
Report to: Council

Date of Meeting: 17 December, 2015

Subject: Education & Social Services - Future Management Arrangements

Report by: Chief Executive

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on developments in shared services since the last meeting of Council in October and to seek members' approval of matters relating to the future management of school education in Clackmannanshire.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- a) notes the work which has been undertaken since 22 October, 2015, in response to Stirling Council's decision to move away from shared services;
- b) notes the externally commissioned paper (Appendix 1 to this report) on strategic options for the future management of school education in Clackmannanshire;
- c) agrees that the Council should pursue the cluster-based management approach going forward;
- d) agrees to establish the post of Chief Education Officer and to recruit to that post in the new year as set out in paragraphs 4.7 & 4.8 of this report;
- e) nominates six members to sit on the Appointments Committee for the chief officer post as set out at paragraph 4.9 of this report;
- f) agrees to vire £150,000 from the education service's projected underspend in 2015-16 to fund the recruitment process for the chief education officer, to resource any future externally commissioned work which may be required between now and the chief officer taking up post and any other activities related to arrangements for withdrawing from shared services (the unspent allocation of this overall resource at the end of March 2016 to be carried forward into 2016-17 and earmarked for those same purposes);

- g) agrees to establish an Attainment & Improvement Sub-Committee of the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee as set out at paragraphs 4.14-4.17 of this report
- h) subject to agreeing the above recommendation and noting that the Sub-Committee will be chaired by the Convenor of the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee, nominates three other members to sit on the Sub-Committee as set out at paragraph 4.15 of this report;
- i) notes that proposals for new management arrangements for social services will come forward to Council at a future meeting.

3.0 Background - Update

- 3.1 At its meeting on 22 October, 2015, Council agreed to give notice to Stirling Council of the ending of the current arrangements for education and social services in light of Stirling's decision to withdraw from shared services.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive wrote to the Chief Executive of Stirling Council on 22 October and acknowledgement of that letter was received on 3 November, together with notice from Stirling Council of its intention to withdraw from shared services as at 31 March, 2017.
- 3.3 The two Chief Executives had a meeting on 26 October, 2015, and began discussions about progressing the managed withdrawal of shared services. It was agreed at that meeting that a jointly agreed baseline position of the extent of shared services was required and the chief officers for social services and education are taking that forward.
- 3.4 As well as confirming those posts which are formally part of the shared services (i.e. which are co-funded) and the extent of integration, the chief officers are also outlining where there exist informal arrangements which are not reflected in the financial arrangements.
- 3.5 Preliminary assessments suggest the following summary baseline position of formally shared posts:

Education

- Shared posts are predominantly management and central teams
- 25 fte shared posts (19 employed by Stirling, 6 employed by Clackmannanshire)
- Almost all senior management (ex schools) employed by Stirling

Social Services

- Shared posts predominantly senior management of service, adult care management at team leader level and the Strategy & Partnership section
- 44 fte shared posts (36 employed by Clackmannanshire, 8 by Stirling)

- All senior management employed by Clackmannanshire.
- 3.6 This balance of staffing reflects the strategic approach the councils adopted for shared services where each organisation was the lead authority for a particular service. Most of the jointly funded staff work in equal part across both authorities although there also is a small number of individuals who while employed by one authority work predominantly in the other (further to the joint commitment in 2014 to deeper integration).
- 3.7 This presents a somewhat unique situation: as things stand, and in the absence of any alternative agreed proposals, most staff who work equally across both authorities would likely default to their employing authority once shared services cease as that is the legal basis of their employment.
- 3.8 In that context, given that Clackmannanshire is the lead authority for social services and employs all of the senior management of that service, initial priority has been given to consideration of the future management of the education service, with a particular focus at this stage on school education.

