

## Minutes of Meeting of BPC with PKC Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023

### Mtg Purpose

This meeting was for all members of the school community and provided the opportunity to put our questions to Perth and Kinross Council regarding our school and the plans for the refurb/rebuild.

### Present:

Braco School parents: Becca MacRae, Adrian Davidson, Gillian Nixon, Iain Johnston, Dee Campbell, Rachel Beaton, Rhona Nuttall

Braco School staff: Kirsty Binnie

PKC: Brian Reid (projects team), Andrew Davidson (estate maintenance team), John Rebbeck (investment/finance), Ryan Graham

Councillors: Keith Allan, Stephen Carr

**Apologies:** Mairi Milne (PKC Team Leader, Project Support Team), Dom Edward, Craig Torrens

### Introduction:

The PKC representatives and Councillors introduced themselves. BMacR reminded everyone of the purpose of the meeting, handing over to the PKC team to respond to the questions.

### Questions circulated prior to the meeting

NB. For the purpose of these minutes, the questions submitted and shared in-advance with PKC are in italics.

*What is the estimated working date for completion of the project? How is this being determined?*

BR shared that the duration of such a project would typically be 3 – 3 ½ years from the point that can clearly start – completion of land purchase agreement in our case, assuming successful.

**BR shared that work on the land purchase agreement is on-going, tree issues having been resolved but that the initial proposal from the landowner was for the agreement to be valid for 1yr and this was deemed unrealistic by PKC as if planning permission was not reached within the year then the contract would be void and land negotiations would begin again. BR shared that PKC would need a longer period to ensure this did not happen. BR shared that other school estates projects typically took around 8 months for the planning process to be completed**

No specific dates were mentioned.

*It is noted that the last update provided to parent council in regards planning permission is that the situation was 'positive' and that the only issue there might be difficulty with is the archaeology. What is the project team's current assessment of the prospects for achieving planning and other relevant technical permissions to build a new school on the new site?*

BR shared: that the PKC Team expect all aspects of planning to be successful, hence the focus on delivering the current option; that **changes in national planning policy** mean greater flexibility where makes sense for a community; that successful planning cannot be guaranteed.

When challenged re. the less optimistic comment by an advisor in the PKC Team, obtained via the '22 FOI request, advised that the taking of isolated items of information from an FOI request can be misleading. AD asked BR, for the purpose of the minutes, how likely he thought successful planning was, for example very likely. It was suggested by someone present that this was an unreasonable question. When asked what would happen should an aspect of planning not be successful, BR shared that the previous option (new build on existing school plot) would be pursued.

**BR shared that, unlike the ideal option of a new school on the new site, were a new school to be built on the existing site then it could not be an optimum eco build because of the constraints of the existing site**

BR shared that the current scheme, if pursued, would require a formal community consultation since the school would be moved to a new location – but considered logical that such a consultation would be successful.

Regarding the issue of flood risk – BR commented that fields often have drains not working and that an engineering solution would be found.

*It is understood that changes have been made to include a hall in the plans and that PKC would not continue to maintain the existing village hall. Has the project team considered what would become of the existing village hall and the land on which it stands? Given the planning requirement to demonstrate there are no other suitable sites within the settlement boundary - has the project team considered building a new school/hall on the site of the existing village hall/play park rather than building outside the settlement boundary?*

The first question of the existing hall and land was not commented on.

The second question was raised in the meeting by AD after, having asked what would happen should planning be unsuccessful for the current scheme, BR shared that PKC would revert to the previous scheme (new school on current site). AD commented that there could be other options for example a re-jig of what was across the road - building a new hall first to minimise impact to the school, avoiding buildings beyond the settlement in order to help with planning. There was no comment from BR. KA commented that this would be pursued if necessary.

*Does the project team have a cost estimate for building a new school on the new site and when was this last updated? Have funds matching this cost estimate been guaranteed and set aside for this specific project?*

Cost estimate – BR shared that the current cost estimate is based on square meterage and rates.

There was no explanation as to whether this took into account such issues as the engineering solution for the flood risk mentioned earlier.

Guarantee of funds – various points were shared by BR and JR: allowed for in the relevant capital pot; that Braco was the next priority project (explaining that it may feel like this has been the case for a number of years); **that the Early Years expansion of 1140 hours has impacted on the**

**progression of school estates transformation but this has not meant Braco has fallen down the list;** the hope that spiralling construction costs would slow down; if it cost another £1m it would happen; determination to get it over the line; no guarantee until an approved draw-down.

