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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Education &amp; Lifelong Learning Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>2 November 2010</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Education and Communities</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>EDUC66/10/EH</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Elsa Hamilton</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712850</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on School Age Language Unit (SALU)</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to draw to a summary and conclusion, the decisions and actions taken with regard to the School Age Language Unit (SALU) currently located within Highlanders Academy.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The matter of the future of the SALU first came to the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee in September 2008. Over the past 2 years a period of extensive consultation and debate has taken place, where options for the provision of Speech and Language Support have been discussed extensively.
- 2.2 More recently, a Working Group has been established to consider practice and evaluation outcomes in other authorities and to build on the local consultation that has taken place to address the issue of the future of the unit.
- 2.3 Proposals from this Working Group, following a subsequent consultation period, are now brought to Committee for approval.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

- 3.1 Committee agree the development of the current SALU, based within Highlanders Academy, to become a Base offering support through Primary 1 – Primary 3.
- 3.2 Committee agree to the additional provision of extended support beyond Primary 3 based on assessment of needs for individual children and their families. Details of this proposal are noted in Section 4.
- 3.3 The SALU Working Group continues to work towards the implementation of this proposal.
- 3.4 Committee note that, following the amalgamation of Highlanders and Overton, the SALU will be based within the new school, on the Overton campus.

**Albert Henderson**  
**Corporate Director – Education & Communities**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In September 2008, the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee was presented with the first of a number of papers relating to this matter, within which it was recommended that there be a reconfiguration of the SALU.
- 4.2 At that meeting, it was decided that the matter be deferred to the following meeting, allowing for further consultation with parents of pupils using the Unit.
- 4.3 A meeting was held with Parents on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2008 to discuss the future of the Unit. This meeting was also attended by Authority officers, Head and Class teacher, union representatives and 5 Elected Members.
- 4.4 On 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008, as requested, a further report was submitted to the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee, noting that this meeting had taken place and recommending that a wider consultation be undertaken to elicit wider opinion.
- 4.5 Consultation documentation was prepared in December 2008/ January 2009 and Committee were asked to approve the details, and commence the consultation at their meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009. A number of options were set out within the consultation, all relating to the future delivery of services to primary aged children with specific language impairments. The consultation was sent out to all parents of pupils within all Primary and Early Years establishments for their comments, as well as to members of the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee, school staff, parent councils and the appropriate Trade Unions.
- 4.6 The options presented for consideration were:
- Option 1:** Status Quo – no change to the current unit
  - Option 2:** All children referred to the Unit should attend Highlanders Academy
  - Option 3:** Change to unit – provide support at P1 – P3 only
  - Option 4:** Needs met in pupils' mainstream schools with specialist support
- 4.7 The consultation period ended on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009. Response rate was low, and opinion was divided equally between options 1 & 4, with almost no preference expressed for either of options 2 & 3. It was recommended within the Feedback report that Option 4 be pursued, as this was the preferred professional opinion, and in line with the National Priority of Inclusion and Equality, where there is a presumption of mainstreaming wherever practical.
- 4.8 The matter was further referred to the meeting of Inverclyde Council on 11 June 2009, and at that time, it was agreed that a further report would be submitted to the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee, outlining the results of an evaluation in authorities which have adopted a policy of mainstreaming. It was agreed that a further local consultation would be issued, based on this evaluation.
- 4.9 At the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009, establishment of a working party was proposed, to consider strategic options for provision covered by the SALU. It was noted that this Working Group would comprise Elected Members, Authority Officers, Head Teacher, Educational Psychologist, Speech & Language therapist, Professional Association Member and Parents. This proposal was approved by the Committee.
- 4.10 There was one response to this local consultation, from a Parent involved both in the SALU and also the Working Group. The parent was in support of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Option (see Section 4.6) on the proviso that
- “Intensity of early intervention entails more than 5 hours per week spent currently in the base per child... I am relieved that the LEA will look at the individual child's needs and pace in regards to further support is required.”*

- 4.11 The Working Group have met on a number of occasions and, at their meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010, it was agreed that all parties were happy to support Option 3, from the original consultation exercise, which would result in “A Base offering support through Primary 1 – Primary 3”.
- 4.12 In addition to this it has also been agreed that support be made available beyond Primary 3 where this is assessed to be necessary in the case of individual children.
- 4.13 The benefits of this option was outlined and supported by the Council’s Principal Psychologist, Speech & Language Therapist, the Quality Improvement Officer (Inclusion) and the Acting Head of Service for Educational Planning & Culture.
- 4.14 As outlined, a commitment had been made to conduct a further consultation, the results of which would help to inform the ongoing actions of the Working Group. Consultation period ended on 18<sup>th</sup> June, and only 1 parental response was received.
- 4.15 As such, the Working Group will continue to implement Option 3, as articulated in Sections 4.6 and 4.10 above.

## 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 **Legal:** The Working Group and Senior Management within Education will liaise with and refer to legal colleagues on any matters which may arise in the implementation of the chosen and approved option

**Finance:** There are no financial implications relating to the adoption of the preferred option.

Financial Implications – One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Financial Implications – Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Personnel:** Staff and Trade Union Representatives are fully involved and aware of the current proposal and the impact of this on affected staff.

**Equalities:** A phased approach to provision, with intensive support in early Primary, with mainstreaming thereafter is in line with the National Priority of Inclusion and Equality, where there is a presumption of mainstreaming wherever practical.

## 6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposal outline above has been put forward to address parental concerns about the previously suggested removal of the SALU, whilst taking on board the professional considerations and advice regarding the best learning options and environments for young pupils requiring support with speech and language.