4.0 Considerations - Education Service - School Education

Strategic Management Options

- 4.1 Immediately following the announcement by Stirling Council that it intended to withdraw from shared services, the Chief Executive commissioned external support to undertake a study of how the education service might be managed in the future.
- 4.2 An initial paper was produced which set out four strategic options, summarised as follows:
- i) *traditional model* - this would be similar to the current management model where there is a sufficiently large management team to allow the service to be managed from the centre;
 - ii) *cluster-based approach* - this approach would establish the cluster as a significant tier of management, with a smaller team at the centre. Certain responsibilities and powers would be devolved from the centre to the clusters;
 - iii) *charitable trust* - one or more charitable trusts would be established for the management and delivery of school education. A small central team would be retained by the council, mainly to perform client functions. The trust(s) would be largely independent of the council;
 - iv) *out-sourcing options* - the council could outsource the management of its service to an external agency. A small council-controlled central team would be needed, largely to perform client functions.
- 4.3 Further to discussions with the Administration group, options i) and ii) were then more fully worked up. The detail of those options is contained in the paper appended to this report and was also due to be discussed at an all member briefing on 14 December. The appended paper was informed by

discussions with headteachers from all sectors, central education staff, chief officers and members of the Council's political Administration.

- 4.4 Taking into account the pros and cons of the two options set out in the externally commissioned paper, and considering those options in the Council's wider corporate strategic contexts, it is recommended that Council agrees to develop the cluster-based approach to the future management of school education.

Future Leadership

- 4.5 As members will have noted in the appended paper, the cluster-based approach described still requires a chief officer to lead the service overall, as well as a small central team.
- 4.6 It is proposed, therefore, that Council establishes the post of chief education officer and openly recruits to that post in the new year.
- 4.7 The appointee in the first instance would:
- i) develop the cluster-based management approach;
 - ii) begin to take forward that approach in shadow form pending the formal ending of shared education services;
- and would then lead the education service when the shared arrangements with Stirling cease.
- 4.8 An outline timetable for the appointment of Chief Education Officer is set out below:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Task</u>
• 17 December 2015	Council authority to appoint
• Early January 2016	Advertise for chief education officer
• Third week January 2016	Closing Date for applications
• Second week in February 2016	Assessment centre
• End February 2016	Appointments Committee
• End May 2016	Chief officer takes up post

- 4.9 As this is a chief officer post, the appointment would be by a committee of Council which, as per Council policy, would have the following political balance:
- SNP - 3 members
 - Labour - 2 members
 - Other - 1 member.

- 4.10 Council is, therefore, invited to nominate six of its members to sit on the Appointments Committee on that basis.
- 4.11 Elected members will note that the appended paper states that there are various structural options within a cluster-based approach. Concurrently with the process of recruiting the chief education officer, therefore, further engagement will take place on the detail of the future structure within the overall cluster model.

Other Matters - Attainment & Improvement

- 4.12 As members will be aware, Clackmannanshire Council is part of Phase 1 of the Scottish Attainment Challenge initiative which targets improvements in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and is focused on primary schools. Clackmannanshire is one of seven local authorities receiving a share of the £100m funding allocated to drive forward these improvements over 4 years; £718,000 has been allocated to this Council for 2015-16.
- 4.13 An officer Attainment Challenge Team has been established to lead the Scottish Attainment Challenge in Clackmannanshire and an Attainment Challenge Management Group has been established to oversee and monitor its work.
- 4.14 In order to enable focused elected member scrutiny of the implementation of the Attainment Challenge, as well as other matters related to attainment and school improvement, it is recommended that a sub-committee of the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee is established. The sub-committee would be called the Attainment & Improvement Sub-Committee and its remit would be to:
- a) monitor the implementation of the Attainment Challenge programme in Clackmannanshire;
 - b) review the effectiveness of the funded activities in meeting the desired outcomes of the Attainment Challenge;
 - c) review the effectiveness of improvement plans of educational establishments;
 - d) make recommendations to the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee on any matters within this remit.
- 4.15 It is proposed that the Attainment & Improvement Sub-Committee would have four members drawn from the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee as follows:
- SNP - 2 members (one of which is the Convenor of the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee)
 - Labour - 2 members

- 4.16 The sub-committee would be chaired by the Convenor of the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee. The sub-committee's quorum would be two.
- 4.17 It is proposed that the sub-committee would meet 2-3 weeks in advance of each full meeting of the Education, Sport & Leisure Committee.

