

The background of the slide features a large, faint, light blue outline of the Seal of the State of Alaska. The seal includes a crown at the top with four stars, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: sailing ship, top-right: moose head, bottom-left: ship, bottom-right: eagle), and a banner at the bottom with the motto "A NE FOR A".

Agenda Item 5

**Early Learning and Childcare -
Expansion to 1140 Hours by 2020**

Falkirk Council

Title: Early Learning and Childcare -
Expansion to 1140 Hours by 2020

Meeting: Education Executive

Date: 13 June 2017

Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report updates the Education Executive on:-

- The Scottish Government's commitment to increase early years learning and childcare from 600 hours to 1140 hours per annum by 2020;
- The current financial resources that are available to Children's Services and future estimated receipts.
- Progress in developing plans to expand capacity and increase flexibility of choice for parents, within the context of the Council's asset review;
- Proposed investment and expenditure plans for 2017/18.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Education Executive is asked to:-

- (1) note the information and content of the report;
- (2) agree Children's Services revenue and capital expenditure plans for 2017/18 as detailed within the report; and
- (3) ask the Director of Children's Services to provide the Education Executive with a further report later in 2017 on the progress of current expansion plans and an update on future infrastructure investment.

3. Background

3.1 **National Position – "A Blueprint for 2020 - Consultative Document"**

The Scottish Government published its consultation document in October 2016.

This document set out the high level vision for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare Provision and re-stated the underlying principles of this to be quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

The Education Executive approved the Council's response to this consultation on 10 January 2017.

3.2 Scottish Government's Response to "A Blueprint for 2020" Consultation

This was published in March 2017 and confirmed that the Scottish Government wishes to give parents maximum choice and flexibility over what type of early years provision they require and which establishment they wish to use.

This also endorsed the Scottish Government view that Authorities should give priority to expansion plans in the areas of highest deprivation.

3.3 Financial Funding 2017-18

In March 2017, the Scottish Government confirmed the following additional financial resources for 2017-18:

	<u>Scotland</u>	<u>Falkirk Share</u>	<u>% Share</u>
Capital	£30m	£ 0.933m	3.1
Revenue	£21m	£ 0.653m	3.1

In May 2017, the Scottish Government redistributed a further **£1.482m** of capital funding to 11 Authorities who had indicated that they could use further capital funding. Falkirk was one of the 11 Authorities and received a further **£0.319m**.

This takes the overall additional capital funding package for 2017-18 to **£1.252m**. These monies must be fully spent in the 2017-18 financial year.

3.4 Financial Funding: 2018/19 – 2020/21

The Scottish Government recently stated that it expects to distribute a further £400m of capital funding to Authorities over the next 3 financial years.

The exact individual allocations will be informed by consultation through COSLA and confirmed as part of the Scottish Budget settlement later this year. If Falkirk receives the same level of funding (3.1%) as detailed in Section 3.3 above then this would equate to **c£12.4m**. Our future expansion planning assumptions will therefore be based on this estimated amount.

3.6 Planning and Design Guidance

The Scottish Government issued Planning Guidance in March 2017 and plans to publish a "Design Guide" to support Authorities with their infrastructure expansion plans and projects in June 2017.

The key assumption made in the Guidance issued so far is to “Make Best Use of Assets”. This aim is supported by 3 fundamental drivers:-

- Use What We Have (make full use of all existing assets);
- Use What We Purchase (develop and enhance use of partner assets); and
- Create What We Need (create or build new capacity where gaps exist).

The Scottish Government has clearly stated that it wishes partnership models to be created and extended to provide a “blended” model of provision. This will include increases in the use of:-

- private and voluntary sector nurseries;
- child-minders; and
- outdoor nursery areas.

This guidance indicates that there is a need to connect the early years expansion plans with the Council’s related objectives in terms of corporate asset management, community planning and deprivation.

3.7 Requirement for a Local Early Years Expansion Plan

Part of the Scottish Government’s “planning guidance” requires local authorities to submit an Early Years Expansion Plan by 29 September 2017. The Scottish Government also plan to recruit a number of Advisors to work with and support local authorities with the preparation of their local plans.

Officers have recently met with the Scottish Futures Trust to get some independent views, input and advice on current investment plans. This meeting was very productive and supported our current plans and efficient costing model.

