

## Appendix A



# PROPOSAL TO REZONE MINTLAW PRIMARY NETWORK

## CONSULTATION REPORT

DECEMBER 2016

**This Consultation Report has been issued by Education & Children's Services of Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

## - Contents –

- 1 THE PROPOSAL
- 2 THE PUBLIC MEETINGS
- 3 WRITTEN RESPONSES
- 4 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED ZONING OPTIONS
- 5 EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO WRITTEN AND ORAL REPRESENTATIONS
- 6 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT
7. RURAL SCHOOLS – COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 11A - 13 OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010
8. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONCLUSIONS

### - Appendices –

- Appendix 1 Map of the proposed changes to the catchment areas in the Mintlaw Network incorporating recommendations of this report
- Appendix 2 Pupil consultation responses
- Appendix 3 Education Scotland Report
- Appendix 4 Equality Impact Assessment

## 1. THE PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Aberdeenshire Council's Education, Learning & Leisure Committee at its meeting on 25th August 2016 gave officers permission to consult on rezoning the Mintlaw network. The Proposal Document was issued in October 2016 to those individuals and bodies listed under Distribution within the document. The Proposal Document was also published on the Council website: <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/education-consultations/>  
The Proposal Document made clear to consultees that the consultation period would run from Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016 - Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016 – a period of 31 school days in total.

The proposal on which consultation took place was that:

*The catchment areas for Mintlaw Primary School, Pitfour School and Stuartfield School are amended with effect from August 2017. The catchment areas for Maud School, Fetterangus School and Longside School may be altered with effect from August 2017 in line with the changes to Mintlaw, Pitfour and Stuartfield Schools.*

*New pupils joining schools living within these catchment areas should be educated at their newly zoned school with effect from August 2017;*

*Pupils already attending these primary schools who were previously zoned to the school will not be required to change school and their siblings would also be able to join them at that school.*

- 1.2 The proposal document (Appendix 4) provided a new catchment for Stuartfield School, Mintlaw Primary School and Pitfour School with options of rezoning areas from existing zones for these schools to Fetterangus, Longside, and Maud Schools.

### 1.3 Educational Benefits Statement

The Proposal Document contained an Educational Benefit Statement, which highlighted an imbalance in the capacity of schools across the network. Some schools are operating close to or above maximum capacity, and so have less space available for pupils, restricting delivery of the curriculum. In contrast, other schools are operating well below capacity. The proposed changes will largely address the capacity issues across the network and over time will ensure that all pupils are given the same opportunities and access to resources.

## 2. THE PUBLIC MEETINGS

- 2.1 In September 2016 informal engagement sessions were held to discuss potential zoning options. These were attended by members of the community, parents and local Elected Members, feedback helped to develop the proposal that was consulted upon. During the statutory consultation a public meeting was held in Mintlaw Academy on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016. The meeting was attended by 17 parents, staff, elected members, Education Scotland representatives, and members of the community. A full note of the meeting is available on the Council website at the link provided in 1.1 above.

There were several comments and questions raised concerning:

- A number of parents raised concerns about the proposed rezoning around the Northwoods housing development. They were concerned about road safety and traffic controls.
- Questions and concerns raised about roll forecasting. In particular that the Stuartfield School roll will remain over working capacity even after the potential rezone. Parents do not want the Stuartfield School roll to rise and questioned whether an extension to the school will be needed in the future.
- Further concerns about rising rolls across Mintlaw village due to the new housing developments.
- The local Community Council voiced their concerns about the lack of investment in new schools around the Mintlaw village and their desire for one school for the whole village to be considered.

## 2.2 Discussions with Pupils

As part of the consultation process, the head teachers from Fetterangus, Longside, Maud, Mintlaw Primary, Pitfour and Stuartfield Schools posed a short set of questions to pupils about the proposal to rezone the Mintlaw Network catchment areas. A summary note of responses from the pupils is appended (**Appendix 2**).

## 3. WRITTEN RESPONSES

In all, three written responses were received by email. An overview of this correspondence is provided below.

(1) E-mail from Mintlaw Community Council 10/11/2016: stating the community councils preferred options for Stuartfield and Mintlaw village and raising concerns about the need to ensure pupil safety with traffic controls are met and the need for a fourth option to the proposal for a new school in Mintlaw village.