5.0 Considerations - Social Services

- 5.1 With the ceasing of shared services, the Council will also be required to establish a new management structure for social services.
- 5.2 This is currently under preliminary consideration with regards to the following contexts:
- the adoption of the health and care integration (HSCI) scheme and the appointment of the HSCI chief officer for Clackmannanshire & Stirling;
 - the transfer of community justice services back to the Council and the new strategic responsibility the Clackmannanshire Alliance will have for community justice;
 - (as with the education service) the Council's wider strategic corporate contexts of *Making Clackmannanshire Better* and future budget decisions.
- 5.3 In respect of health and care integration, the Integration Joint Board (IJB) has anticipated that the HSCI chief officer will likely at a future (as yet unspecified) point assume responsibility for the direct management of adult care services. There will remain, however, a need for the Council to retain a chief social work officer (CSWO) and to have recourse to advice on adult care matters independent of the IJB. The CSWO will also have responsibility for child care and community justice.
- 5.4 Existing community justice services are due to transfer from the Community Justice Authority back to local councils as of April, 2017, and local community planning partnerships will have new strategic responsibilities for community justice.
- 5.5 It is not anticipated that the new social services arrangements will wholly mirror existing arrangements as the scale of Clackmannanshire-only operations offers opportunities for more tailored local approaches.
- 5.6 A report to Council will come forward in due course with proposals for future arrangements for social services, as well as any proposals for changes in the wider corporate management arrangements further to the decision on shared services and forthcoming budget decisions.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Progress has been made in since late October in considering and developing new arrangements for Clackmannanshire's education and social services.

- 6.2 Briefing sessions for senior education and social services employees of Clackmannanshire have been led by the Chief Executive, Leader and Convenor; focus groups of headteachers have taken place to inform the thinking on future education management arrangements.
- 6.3 Positivity, commitment and good will have been expressed by staff at all these forums which provides a very encouraging basis for moving forward. While much remains to be done to put in place new arrangements by the end of March 2017, a useful start has been made.

7.0 Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 N/A

8.0 Resource Implications

Financial Details

- 8.1 There are budget implications arising from this report. There is no budget for the post of chief education officer or to commission any further external support for work in connection with arrangements after shared services or to undertake any activities related to withdrawing from shared services.
- 8.2 It is proposed, therefore, that £150,000 is vired from the education service's projected underspend in 2015-16 to fund the recruitment process for the chief education officer, to resource any future externally commissioned work which may be required between now and the chief officer taking up post and to fund any other activities related to arrangements for withdrawing from shared services. It is proposed that the unspent allocation of this overall resource at the end of March 2016 is carried forward into 2016-17 and ear-marked for these same purposes.
- 8.3 The costs of the chief education officer and potentially other management positions will likely also require to be included in the 2016-17 budget as a demand pressure to cover the shadow period.
- 8.4 The Council currently transfers around £538,000 to Stirling Council for the shared education service and once the shared arrangements cease, that resource will return to this Council to fund its own services. This is a gross figure - this Council receives around £240,000 from Stirling for shared posts.
- 8.5 A business case on secondary school staffing has identified that the number of promoted posts in secondary schools in Clackmannanshire is higher than other local authorities to the equivalent value of £260,000 (costs per pupil at secondary level in Clackmannanshire are the eighth highest in Scotland.) This suggests there is some capacity in the secondary sector which could be utilised for any new arrangements.
- 8.6 There is not yet sufficient information overall around staffing to provide firm advice on the net impact of ceasing shared services and moving to new arrangements. Further reports will be submitted to Council as the process of

withdrawing from shared services and developing the proposed new arrangements progress.

