

# Report

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Report to:	<b>South Lanarkshire Council (Special)</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>19 September 2007</b>
Report by:	<b>Chief Executive</b>

Subject:	<b>Secondary Schools Modernisation - Independent Review of Strathaven Academy</b>
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## **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Summarise the outcome of the independent review carried out by the Council's auditors and recommend appropriate action

## **2. Recommendation(s)**

2.1. The Council is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the Council note the report prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, which concludes that the overall outcome in terms of Strathaven Academy would likely remain unchanged.
- (2) that the Council agree the learning points as summarised at paragraph 4.5 of the report are accepted for future appropriate action.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1. In May 2006 South Lanarkshire Council approved a major programme to rebuild seventeen of its secondary schools and refurbish the remaining two. This project will be complete by 2010 and have a capital cost of £300 million.
- 3.2. Within this programme, Strathaven Academy is to be rebuilt on its existing site. This was a material change from the refurbishment planned in the original Outline Business Case. While the new school is being constructed, the pupils will be educated at Crosshouse Campus, East Kilbride.
- 3.3. At a Special Meeting on 2 July 2007, it was agreed to instruct the Council's auditors to review the decision in relation to Strathaven Academy from a best value point of view.
- 3.4. Consequently PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) were engaged to undertake a review, with a scope to focus on the decisions taken at key stages of the project and the documentation available to support these decisions.

## **4. Key Findings and Response**

- 4.1. The auditors' report detailing the approach and outlining their findings is attached at Appendix 1.

- 4.2. In general, the contents of the report are balanced and fair, providing a reasonable assessment of the decision-making process. The auditors' approach was thorough and professional.
- 4.3. It is of no surprise that the requirements of value for money were met, given that the project had to satisfy the stringent requirements of the Scottish Executive and Audit Scotland before financial support was approved.
- 4.4. Acknowledgement of the areas of good practice is noted and useful.
- 4.5. The key learning points are accepted and it is acknowledged that, with the benefit of hindsight, the particular issues relating to Strathaven Academy could have been handled better, as follows:
- ◆ While the proposed solution of a new build for Strathaven Academy provided an improved long-term outcome over the original specification of a refurbishment, more consideration could have been given to the particular implications of building the new school on the existing site.
  - ◆ While we exceeded our legal requirements in relation to engaging with stakeholders, a point noted as good practice, it is accepted that we could improve in this area. We will take the outcome of this review as an opportunity to review our engagement practices and communication arrangements both for the remaining period of the Schools Modernisation Programme and in future initiatives.
  - ◆ The existing arrangements for temporary leisure provision will be refined. Charges for alternative sports usage at South Lanarkshire facilities, particularly for outdoor facilities in Hamilton and East Kilbride, will remain at the levels applying in Strathaven.
  - ◆ The practice of providing people at transport pick up points will continue to be provided for one week after every holiday as planned for October and extended to every holiday during the decant period. The arrangements for bus travel will be kept under review.
- 4.6. In summary, while the review has shown that there are some areas where practice could be improved and that at this stage the temporary arrangements can be refined, it is unlikely that the eventual outcome would have been any different, as the table in the Overall Commentary of the Executive Summary clearly shows.

## **5. Employee Implications**

- 5.1. None.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. None.

## **7. Other Implications**

- 7.1. None.

## **8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 8.1. None.

**Archibald Strang**  
**Chief Executive**

7 September 2007

**Previous References**

South Lanarkshire Council Meeting 2 July 2007

**List of Background Papers**

None

**Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Linda Hardie, Executive Director Finance and Information Technology and Depute Chief Executive

Ext: 4622 (Tel: 01698 454622)

E-mail: [linda.hardie@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:linda.hardie@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)