(2) E-mail dialogue between parent and officers 1-10/10/2016: seeking more information about the proposed catchment boundary for Old Deer and their concerns over transport, community involvement and after school care for their child.

(3) E-mail from parent 07/11/2016: explaining their reasons for wanting Nether Aden to remain within Mintlaw Primary Schools zone, and a copy of an email the parents sent to two local Elected Members.

In summary, the written responses highlight:

- Support for the proposal to address the school roll and capacity issues across the Mintlaw School Network.
- A desire for one school to accommodate all of Mintlaw Village and an extension to Stuartfield School
- Concerns the proposals do not address the long term capacity issues within the network.

### 3.1 Survey Monkey Responses

An online survey was issued to all parents of existing pupils at all Mintlaw network Schools, all parents of pre-school age children who would attend schools in the Mintlaw network, as well as all members of staff, and the wider community. There was a response rate of 40. This would suggest a broad acceptance of the proposed zones. The following questions were asked:

#### **Question 1: Do you agree that Old Deer should be removed from the Stuartfield catchment area?**

(38 responded, 2 skipped the answer)

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses %</b>	<b>Responses No.</b>
Yes	39.47%	15
No	18.42%	7
No Preference	42.11%	16
Total		38

#### **Question 2: If Old Deer is removed from the Stuartfield Catchment, which school should it be zoned to?**

(34 responded, 6 skipped the answer)

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses %</b>	<b>Responses No.</b>
Fetterangus	23.53%	8
Maud	20.59%	7
No Preference	55.88%	19
Total		34

#### **Question 3: Where do you think Nether Aden should be zoned to?**

(36 responded, 4 skipped the question)

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses %</b>	<b>Responses No.</b>
Pitfour	50%	18
Mintlaw Primary	22.22%	8
No Preference	27.78%	10
Total		36

#### **Question 4: Where do you think Northwoods should be zoned to?**

(36 responded, 4 skipped the question)

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses %</b>	<b>Responses No.</b>
Pitfour	25%	9
Mintlaw Primary	38.89%	14
No Preference	36.11%	13
Total		36

### Question 5: Where do you think Clola should be zoned for?

(35 responded, 5 skipped the question)

Answer Choices	Responses %	Responses No.
Mintlaw Primary	17.14%	6
Longside	45.71%	16
No Preference	37.14%	13
Total		36

There were 8 written responses in the comments section (question 6). Of the 8 comments received all related to the proposed boundary changes. A summary of these comments is given below.

- Concerns the proposed Gypsy Traveller site at Aikey Brae will compromise capacity at Maud School
- The need for a new school in Mintlaw and an extension in Stuartfield
- Greater transparency on developer contributions and planning agreement processes

#### 4. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED ZONING OPTIONS

4.1 Two broad proposals regarding the rezoning of the Mintlaw Network were consulted upon, with two sub- options for Stuartfield and three sub-options in Mintlaw.

##### 4.2 Stuartfield Proposal

The proposal for Stuartfield had two options, one to move Old Deer to Maud School and the other to move Old Deer to Fetterangus. An overview of the responses to each option is provided below.

##### **Option 1 – Old Deer to Maud**

Comments suggested there is a need to address capacity issues in Stuartfield rather than trying to change the catchment area. The distance and school rolls were noted by respondents as was the awareness of the proposed Gypsy Traveller site at Aikey Brae which would be zoned for Maud School.

##### **Option 2 – Old Deer to Fetterangus**

Whilst most respondents had no preferred option, one more respondent preferred Option 2 to Option 1 (Numbers). Comments were received regarding the distance of eight miles (round trip) for children every day. It was highlighted by a respondent that Fetterangus will go over its capacity by 2020 and therefore may not be the best solution.

##### 4.3 Mintlaw Village Proposal

The proposal for Mintlaw Village had four options; one to move Nether Aden to Pitfour; a second option to move Nether Aden and Northwoods to Pitfour; a third option to move Clola from Mintlaw Primary to Longside; and the fourth option to is to retain the status quo

### **Option 1 – Nether Aden to Pitfour**

50% of respondents prefer this option. Comments reflected concerns around road safety and the small established community at Nether Aden that already has some children attending Mintlaw Primary School.