Staffing

- 8.7 This report proposes the establishment of a chief officer post which requires Council approval.
- 8.8 The report proposes new strategic management arrangements focused on the school education service. While currently part of the education service, youth, sports and adult education services are not incorporated in the appended paper. This is to allow a focus directly on school management and does not at this stage imply anything about the future arrangements for these other services.

9.0 Exempt Reports

- 9.1 Is this report exempt? No

10.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

- (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box)

The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

11.0 Equalities Impact

- 11.1 N/A

12.0 Legality

- 12.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

13.0 Appendices

Options for the Future Management of School Education in Clackmannanshire

14.0 Background Papers

Options for the Future Management of School Education in Clackmannanshire, Interim Report

author(s)

NAME	DESIGNATION	TEL NO / EXTENSION
Elaine McPherson	Chief Executive	

**Options for the Future Management of School Education in
Clackmannanshire**

Report of a consultancy undertaken by Keir Bloomer

1. Background

The fundamental statutory responsibility placed on local authorities in relation to school education is set out in Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 where it is stated that "it shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education". It is important to note that there is no requirement that councils *provide* school education, merely that they should *ensure* that provision is made. Since December 2010 Clackmannanshire has met its obligations by means of what is usually described as a 'shared service' arrangement with Stirling Council.

This description is open to question. The service in schools has been provided by staff employed by Clackmannanshire Council who have been managed by a senior team employed by Stirling. Thus, so far as young people and their families are concerned, they have continued to receive a service provided by Clackmannanshire staff in Clackmannanshire premises. Senior management, however, has been provided almost entirely by staff employed by Stirling Council. There is no significant element of 'sharing' either of management or of service delivery. It would be more accurate to say that, over the past five years or so, Clackmannanshire Council has outsourced the management of its service to Stirling Council.

Stirling Council decided in October to bring the current arrangements to an end. Clackmannanshire, therefore, has to determine how it would wish to see school education in its area managed in the future. It will also wish to decide whether to hold to the terms of the agreement with Stirling and continue the present arrangements until March 2017 or seek to agree an earlier date from which new ones will come into operation.

2. Remit

I was approached by the Chief Executive in early October and asked to undertake a study of how the management of the school education service could be undertaken after the 'shared service' is dismantled.

Following discussions with the Chief Executive and with the Leader of the Council and the Education Convenor, I understood my remit as being to bring forward a number of possible options for the consideration, firstly of the Administration and subsequently of the council as a whole. I also understood that, although the main focus of these options was to be the future

management of the education service, I was free to bring forward options that would have implications for the running of other council services.

3. The educational context

Over the twenty years since the council last established an education service, thinking in relation to the management of schools and to the processes of bringing about improvement and increasing effectiveness has undergone significant change. Some of these issues are explored in more detail later in this paper. However, the more important features can perhaps be summarised as follows:

- Greater importance is now attached to collaboration among council services and with external partners. Mechanisms to promote collaborative working, such as community planning, have assumed increased significance.
- Schools have come to be seen as having important roles in relation to broader public priorities such as promoting equity and combating disadvantage.
- International research suggests that school systems with higher degrees of autonomy at school level perform better than more highly centralised systems.
- Quality improvement has become increasingly reliant on self-evaluation by schools followed by improvement measures undertaken jointly by schools, the Council and external agencies. External inspection, however, remains an important aspect of the system's quality assurance mechanisms.
- Much of the expertise needed to secure improvement and raise standards lies in schools. Therefore, collaboration among schools has come to be seen as an essential element in supporting school improvement.
- Greater emphasis has been placed on the continuity of education and on facilitating effective transition from one stage of education to the next. School 'clusters' have assumed increasing prominence.
- Local authorities' capacity to support innovation and school improvement has steadily diminished. At the same time, the strategic direction of the system has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of national government.