Councillors KA and SC re-iterated their commitment to make it happen – “all parties want to make it happen”.

*We have been told the alternative to a new school on a new site is to build a new school on the existing site with pupils being decanted to Greenloaning Primary School (GPS). Can the project team explain how they are confident that a decant to GPS remains technically and financially viable? When was the most recent building condition / financial assessment carried out at GPS to confirm this?*

BR confirmed that this was the alternative (as above). BR stated that required would be the scope that had been defined previously.

No comment was provided re. any inspection or maintenance having taken place/being planned for the GPS or a re-appraisal of cost.

*PKC have not consulted with parents or the community on this project since September 2017 and Parent Council has been told that further consultation will not take place until later in the project. However, the project team did consider input from other interested parties when it was suggested a hall should be included in the plans. Can the project team explain why consultation with parents is not appropriate whilst other stakeholders are being listened to and have been able to influence the project?*

Advised that consultation would take place later, primarily working with the School Team, including pupils.

*Can the project team confirm the dates that 5 yearly and annual interim condition assessments of the existing school have been completed since the last full condition survey in 2016 – and provide a copy of the most recent survey. In case of gaps in the record, what is the reason for this and how is PKC ensuring the school buildings were/are a safe space for our children? Was it safe to have delayed repair work to the gable wall of the school for 3½ years?*

Advised: that some of the assessment intervals are only for guidance purposes; that annual assessments do not get reported back to Government; that the PKC Team have had challenges with staffing but have been catching up; that most councils have also been behind; that PKC have been in twice recently working with KB; only limited spend is practicable where a school is going to be replaced

Dates of assessments – not commented on.

Provision of a copy of the most recent survey – not commented on.

Was it safe to have delayed repair work to the gable wall of the school for 3 ½ years – not commented on.

*Since the Sept 2017 consultation, PKC have looked at several different options over the last 5 or so years – how long might this process of looking at different options prior to one being definitely agreed for implementation continue for?*

See earlier – no overall time or date provided.

*What is the earliest date by which a refurbished or new school will be completed?*

See earlier – indications of time frames but no date provided.

*In Sept 2017 there was a consultation with the Ardoch Community over different options for Braco and Greenloaning (as there were for other PKC primary schools in the 'Priority 1' group). Given that PKC has been looking, for some 18 months, at one option that was not presented within the initial Sept 2017 consultation, and which presents significant change relevant to the wider community, why has there not been a further consultation?*

BR commented that there are no plans for any community consultation (other than as required to relocate the school to the anticipated new plot). Not seen as advantageous to have any other community consultation – only seen as something that would cause delay

*Given the passage of time since the June 2016 suitability study, what maintenance/ investment is taking place for both the Braco and Greenloaning school estates in order to prevent deterioration that could impact adversely on possible transformation options, no decision having yet been taken?*

Maintenance/investment plans for Braco – see earlier comments **and under New questions/points below** – no specifics

Maintenance/investment plans for GPS – not commented on other than for a decamp, what would be required was what was defined previously.

### **New questions/points**

It was asked whether, should the option of building a new school on the existing site be taken forward, might it be considered using another school other than GPS for the duration of the project?

BR shared that moving pupils to another school would normally only be considered **when there was some form of emergency such as fire damage requiring a quick relocation**, so GPS would be used should the option of a new school on the existing site have to be pursued.

GN explained that some parents have significant concerns around the suitability of the school. BMacR highlighted: that, as recognized by PKC and the reason for the transformation being worked, the school wasn't fit for purpose; that parents and children just try and get on accepting issues such as poor accessibility; that teachers have to just accept things as they are. KB commented that teachers are very aware how poor some aspects are, eg staff toilets, having to go out to cars to get changed. It was pointed out that the councillors have not had an opportunity to look round the school – this was accepted as something that should happen. KA acknowledged he'd not fully appreciated some of the current issues and that efforts should be made to try and see if some could be addressed for the current school. AD commented that this was important since a new school was a minimum of 3 ½ years away and it could be a lot longer. **PKC Team stated that if there were possible resources that could later be moved to a new school building they could consider these investments now.**

### **Mtg Ending**

The meeting was ended **after the planned 1 hour** and BMacR thanked everyone for their attendance.