### **Option 2 – Nether Aden and Northwoods zoned to Pitfour**

As with the response from above, there was no specific comment relating to Northwoods moving from Mintlaw Primary to Pitfour.

### **Option 3 – Clola and surrounding area is rezoned to Longside**

This option sees the area south of Mintlaw moved from Mintlaw Primary School to Longside School. Although this would incur the need for two sets of pupil transport to cover the overlap of children already attending Mintlaw Primary and their siblings and the catchment moving to Longside. There were no specific comments from stakeholders regarding this proposal.

There were no comments about retaining the status quo and this option would not address the capacity issues at either of the schools in Mintlaw village.

Regarding the options for Mintlaw village it is clear that respondents main concerns are road safety to and from home and the implications this would have on parents feeling they need to transport their children to and from school rather than walking them.

#### **4.4 Retain the status quo**

There were no comments about retaining the status quo and this option would not address the capacity issues at either of the schools in Mintlaw village.

## **5. EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO WRITTEN AND ORAL REPRESENTATIONS**

### **5.1 Educational Benefits**

For Aberdeenshire Council, Education & Children's Services, educational benefit to pupils affected by the proposal is the key issue. Pupils are already receiving high quality education at schools within the Mintlaw network, and parents are happy that their children are receiving quality education in their chosen setting.

Changes to the catchment areas will ensure a more even allocation of school places across the network. This will relieve the physical pressure on those schools working at, or close to full capacity, thereby providing better physical environments for learning. For those schools operating significantly below capacity, the proposal will ensure an increase in the school roll. This will provide children with opportunities to socialise and learn with more children of different ages and stages, helping to promote more peer learning and encouraging children to participate in more team activities.

Siblings of existing pupils will be entitled to attend the same school, thus keeping families together. No children currently attending the schools will be

forced to move schools, although some may choose to. Furthermore, the proposal has no impact on Nursery placements, and parents may still send their child to their preferred nursery subject to available spaces.

## 5.2 The Suitability of Mintlaw Primary School and Pitfour School

There was concern regarding the capacity of Pitfour School and the suitability of the actual fabric of the building. It has been raised by stakeholders and Elected Members that the school is past its best and there is a need to discuss the suitability of the learning environment and the option for a new school within the village. The Learning Estates team will engage with the community to agree a preferred option regarding any extension plans to schools within Mintlaw. Both schools have space to consider adding extra class space. Particular issues regarding dining have been raised and the authority is keen to ensure any concerns are addressed by working with both schools to ensure there is a dining plan to accommodate any increase due to rezoning.

## 5.3 Stuartfield School

There was overall support for the proposed Stuartfield School catchment, but with the suggestion that the temporary building be removed and replaced with an extension to the main school. It was agreed in August 2016 that the school would be capped for twelve months to enable the rezoning consultation to be completed. It has been the local authority's plan to include a discussion on replacing the temporary unit or extending the school in the future and this will be discussed within the community to ensure any extension is suitable for the growing needs of the school and village.

## 5.4 The Northwoods and Nether Aden Developments - Transport and Safe Routes to School

There were concerns raised about the proposed zones within Mintlaw village due to road safety concerns and main roads that may have to be crossed by children. Stakeholders were concerned this would increase the amount of parents driving their children to school causing more congestion around the schools. As previously mentioned there are concerns over the main roads within Mintlaw village, Main Street, Station Road and Longside Road are the key areas of concern and the amount of traffic and congestion around these roads especially during the start and end of the school day.

# 6 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

## 6.1 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full (**Appendix 3**)

6.2 Education Scotland acknowledges changes to the catchment areas will ensure a more even allocation of school places across the area. This will relieve pressure on those schools working at, or near to full capacity, thereby providing better physical environments for learning. Currently Stuartfield School requires temporary premises to accommodate all children within its



catchment area and is capped and Pitfour School has a temporary building. Furthermore, there is sufficient space within both Maud School and Fetterangus School.

