

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: FORMAL CONSULTATION - PROPOSED CLOSURE OF TORWOOD SCHOOL
Meeting: EDUCATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
Date: 30 January 2007
Author: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that on 11 November 2003 a report was brought to Education and Leisure Committee detailing two public consultations that focused on the proposed inclusion of Additional Support Needs facilities in the new North Larbert and Maddiston Primary Schools to provide a better geographical split for this specialist provision in the Falkirk area.
- 1.2 During the consultation process it was made clear that these facilities would provide replacement facilities for the existing pupils at Torwood School, and that once the pupils were moved to these new schools, Torwood School would close.
- 1.3 In both consultations there was overwhelming support for inclusion of the additional support needs facility in both schools.
- 1.4 It was made clear at the time, that a further consultation would be required at a later date regarding the closure of Torwood School.
- 1.5 The new North Larbert and Maddiston Primary Schools are planned to open in August 2007, with the two specialist facilities being opened shortly thereafter. The transfer of staff and pupils currently at Torwood can only take place once these facilities are open and operational.

2. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 2.1 It is proposed that arrangements are made to transfer all staff and pupils to the new facilities at North Larbert and Maddiston Primary Schools once they become available, and that Torwood School would close thereafter.
- 2.2 It is expected that the two new facilities will be operational around October 2007.
- 2.3 It is proposed that places are allocated at either facility by catchment area, thus each unit will serve approximately 50% of the council area/population.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The scope of the consultation required for the closure and relocation of a school is defined in the Education (Publication and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981.

- 3.2 We are obliged to consult all parents of children at the schools affected, and parents of any children that we are aware will be in attendance at the school within two years of the proposed closure/transfer. We must also consult the relevant school boards. Law and Administration Services have confirmed that we are required to consult with the parents and school boards of Torwood School and Maddiston Primary School, but not North Larbert Primary School as the school does not currently exist.
- 3.3 It is also proposed that we consult with all staff at Torwood School on these proposals.
- 3.4 In accordance with the regulations, it is proposed that we undertake a 28 day consultation, starting on 1 February 2007, and that this takes the form of a consultation document issued to all parents, staff and the school board, and that this is made available on the council website and at all libraries and one stop shops. It is also proposed that a public meeting takes place and a notice is placed in the Falkirk Herald. A copy of the proposed consultation document is attached as Appendix 1.

4. PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Although the closure of Torwood School is the trigger for this formal consultation process, it was discussed in the 2003 consultation for both new schools, and endorsed by the overwhelming agreement of those consulted that the two new facilities would replace the current Torwood School. However, it was made clear at the time that the closure of Torwood School would be the subject of a future consultation.
- 4.2 As the closure was proposed to take place about five years after this earlier consultation, most of the current statutory consultees will not have been involved first time around.
- 4.3 It is proposed that we consult with parents and staff on the following.
- The proposed closure of Torwood School.
 - The proposed catchment areas for the North Larbert and Maddiston specialist facilities (see attached proposed consultation document (Appendix 1)).
 - The draft schedule for closure of Torwood School and the transfer of all pupils and staff to the new facilities once they are operational.
- 4.4 This consultation will provide the service with the ideal opportunity to communicate to all relevant parties the positive impact that the two new purpose-built facilities will have, namely:
- improved facilities and environment
 - a net increase in capacity over the current Torwood School
 - more opportunity for pupils to access mainstream primary classes
 - more facilities than it has been possible to provide at Torwood
 - reduced travelling time for pupils as the schools will be closer to home for most children.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Education and Leisure Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations:

- (i) that appropriate consultation, as required by legislation, takes place in respect of the proposal to close Torwood School and the process and timescales for transfer of all staff and pupils to the replacement facilities at North Larbert and Maddiston Primary schools;**
- (ii) that a further report on the outcome of this consultation, including appropriate recommendations, be brought to the next full council meeting on 7 March 2007.**

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Director of Education

Date:

Contact Officer: Richard Teed, ext 6621

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

DRAFT



Falkirk Council
Education Services

**PROPOSAL FOR CLOSURE OF TORWOOD SCHOOL AND
TRANSFER OF PUPILS AND STAFF TO NEW NORTH LARBERT
AND MADDISTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

A Consultative Document



BACKGROUND

In October 2003, parents of Torwood School were amongst those consulted on a proposal to include new, purpose built Additional Support Needs facilities within two new primary schools, one to replace Maddiston Primary, and one to serve new housing developments in North Larbert.

It was made clear at the time that it was intended that the two new facilities would replace Torwood School, which would ultimately close. However, it was also made clear that the proposal to close Torwood School would be subject to a later consultation.

There was overwhelming support for inclusion of the two new facilities within these new build schools, from parents at Torwood, Maddiston and Stenhousemuir Primary Schools.

Plans are well advanced, and both new schools are currently under construction. The schools are both planned to open for Primary 1 to 7 pupils in August 2007, whilst the specialist facilities are both expected to be ready to open by October 2007.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that all staff and pupils currently at Torwood School are transferred to either the new Maddiston and North Larbert schools once both replacement facilities are complete and ready to open. The detailed arrangements and allocation of staff will be carried out in full consultation with all members of staff at Torwood School. The new facilities are expected to be ready for October 2007, so the transfer would be planned on this basis.

