

Council decide to keep Castlebrae Community High School open



The council has decided the future for Castlebrae Community High School – and it is to stay open.

Following deputations this morning from pupils, education experts, the community council and community activists, the council took a long recess over lunch to discuss what they would do and then another recess...

This is the Capital Coalition motion:-

- 1. Council acknowledges the strong arguments presented in favour of, and against, closing Castlebrae Community High School; and the concerns expressed by the local community and the 'Save the Brae' campaign.*
2. Council rejects officials' recommendations in the report.
3. Council instructs the Director of Children and Families to report to the Education, Children and Families Committee within three months with future options for Castlebrae Community High School including the potential to retain the Castlebrae Community High School building as an Annex of Portobello High School until a new Secondary School in Craigmillar is delivered.
4. Council instructs officers to submit a report regarding the potential establishment of a Commission with appropriate external experts to look at viable options for the use of the proposed Annex.

It appeared from some of the councillor's contributions this morning that there might be a softening of approach. SNP Group Leader, Councillor Steve Cardownie postulated a midway approach which would allow the school building to remain open. He set the hypothetical scene where the site might be used for vocational education and perhaps also some daytime classes, using the building almost as an annexe to Portobello High School who would presumably have been in control of the education of all of the pupils.

Following the recess the motion put forward will allow the school to stay open but recognises that the difficulties of falling rolls has to be addressed.

The Council has set aside funding to kick start the design stages for a new school in the Craigmillar area by 2020, when it is believed the new school will be required.

Education, Children and Families Convener, Paul Godzik, said after the meeting:- "We have gone through a thorough consultation process and we have listened and responded to the community. We are determined to work in co-operation with the community to deliver a better education for pupils, and will now look at further options to do this. In addition, we have today, yet again, reaffirmed our commitment to the new school and we will work towards delivery as quickly as possible."

Responding to the City of Edinburgh Council decision to save Castlebrae Community High School from closure, Sheila Gilmore MP and Kezia Dugdale MSP said:

'Campaigners will be relieved their hard work has paid off. Save the Brae should be congratulated for their tenacity in refusing to back down. Parents and pupils kept up the pressure on the administration despite misleading claims about poor outcomes and educational performance.

'Contrary to some suggestions that few responses were received to the consultation, the community came together to make their views known and were able to show Councillors that the school is an integral part of local community life.

'This outcome is not ideal and some uncertainty remains. Save the Brae campaigners are right to be anxious about what happens next and the Council has a long way to go to regain their faith.

'While a fully functioning secondary school is the best foundation for establishing a new school, campaigners will worry this is a short term reprieve.

'We place our trust in the Capital Coalition to use this time to evaluate all options. Any investigation into all of these options must be thorough and genuine'

'We now need to see what can be done to speed up the start on a new school and build on the welcome commitment to re-energise the regeneration of the area, tackling wider issues of poverty and inequality. A new school is at the heart of that process. As the local Labour representatives we look forward to working with the local community to ensure that their voice is heard in this process.'

There is much community spirit in Craigmillar which has drive the Save the Brae campaign. We have filmed two reports

featuring the campaigners:-