- 6.3 Education Scotland noted that almost all stakeholder groups are in favour of the proposal. However, parents from Stuartfield School and families living within the village would like the Council to consider alternative options to delineation the Schools temporary building. This is acknowledged by officers, who have identified the need for a review of the building in the future
- 6.4 They were also concerned about safe routes to school and in particular transport provision for Old Deer and traffic management on Station Road in Mintlaw is addressed. In addition, stakeholders within the Nether Aden area were also concerned about safe routes to school if the area is rezoned to Pitfour School
- 6.5 Education Scotland suggest that in taking forward the proposal the council should review travel plans for Old Deer, as well as address concerns about road safety in Mintlaw. Careful consideration should also be given to the condition of each schools facilities including dining areas, and implications of any extensions required to the schools. Officer recommendations will be within the public domain prior to the P1 admission period with a final decision due in February 2016.

## **7. RURAL SCHOOLS – COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 11A - 13 OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010**

- 7.1 Section 11A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 introduces a presumption against closure for any rural school and requires the education authority to have special regard to the following factors when proposing changes to rural schools:
- any reasonable alternatives to the proposal
  - an assessment of the likely educational benefits of the proposal and the alternatives identified
  - an assessment of any likely community impact of the proposal and the alternatives identified
  - an assessment of the likely effect of different travelling arrangements on pupils arising from the proposal and the alternatives identified .
- 7.2 Reasonable Alternatives to Rezoning  
One alternative was identified in the Proposal Document, which is to retain the status quo. This would not address the concerns about the disparity of schools being over and under capacity. In particular, Stuartfield School and Mintlaw Primary School where there are the most severe capacity pressures and without the rezoning will be significantly over capacity, ultimately losing their small, rural identity.
- 7.3 Effect on the Local Community  
There are no changes to the level of facilities that will be available to communities particularly in Stuartfield School. Furthermore, comments about

changing the rezoning of Stuartfield School in particular moving the catchment area of Old Deer have been taken on board and form part of officer recommendations.

#### 7.4 Travelling Arrangements

Pupils living rurally within the Mintlaw network who are currently entitled to transport will continue to be entitled to transport. They will also be able to attend their current school until they finish primary education. For new pupils in Old Deer they will still be entitled to transport, and those in the Northwoods and Nether Aden housing developments in Mintlaw village will have a safer walking route through the village, on mainly paved and illuminated footpaths. The journey times will increase for those pupils from Old Deer by an extra four minutes taking their journey time to ten minutes.

#### 7.5 Financial Implications

This rezoning could eventually allow removal of the temporary accommodation from Pitfour School and Stuarfield School with them being replaced with permanent extensions. There will be a need to invest in the fabric of both schools but will, in the long term, reduce the associated running costs for the school. This rezoning will ensure the sustainability of the school estate across the Mintlaw network, thereby preserving communities and ensuring future provision for children moving into the area.

### **8. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states that:  
*After the Education Authority has received HMle's report, the Authority is to review the relevant proposal having regard (in particular) to*
- (i) written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the consultation period,*
  - (ii) oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting,*
  - (iii) HMle's report.*

Officers of the Education Authority have listened carefully to the points made at the public meeting and have considered equally carefully the written representations. The Education Authority's position is set out in this document.

#### 8.2 Conclusions and Recommendation

The Council now has 3 broad options with regards to the proposed changes;