At the same time, a clear but complex policy agenda has been put in place. The key features are as follows:

- Broad objectives for Scottish education have been set by *Curriculum for Excellence*. These are ambitious, requiring schools to do much more than convey knowledge and basic skills. The extensive agenda of *Curriculum for Excellence* imposes on Directors of Education and other senior figures the responsibility of assisting schools to take on successfully a wide range of new activities.

- Over the past year the Scottish Government has made significant changes to the priorities that councils and schools must pursue. Greatly increased emphasis has been placed on raising attainment for all and narrowing the gap in attainment between poorer and more affluent young people.
- Vocational education, preparation for work and sustainable positive destinations for school leavers have emerged as priorities. The agenda set by *Developing Scotland's Young Workforce* will increasingly influence school education, especially in the senior phase of secondary schooling.

These trends in thinking about processes of change and improvement have important implications for the way in which services should be managed. At the same time, the imperatives of national policy largely prescribe the educational objectives councils have to pursue and the nature of the support that schools will require. In particular:

- Schools must continue to be supported in implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Emphasis must be placed on raising standards of pupil attainment and achievement and on narrowing the gap in performance between disadvantaged and other young people.
- This will require the senior team to possess expertise in school improvement. The team will need to be able constructively to challenge schools on their performance and to give access to sound advice and support in raising standards.
- There will need to be mechanisms that will assist schools in collaborating with each other and a wide range of partners. The centre will need to promote the sharing of expertise and good practice.
- The senior team will require to have the expertise to build leadership capacity at school and cluster levels. Sufficient resources will need to be available for professional development.
- The team will need wide knowledge of approaches that have been successful elsewhere. They will be required to bring new ideas and impart to the schools a willingness for radical change and carefully considered risk-taking.

The importance of these points cannot be exaggerated. Senior management within local authorities must be capable of assisting the process of school improvement, raising standards of attainment and enhancing the life chances of all young people or it will be judged as having no purpose or value.

A further factor that requires to be taken into consideration is that Clackmannanshire is the smallest mainland authority. This brings both problems and opportunities. On the one hand, it is certainly difficult for the council to assemble the capacity for management and strategic direction that a large and complex service such as education requires. On the other, lines of communication are short. Close collaboration between service management and schools is thus made easier than in larger and geographically more dispersed council areas. It is important that options for

future structures should try to minimise the problems of diseconomies of scale and maximise the advantages of compactness and easy communication.

An important consequence of the small scale of operation is that the senior team will need the knowledge to help schools access external sources of support and expertise. Thus, the senior team will need to be both a provider of advice and support and a broker giving access to expertise possessed by others. This suggests a requirement for a modest research and intelligence function.

Finally – and despite the emphasis placed above on improvement and raising standards – it has to be remembered that local authorities have to fulfill a range of statutory duties and provide schools with a wide array of support functions. These range from duties with great educational significance such as meeting the requirements of young people with additional support needs to more routine tasks including providing school catering, processing placing requests, recruiting staff, purchasing supplies and many more. Some of these functions will be under the control of education senior management while others will be provided by other services of the council. Sufficient resources need to be made available for these tasks.

4. Overview of possible management models

At an early stage of the consultancy, I identified four management models that could potentially meet the requirements set out in the previous section. The table below gives a very brief general description of the four models and some indication of the range of options each could support.

