 13. Climate Risk**
This report is for noting and as such there no implications which arise directly from this report.

List of Background Papers

- (a) None.

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