The opportunity to engage Hubco (the body charged with delivery of public sector asset projects), has also been identified and contact has been made with them to assist in the delivery of the plan.

4. Considerations

4.1 Early Years Expansion Plan and Scottish Government Return

The Scottish Government has requested that all Authorities prepare and agree an expansion plan outlining the key strategies and approaches that will be adopted in the staged progress towards the 2020 target.

In addition to this, it has also asked all Authorities to complete and submit a return that provides a detailed analysis of:-

- infrastructure expansion plans and estimated costs; and
- future additional staffing requirements.

These returns involve a significant amount of staff resource and input. Children's Services plan to complete this work over the summer and will provide a report on this for the Education Executive's consideration in September 2017.

4.2 Key Areas That Will Support Future Early Years' Service Provision

In order that the Education Executive can gain an appreciation of both the range of service areas covered and the complexity of the work involved, a brief summary of the different areas of provision to be considered is shown below.

4.2.1 Use of Private and Voluntary Sector Nurseries

To provide parents with increased flexibility, Children's Services will engage the services of all private nurseries, where parental demand is identified, within the Falkirk district that wish to work in partnership with the Council. Such engagement will be subject to:-

- The nurseries meeting quality standards;
- agreeing the number of funded places for each establishment; and
- agreeing the amount of funding for each child.

Discussions with those nurseries concerned are already underway to increase partnership provision in a "stepped" manner from August 2017 so that parents can have increased choice and greater flexibility over provision. It will also enable Children's Services to assess demand from parents in this area.

4.2.2 Use of Child-minders

Although Children's Services do not use child-minders for the delivery of the existing 600 hours, discussions have already taken place with the Scottish Child-minders Association (SCMA) to look at areas where this support could be offered in the future.

4.2.3 Early Years Establishments Staffing Structures

The planned increase from 600 to 1,140 hours (30 hours per week) of provision will mean a significant increase in staff. Additional staff will require to be taken on each year to allow Authorities to increase provision in a "stepped" and pragmatic manner.

Children Services will review the existing staffing structures to ensure that we have in place a structure that allows for:-

- Growth in overall staffing levels;
- Management of establishments' out-with the current 25 hour school week and when they are open "all year";
- Training and "Growing Your Own Staff" – this will include the very successful use of our Modern Apprenticeship programme;
- Administrative/Clerical Support; and
- Curricular Input to establishments.

4.2.4 Further Education Increased Places & Course Provision

Children's Services will liaise with Forth Valley College and the Council's Employment & Training Unit to ensure that increased places and courses are being offered to students to enable future workforce demands to be met.

4.2.5 National Graduate Programme

The Scottish Government plan to support nurseries in Scotland's most deprived areas by providing them with a suitably qualified graduate by 2018. Nationally 435 graduates are involved in this programme and it is expected that Falkirk will benefit from 8 graduates.

Children's Services will liaise closely with the Scottish Government on the implementation of this programme.

4.2.6 Use of External Space for Classroom or Play Provision

As an integral part of the expansion programme the Scottish Government have already commissioned a number of trials or pilot projects. One of the most interesting and challenging aims they have is that Authorities make more use of external/outdoor space to support children to learn and play.

Opportunities to allow Authorities to register outdoor space as properly scheduled learning and play areas means that effectively outdoor "classrooms" can be developed and created which will reduce the need for traditional "bricks and mortar" classrooms to be built. There are already some examples of this being used in Scotland and Children's Services will consider such innovative and creative use of external areas as part of their Expansion Planning.

4.3 **Infrastructure Expansion Plans - 2017/18**

Recognising the Scottish Government's aims to both prioritise expansion in areas of the highest deprivation and to ensure that the capital monies are fully used in 2017/18 and taking into account the time critical nature of such work, Children's and Development Services staff have developed an initial phase of infrastructure projects for delivery in 2017/18. All of these projects, when completed, will provide the necessary infrastructure to deliver 1,140 hours of provision. The four schools selected are in the highest quartile ranking for deprivation.

Consideration has been given to align these projects with the objectives of the Council's Strategic Property Review and to the suitability of these projects for procurement via our local Hub company (Hub East Central Scotland Ltd).