Traditional model	This model would involve establishing a sufficiently large management team to allow the service to be managed effectively from the centre. Account would have to be taken of the increased emphasis on raising standards and school improvement. It would, however, be possible to devolve certain functions to school or cluster level.
Cluster-based approach	This approach would require the establishment of the cluster as a significant tier of management. The team at the centre could be smaller but greater capacity would be required at cluster level. Significant responsibilities and powers would be devolved from the centre. Such an approach could be readily combined with initiatives to develop schools as community hubs. A variety of options could be developed for the management structure and functions of the clusters. The model would empower schools and promote local initiative.
Charitable trust model	One or more charitable trusts would be established for the management and delivery of school education. The trusts could also be involved in other services such as leisure and libraries. A small central team would be retained by the council, mainly to perform client functions. The trust(s) would be largely independent of the council and would give scope for significant community

	empowerment. Again, several options within the framework of trust governance could be developed.
Outsourcing options	The council could outsource the management of its service to an external agency. This model would resemble the arrangements that have been in place over the last five years. However, freed from the language of 'shared services', responsibilities could be more clearly defined. There are widely differing options for external partner, including universities, charities and the private sector. Again a small council-controlled central team would be needed, largely to perform client functions.

Following political guidance, the number of models to be further developed was reduced to two; the traditional model and the cluster-based approach. These are explored in greater detail in sections 6 and 7. In each case, an assessment is made of the ability of the model to meet contemporary requirements as set out in section 3 above.

5. Educational management – some preliminary considerations

Historical context

School education in Scotland has traditionally been managed at three levels: national, local authority (previously, parish school board) and school. Over time, the responsibilities of each level have changed and there has been a shift in the balance of power among them.

Traditionally, schools have enjoyed great autonomy in relation to *inter alia* the organisation of classes, teaching methods and materials, relationships with parents and the curriculum. Parents have seen the school as directly responsible for almost all of the decisions of interest to them. The headteacher has generally been seen as the most significant authority figure in the system. For the most part, parents have valued relatively easy access to a known person who could take decisions of importance to them. Parents' perceptions of the duties and powers of the two other levels have been less clear.

In recent decades, the autonomy of schools has been eroded in some respects by an increased emphasis on policy making at the level of the local authority and, to an even greater extent, national government. Initiatives such as *Curriculum for Excellence* (and other programmes before it) have set school management of the curriculum within a broader policy context. The emphasis on school self-evaluation, although in theory an empowering concept, has established a national template of what constitutes good practice to which schools generally feel a need to conform.

On the other hand, schools have been given some measure of control over their budgets through Devolved School Management schemes. Their ability to move significant sums of money between budget headings, however, remains limited. Greater powers have been devolved in relation to staffing.

The time when all appointments were made centrally has now long gone. In relation to the curriculum, the rhetoric of *Curriculum for Excellence* stresses professional discretion and freedom to initiate but aspects of the implementation programme such as the division of the educational experience into distinct *phases* have imposed increased rigidity. Overall, is open to question whether policy constraints have loosened or tightened.

Councils have the major statutory responsibilities for the delivery of school education. They are obliged to ensure the availability of good quality education for every child whose parents choose to use the council service. Other responsibilities cover a very wide range of functions from the highly strategic to the decidedly mundane. There can be little doubt, however, that council management of education services has been significantly weakened over recent decades. The reorganisation of 1996 created a larger number of smaller authorities with reduced capacity that has been further weakened over the past few years by financial constraints. At the same time, the reach of central government policy making has extended to the point where high-level strategy is effectively a government monopoly.

Leadership of the service

It is vital that the new service should be led effectively and creatively. It will, therefore, require a lead officer of appropriate calibre. The title, salary and responsibilities of the post will need to be determined in the light of the management structure of the Council as a whole. However, for the purposes of this report, the post is referred to as 'Chief Education Officer'.

So far as possible, the salary for the post should be set at a level sufficient to make it attractive to anyone working in schools. Given the small size of the Council, and the level of existing senior manager salaries, this may require some ingenuity. One possibility might be to set a minimum level but indicate a willingness to meet or exceed existing salary in the case of an exceptional candidate.

Given the likelihood of some more general reorganisation of service management within the Council, it will be important to make clear in the job description the possibility that the responsibilities of the post may be extended in the future to include management of other services in addition to education. The job description should also make clear the Council's expectations in relation to the ethos that the Chief Education Officer should establish in the service (see below).

