

Midlothian Council recommend closing Glencorse Primary School

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

A primary school with just seven pupils is to close after councillors backed education chief's recommendations.

The closure of Glencorse Primary School had been put to a public consultation by Midlothian Council during the latter part of last year.

And a virtual meeting of the local authority this week was told that only two people attended a public meeting on the closure, held in Beeslack High School, while one member of the public attended a virtual public meeting held via Zoom a few days later.

Fiona Robertson, the council's education head, said that 96 responses to the consultation survey were received in total, with 31 supporting the proposal to close the school and 64 against.

However, she said Education Scotland had backed the council's view that closing Glencorse and moving the children to neighbouring Mauricewood or Roslin Primary Schools would widen their breadth of education.

The decision was opposed by some councillors, with Councillor Kelly Parry criticising the move to close the school during the current crisis.

She said of the decision following the public consultation: "It might be legal and it might have followed the correct process but it does not make it right.

"We are sitting in the middle of a pandemic and we are seriously talking about closing [the children's] school."

Councillor Parry raised concerns about a lack of engagement with parents at the school and the wider community over the decision.

She was backed by fellow councillor Debbi McCall, who said she had been told parents who wanted to enrol their children at Glencorse had been actively discouraged or told they could not.

She said: "It is almost as if there was a by-hell-or-high-water determination to close this school."

The meeting heard that 78 children lived in the catchment for Glencorse but only seven pupils attended and no new primary one intake had been registered since 2017.

Councillor Russell Imrie backed the closure, hitting back at opposition to it by questioning how many of those people objecting "had the option to send their child to Glencorse and chose not to".

The decision to approve recommendations to close Glencorse Primary School was approved by 12 votes to four.

The local MP Owen Thompson told The Edinburgh Reporter ahead of Tuesday's council meeting that he found it odd that the council were 'for some bizarre reason' choosing this time to close a primary school. Mr Thompson told us that the council has cancelled all other meetings other than the one held on

Tuesday to discuss this closure. He said: "This utterly baffles me. I will be pulling together my thoughts and submitting them to The Scottish Government along with the council's recommendation. I can't understand it when people are being asked to socially distance.

"Midlothian is the fastest growing population Scotland as we are continually told by councillors and for some reason they think that closing a school is a good answer to it. To me it abandons communities. They tried to close this school three times when I was a councillor and it was rejected three times. It's frustrating especially the timing of it when they say that they are only dealing with emergency type situations but they can find time for this."

Mr Thompson was previously a councillor in Midlothian and said that a lot of his mailbag is still council-related matters.