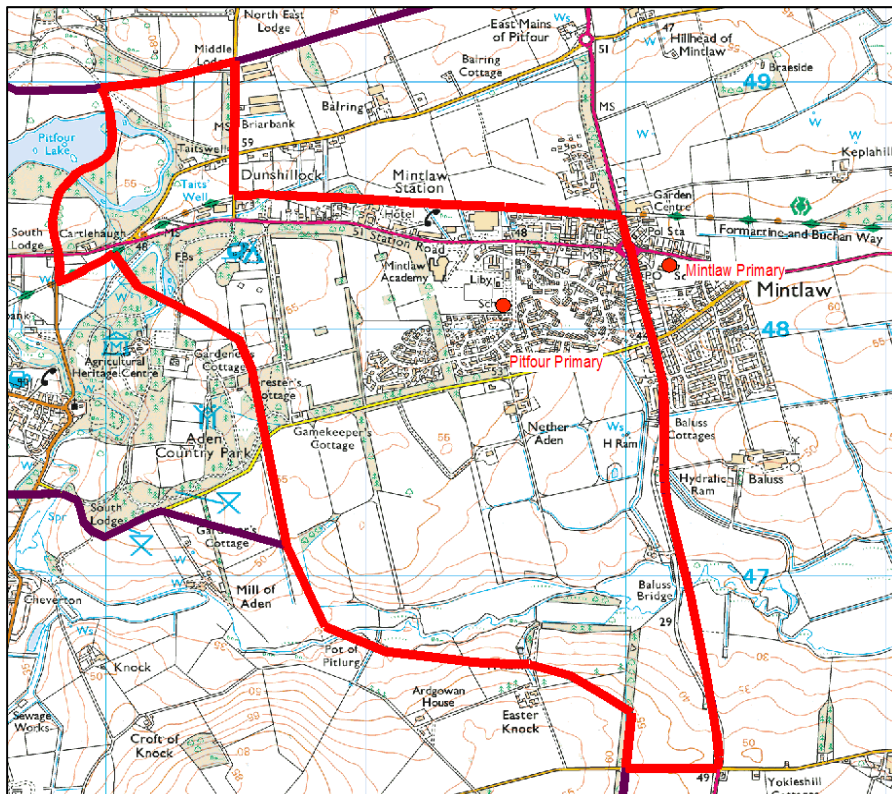
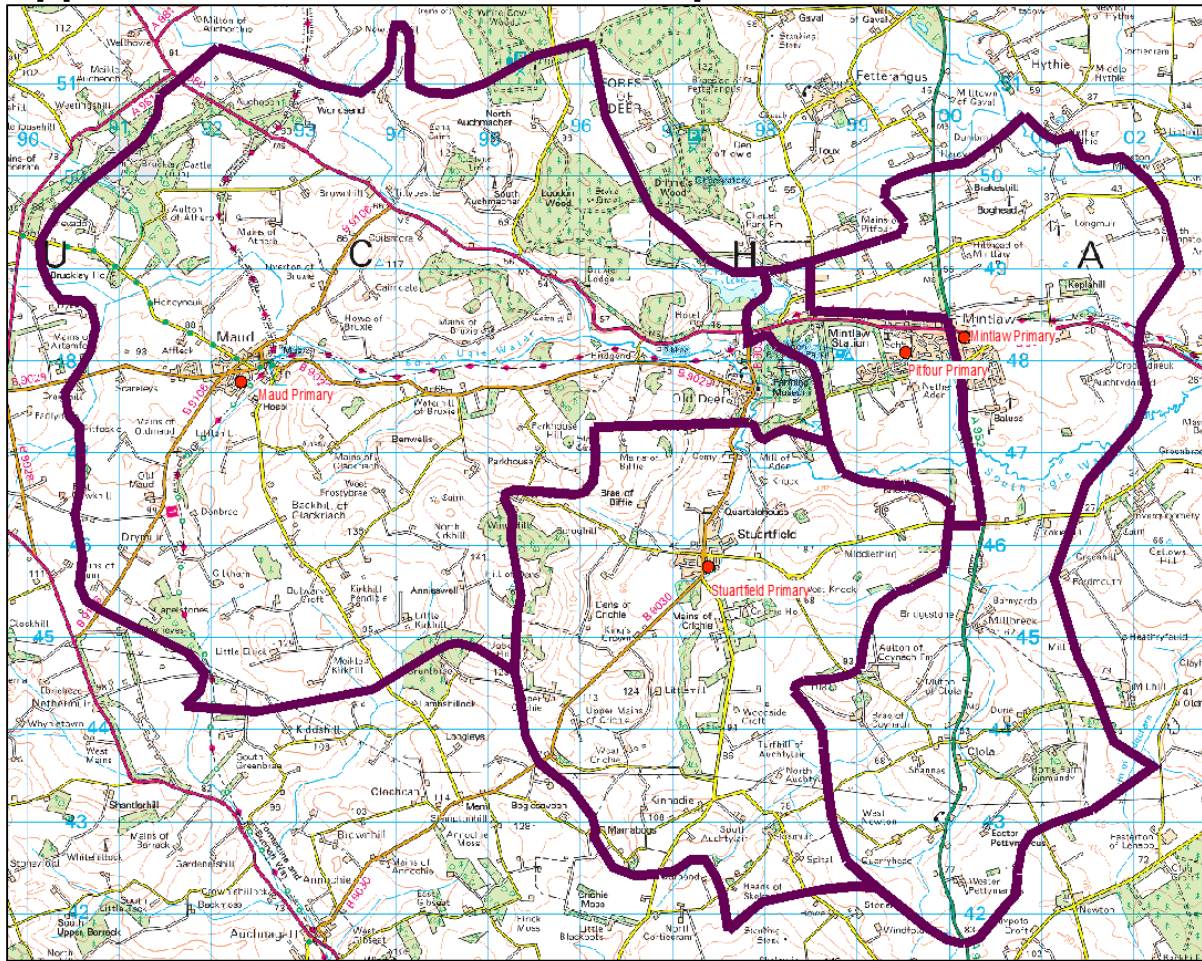
- (1) adopt either Option 1 or Option 2 for Stuartfield School **and** adopt Option 1, 2 or 3 for Mintlaw Village;
- (2) Significantly alter the proposed changes in some way and conduct a further consultation;
- (3) Abandon the proposal and maintain the status quo