Langlees Primary School

- An early year's campus will be installed within the grounds of the school.
- This will follow the design blueprint of other successful campuses that are now fully operational within the grounds of other primary schools.
- Estimated Cost: £0.750 - £0.800m

Slamannan Primary School

- Internal alterations will be made to the school that will enable an early year's campus to be established within the school.
- This will allow Children's Services to progress with previous plans to fully relocate the existing early years services provided at Heathrigg Nursery to the school.
- In addition to the current provision the new facility will also offer increased capacity for 3-5 year olds and offer a new provision for families who have eligible 2 year olds within the area, removing the transport burden on those entitled families.
- Meetings have taken place with the Parent Council, Staff and Parents on this project.
- Estimated Cost: £0.350 - £0.380m

Easter Carmuir Primary School

- The current nursery classroom will be extended into an adjoining classroom.
- Estimated Cost: £0.010 - £0.020m

Avonbridge Primary School

- Internal work to improve access to toilets and kitchen areas.
- Estimated Cost: £0.010m - £0.020m

Other Projects

- Once the costs of the above projects become more certain a number of other projects will be identified as we undertake assessment visits across the school estate.

Internal Teams

- The significant scale and challenges that will arise with such major expansion plans will place additional demands on key teams within both Children's and Development Services. It is important therefore that we allocate an appropriate level of resource that allows the Property, Design and Early Years Teams to bring in additional staff support as required to meet the project and work demands. Such additional resource should also be flexible enough to meet the fluctuating real time needs of the teams. Hubco have also offered to assist with this work.
- It is proposed therefore that the Directors of Children's and Development Services in liaison with Hubco can appoint a project team on a flexible and temporary basis to meet the project demands. It would be prudent therefore to allocate £80,000 from the current revenue funding for this purpose.

4.4 'Test of Change' Pilot Projects – 2017/18

In line with their main priority to offer parents increased choice and flexibility over the provision they receive, the Scottish Government are keen that Authorities undertake trials/pilot projects to test the impact of change and to ascertain what parental demand may be.

To support this, Children's Services asked Headteachers if they would like to volunteer their school to participate in these 'test of change' projects. This was received positively and four schools will, from August 2017, offer parents the chance to vary from the current delivery model of am/pm provision to full-day placements. The schools involved in this project are:

- Wallacestone Primary School;
- Bantaskin Primary School;
- Victoria Primary School; and
- Nethermains Primary School.

The exact cost of implementing these pilots will depend on the demand/uptake levels but full details will be provided in a report to the Education Executive later in the year.

These projects will also allow the Service to better assess demand levels and will therefore provide information for future plans and costing information.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Whilst statutory consultation is not required for the above mentioned projects informal discussions have taken place with schools and other stakeholders as appropriate to the size of the project.

6. Implications

Financial

6.1 Capital Costs

The capital cost of the above projects will be contained within the £1.252m of funding received for 2017-18.

Revenue Costs

As detailed in Section 4.3 £80,000 should be allocated to providing additional support to the key service teams involved in the project work.

Children's Services are also currently working on a number of projects and initiatives where the full details of the projected revenue costs will be provided in the report to the Education Executive later in the year.

The overall cost of these projects will not exceed the £0.653m of revenue funding received for 2017-18.

Resources

- 6.2 Details of the additional staff required will be provided in the next report to the Education Executive.

Legal

6.3 N/A

Risk

6.4 N/A

Equalities

6.5 N/A

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

6.6 N/A

7. Conclusions

7.1 This report provides the first of regular reports to the Education Executive on Children's Services plans to increase infrastructure and staffing resources over the next four years to meet the Scottish Government's 2020 target.

These expansion plans will both provide major and welcomed capital investment in the local Falkirk area and will align with the Council's Strategic Property Review. They will also place significant challenge and innovative and creative demands on both Children's Services and Development Services officers over the coming months as new and exciting projects are developed and taken forward. It is important therefore that the resource demands placed on the key teams involved are reviewed regularly to ensure that they can meet and respond to such challenges in a proactive manner.

Director of Children's Services

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Date: 24 May 2017

Appendices

None.

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland – Consultation Analysis Report (March 2017).
- Scottish Government Revenue and Capital Funding Letters.
- Response to Scottish Government Consultation – A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland (Special Education Executive 10 January 2017).