

Dear Mike,

You were asking for our position on the undue strain on St. Ninian's.

My colleague Stewart Miller asked me to reply to you on our collective behalves.

I can advise that we agree with your evaluation.

In the short term excluding children without Baptismal certificates will reduce pressure in the system.

I have modelled data on access to all of our schools and pupil numbers and whilst we can control the number of houses that are built, we cannot control the inward and outward migration of families and children.

The Council's model does not include the larger element of the potential further increase from outwith the Council boundary, nor does it take into account that the larger houses that are being built are more expensive and the ONS clearly demonstrate that more affluent families in the UK have more children.

The Council has reduced the pupil product ratio per new household; i.e. the number of children to come from new houses.

However, in the medium and longer term even using the Council's numbers St. Ninian's will be beyond full with the additional houses proposed in LDP2. The document comes to Council in August.

This means that we must do something as standing with our fingers in our ears is not a realistic strategy.

I have raised this matter at full Council and I have of course been ignored.

It is politically inconvenient and as you will know only too well there is nothing in the 10 year capital plan.

There have been too many consultations that reflect the short term thinking of this administration.

I can assure you that we as a group have discussed this matter and we all recognise it's importance.

I can assure you I would not have gone to the time and bother of doing the work myself, if I had not thought this important.

If we take the Administration I can assure you we will act.

We will not act rashly, but we will seek to act quickly.

We will ask for an options appraisal to be conducted with two main goals:-

1. To establish what we can do in the short run to alleviate pressure
2. To identify what are our best options to ensure that we can cater for those in our community who seek to access denominational education, including those who do not have Baptismal certificates.

I hope that you find this modestly reassuring, in that whilst I make no actual concrete promises, I am admitting that I think there is a real problem and we want to find a solution. The Scottish Government are forcing us to build houses. I see every reason that they should follow that with the funds for a new High School. However, I make no promises that I cannot keep.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Swift (Councillor at least until Thursday :-))