8.2.1 The recommendation of officers is that the Council should implement Option 1 for Stuartfield – moving Old Deer to Maud School; and Option 1 for Mintlaw – moving the Nether Aden development to Pitfour School along with all houses to the west of South Road, Mintlaw. In addition, consideration will be given to the following:

- Possible extension / improvement to Stuartfield School to meet the needs of pupils within the catchment area
- In due course consider an extension to Pitfour School to meet the needs of pupils within the catchment area.

The map in Appendix 1 shows an overview of the recommended catchment areas across the Mintlaw network.

# Appendix 1 - Mintlaw Network Proposed Catchments



## **APPENDIX 2 – Note of meetings with Pupils**

### **MINTLAW CONSULTATION REPORT**

The school that children go to in Mintlaw (and the rest of Scotland) is decided by which street and sometimes which house they live in. Each school in Mintlaw has a catchment area. A catchment area or zone is a line on a map which shows the streets and houses that are grouped together for that school.

The catchment areas for Fetterangus, Longside, Maud, Mintlaw Primary, Pitfour and Stuartfield schools have not been looked at for a very long time, and a lot of new houses have been built in this area since then. This means that there are some schools with a lot of new houses in their catchment area, and therefore a lot of new pupils. There are also some areas where there used to be a lot of school pupils coming from the houses in the zone, but those children have grown up and not as many new families with school aged children have moved into those areas.

Aberdeenshire Council wants to change the school catchment areas so that some of the schools in Mintlaw have the right number of pupils for the number of classrooms and teachers in the school. This will mean that some of the schools with lots of pupils will have more space, and some of the schools with lots of spare classrooms can have more pupils.

The council have drawn some new lines on the maps, and are asking parents, teachers and pupils what they think about the changes that they are suggesting, and if the catchment for the new school is in the right place.

Your teacher will be able to show you a map with the changes for your nearest school.

1. Do you think that your school needs to have a different catchment area – are there too few or too many pupils at the moment?
2. Do you think that the changes suggested for your nearest school are a good idea?
3. Do you think that changing the catchment areas for some of the schools that are empty or full is a good idea?
4. Is there anything that worries you about this?
5. Is there anything that interests or excites you about this?
6. Is there anything that you think the council needs to think about if they do this?