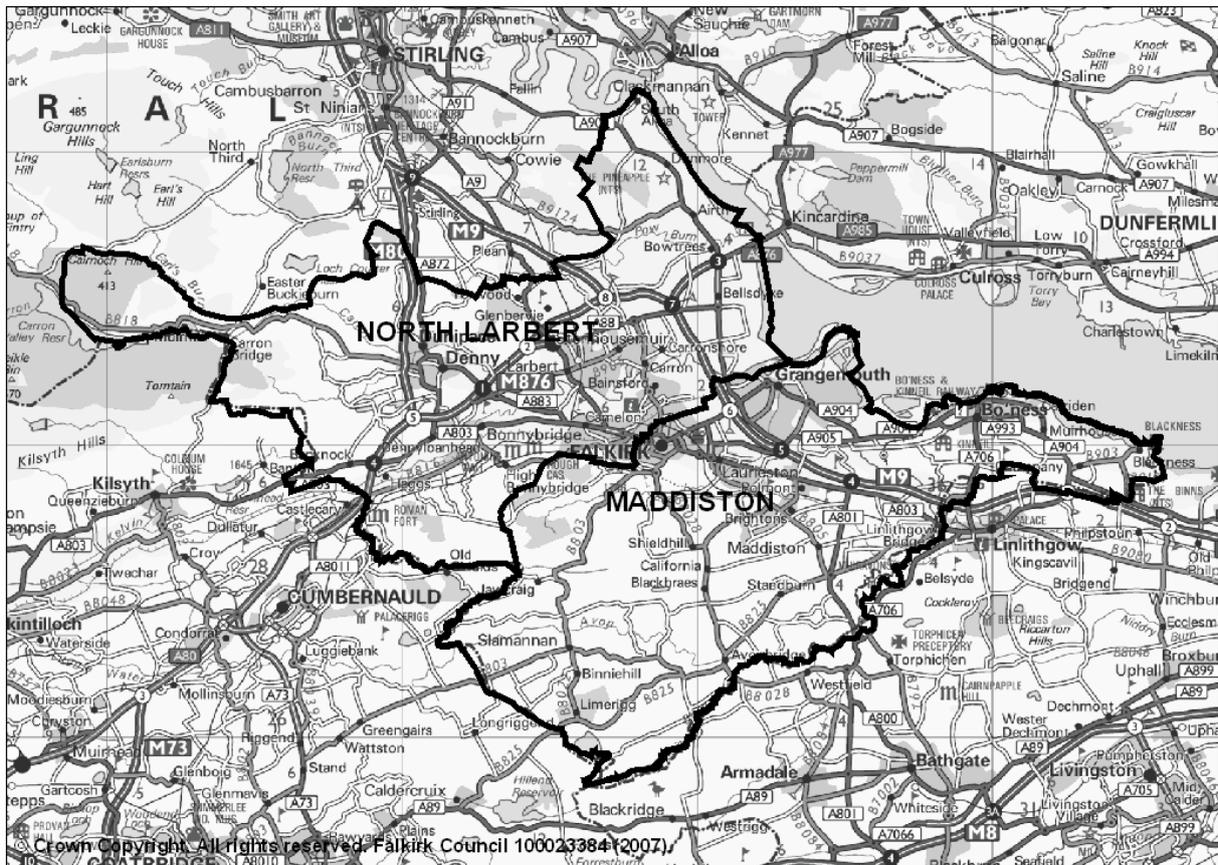
Both primary schools will have a headteacher with overall responsibility for each new specialist facility, but the day to day operation of the facilities will be the specific responsibility of a depute headteacher who will be appointed at each school. Existing staff:pupil ratios will be maintained.

Once all staff and pupils have transferred to the new schools it is proposed that Torwood School is closed. It is currently the Council's intention to sell the land to raise funds to offset the cost of building the two replacement facilities.

The two facilities that will replace Torwood School are of equal size and it is proposed that each facility will serve 50% of the Falkirk population. The catchment areas proposed are shown in the maps overleaf. They each serve almost exactly 50% of the current school-age population, optimise travel times and are broadly aligned with current primary and secondary school catchments.

Although current pupils are not evenly spread between the two proposed school catchments, the distribution is expected to balance out over time. Because of the low pupil numbers, however, there is often likely to be an imbalance, and where this occurs, as is currently the case, it is proposed that places will be offered based on proximity or particular need to ensure that neither facility is over- or under-occupied.

Proposed Catchment Areas for New Additional Support Needs Facilities



CONSULTATION

We hope you agree that the opening of two new purpose-built facilities is a positive move with regard to improved environment and facilities, increased capacity, more opportunity for pupils to access mainstream primary classes, and reduced travelling time to school for many pupils. However, we realise that it will be a significant change for all those affected and urge you to raise any concerns that you may have, ask us any questions you may have and respond to the proposals outlined in this document.

As part of the consultation process, you are invited to attend a public meeting on Monday 12 February at 7.00 pm in Torwood School.

Written responses to this document will be accepted from individuals, organisations or interested parties at **any time up to Wednesday 28 February 2007** and should be addressed to:

The Director of Education
Falkirk Council Education Services
McLaren House
Marchmont Avenue
Polmont FK2 ONZ

Or sent by e-mail to: director.educ@falkirk.gov.uk

If you have any questions that you would like to discuss with us directly please contact Richard Teed (01324 506621) or Jennifer Anderson (01324 506608).