**NOTE:** Pupil responses were only received from P6 class from **LongsideSchool**.

<b>Pupil responses to the questions about the proposed rezoning</b>						
<b>School</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Q5</b>	<b>Q6</b>
<b>Fetterangus</b>	Most pupils felt there were too few children at their school and therefore the proposal is a good idea	Most members thought the changes suggested were a good idea though one boy had reservations about the school becoming crowded	Most felt it is a good idea that pupils are rezoned to fill more empty schools and ease the pressure on schools which are almost full	There are concerns over behaviour of new children coming to the school	The P7 expressed a desire to meet the children but he will be at the academy. A P5 boy felt a bit unsure as to what it would be like to be a family that was rezoned and thought they might feel sad if they already had friends at the school they are currently zoned for.	It would be important to make sure that the children from Old Deer felt welcome and were not treated any differently to those from Fetterangus.
<b>Longside (p6 response only)</b>	Most thought the school has the right amount of pupils at our school. Most children don't want bigger classes.	The majority felt they wouldn't want other schools to have too many pupils in their school.	The majority felt it didn't affect them	The majority felt if schools are too full, where would children go?	The majority were excited at the prospect of meeting new people	How many people this will affect. Try not to overfill the schools. Make sure the pupils will fit in at their new school. Make sure their busses will be suitable – it might affect current pupil's bus times. Will pupils and parents have to pay for a new school uniform because they've moved school? Could they trade in? Free first uniform?
<b>Maud</b>	The majority felt there were not enough pupils in their school	The majority felt the proposal was a good idea	The majority felt it's not good if there's not enough people because they would have no friends	There were no concerns over the proposal	The majority were excited by the prospect of new friends	Make the school a little bigger Put more names on the lunched board Bigger cloakroom or come in at different times
<b>Mintlaw Primary</b>	Most pupils thought the school had just	The pupils were split 50/50 on this question	Most children thought if a school is full	Pupils were generally not too worried	Pupils were excited that they might get to meet new friends if	The builders who are making more people live in Mintlaw should build a new school.

	the right number of pupils.		that it makes sense for some to go to a school that is empty. Or perhaps Mintlaw should get a new school	once they understood that anyone already at Mintlaw and their little brothers and sisters will all get to come to Mintlaw.	new people could come to this school. A few pupils in one class were excited that if less people went to Mintlaw they could get to have their lunch all at one time.	The school should get an extra building to have more pupils come to this school. Families should get to choose which school they want because sometimes they have a personal reason for wanting a school that they choose.
<b>Pitfour</b>	The majority agreed with there were the right amount of pupils at the school	The majority felt the proposal was a good idea	The majority felt it was a good idea to address the amount of children in each school	The majority had no concerns but some felt they may lose friends	The majority were excited at meeting new people and making new friends	Walls and doors needed in classrooms if they become busier and noisier The Council should think ahead before they let any more new houses be built
<b>Stuartfield</b>	The majority felt there are too many pupils at this school	The majority felt it was not a good idea as siblings might be split up and they might miss friends from nursery	Some felt it was a good idea to stop overcrowding and that everyone should have space	Some felt their siblings would not be able to attend the school, concerns over transport and adverse weather	Most felt they might get new friends	The council needs to listen to the children. Stop building houses. Don't make the zones too small. Think about families (brothers and sisters) they might not come to this school after I've left.

## APPENDIX 3

### Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeenshire Council to amend the catchment areas of primary schools in the Mintlaw network.

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to amend the catchment areas of primary schools in the Mintlaw network. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

#### 1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the affected schools, any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

#### 1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 2 November 2016 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the sites of Mintlaw Primary School, Pitfour School, Stuartfield School, Fetterangus School, Longside School and Maud School, including discussion with relevant consultees.



## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 Aberdeenshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 Aberdeenshire Council's proposal relates to the need to address pressure on school rolls resulting from housing development in Stuartfield and Mintlaw. The council proposes to amend the catchment areas for Mintlaw Primary School, Pitfour School and Stuartfield School with effect from August 2017. The council's proposal document contains two options for removing Old Deer from the Stuartfield School catchment. One option is to rezone Old Deer to Maud School. The second option is to rezone Old Deer to Fetterangus School. The council's proposal document contains three further options related to rezoning Nether Aden or Nether Aden and Northwoods from the catchment area of Mintlaw Primary School to Pitfour School and Clola from Mintlaw Primary School to Longside School.

2.3 Prior to the consultation Aberdeenshire Council undertook informal engagement sessions in September 2016 to seek initial comments on the proposed changes. The council undertook the formal consultation between 5 October and 2 December 2016. A public meeting was held at Mintlaw Academy on 2 November 2016. Copies of the consultation document were sent to stakeholders and made available in Mintlaw Library, the affected schools and council offices and posted on the council's website. Questions for pupils were sent to each of the affected schools to facilitate discussion of the options set out in the proposal document. Three written responses were received by Aberdeenshire Council, including one from Mintlaw and District Community Council which proposed alternative school rezoning options to those set out in the proposal document. The two other responses raised individual concerns on the impact of the proposed changes. In addition 40 responses were collated from an online survey containing six questions on the options set out in the proposal. Collated returns to the online survey demonstrated a range of preferences including a significant proportion stating no preference against each of the options.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 The main educational benefit arising from the council's proposal is that amending primary school catchment areas will relieve pressure on Stuartfield School and Mintlaw Primary School rolls. If no changes were made at Stuartfield School the roll could rise to 131 by 2021. The school's current working capacity is set at 125 pupil places. Removing Old Deer from Stuartfield School's catchment would reduce the forecast roll to 112 by 2021. If no changes were made at Mintlaw Primary School the roll could rise to 221 by 2021. The school has a working capacity of 171 pupil places. Removing Northwoods from Mintlaw Primary School's catchment would reduce the forecast number of pupils to 167 by 2021 with further reductions if Nether Aden and Clola are also removed from Mintlaw Primary school's catchment.

3.2 There is sufficient capacity at both Maud School and Fetterangus School to accommodate the estimated increased number of pupils resulting from the rezoning of Old Deer. There is sufficient capacity at Longside School to accommodate the modest increase in pupil numbers resulting from the proposed option to rezone Clola from Mintlaw Primary School to Longside School. However, if both Nether Aden and Northwoods are rezoned from Mintlaw Primary School to Pitfour School this would result in a roll of 213 at Pitfour School by 2021. The current working capacity of the school is 171 pupil places. If only Nether Aden is rezoned to Pitfour School the forecast roll of 176 would be still be slightly above the school's capacity. The council's proposal document refers to the intention to undertake further work at Mintlaw Primary

School and Pitfour School to determine which school would be most appropriate for additional classrooms. The proposal document states that there is sufficient space at both schools for an extension. However, the council's proposal document contains no further detail on this aspect of the proposal. The council will need to provide more detail on how this will be addressed including its timescale for establishing additional classroom space in its final proposal paper.

3.3 There is clear educational benefit to the council's proposal to alleviate pressure on the school rolls at Stuartfield School and Mintlaw Primary School. However, the council's proposal document does not detail any other educational benefits. There is no information on the standard and quality of school buildings and accommodation and no detailed information on sufficiency of existing space in the six affected schools, for example, in school dining areas. There is no information on any curricular benefits arising from the council's proposal options. The council will need to consider what further detail on educational benefits it can provide in its final report.

3.4 Parents, children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors at all six affected schools recognised that change was needed to alleviate pressure on school rolls in Stuartfield School and Mintlaw Primary School resulting from new housing development. Overall, there was support for the proposal with a variety of views expressed on the available rezoning options. Parents at some of the schools raised a number of concerns. Several parents saw a need for better long term planning for schools in the area in relation to new housing development and expressed doubt about the council's roll forecasts. At Stuartfield School and Pitfour School, parents were concerned about the adequacy of existing accommodation including the use of ageing external temporary classroom units with no toilet facilities. At Pitfour School, parents and children were concerned about insufficient school dining space. Several parents expressed concerns about safe walking routes to school and the availability of school crossing patrols. Although one of the council's proposal options is potentially beneficial to road safety, by reducing the number road crossings required in Mintlaw, parents were concerned about the impact of additional traffic at Pitfour School. The council will need to engage with parents on concerns raised if it decides to take forward its proposal.

3.5 The council's proposal document provides assurance that children currently attending primary schools will not be required to change schools and that their siblings will have the right to attend the same school in future. Parents welcomed this assurance but were not clear if this would include cases where the older sibling had moved to Mintlaw Academy before the younger sibling had entered primary school. The council will need to clarify this point in its final proposal paper.

#### **4. Summary**

Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to amend primary school zones will be beneficial in alleviating roll pressure at Stuartfield School and Mintlaw Primary School. The council has not included any detail on any additional educational benefits. The council will need to consider this in its final paper.

The council will need to provide more detail on the timescale and process for considering potential extensions to Mintlaw Primary School and Pitfour School in its final paper.

The council will need to clarify the position regarding the right of siblings to attend the same primary school in cases where the older sibling has moved on to secondary school.

Parents who spoke with HM Inspectors have views and local knowledge on safe walking routes to school and traffic management. The council will need to continue to engage with stakeholders on the details of implementation of its proposal options.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
December 2016**