The service requires to have two senior leadership posts. It is important that there are clear arrangements for somebody to deputise for the Chief Education Officer. This will require both a senior status and a whole-service as opposed to a purely school perspective. In addition, and perhaps of even greater significance, well-considered leadership depends on open-minded discussion and a variety of contributions. Whilst much of this can be contributed by headteachers and other staff, the significance of dialogue at the highest levels of the service should not be underestimated.

Later sections of this report set out the format and potential strengths and weaknesses of two management models. Regardless of which approach the Council favours, it is strongly suggested that the service should be led by a small team consisting of a Chief Education Officer and a Depute.

A further issue is the creation of an administrative apparatus to support management. The joint service arrangements did not involve integration of support staff. Administrative functions relating to Clackmannanshire Council functions continued to be carried out by Clackmannanshire staff. While there is a need to investigate this issue in greater detail than has been possible on the basis of the information so far provided, any extra staffing requirements should be very small. All of these considerations apply both to the traditional and the cluster-based models.

Ethos

The remit of this consultancy relates to management structures and arrangements. These are important but another less tangible factor is even more significant. Every service has a distinctive ethos, partly derived from the culture of the Council itself but largely created by the behaviours of people within the service.

The setting up of a new service and the appointment of a new senior team thus offers an opportunity to create a culture of optimism, collaboration, collegiality and empowerment. It will not happen by accident but needs to be consciously cultivated from the outset.

A positive ethos is built on valuing and respecting staff. Staff need to feel empowered and enabled to collaborate with each other. Recent thinking on school improvement and raising standards – not least the experience of the London Challenge – makes such an ethos even more essential. A command and control approach is counter-productive. Success depends on liberating the commitment and creative energy of every member of staff. This is not to deny the importance of policy and guidance but to set the framework within which an empowered workforce must operate.

Whatever structure is adopted, it is vital that the Chief Education Officer sees all staff as colleagues and, in particular, works with headteachers in a collegiate manner. The same, of course, applies at every level in the service. Empowering headteachers does not automatically lead to empowering staff. The same considerations of respect and collegiality that are important at the level of the service as a whole must operate within schools and other branches of the service. And, indeed, within every classroom.

It is also vital - perhaps particularly so for a small service such as Clackmannanshire's - that the ethos should be outward looking. Most of the expertise needed to take on the challenges of the current policy agenda lies in schools. But it does not lie in any single school, nor even necessarily in any

Clackmannanshire school. Therefore, structures have to facilitate collaboration and leaders have to encourage it.

Finally, the ethos needs to be simultaneously supportive and challenging. It should be an important aim of the new senior management to establish the reputation of Clackmannanshire as a place where staff are expected and helped to develop. Even more importantly, senior management must establish a service where the interests of learners come first and where every year is marked by improvement.

6. The traditional model

The management structures of Scottish education services vary but there is a significant degree of similarity in that all rely on a team of senior managers operating at level that is above that of schools and other branches of the service. This team functions from a central location and has responsibilities that are clearly distinct from those of headteachers and other school-based staff. There is an assumption – usually unstated – that any powers not explicitly delegated to school level are retained at the centre.

Under this management model, the central team fulfils six important functions:

1. It provides a channel whereby all parts of the service are made accountable to the Council. Headteachers and others are responsible to the most senior central manager – usually called the Director of Education – and the Director of Education in turn is responsible to the Council.
2. The central team contributes to the corporate working of the Council and represents the education service at the corporate centre. It facilitates the contribution that other services such as finance, HR and legal services, make to the operation of schools and other parts of the education service.
3. The central team represents the service at a national level and is responsible for interaction with government, national agencies and others.
4. It ensures that the Council fulfils its statutory obligations in relation to education and provides (or collaborates with other Council services to provide) a range of services to schools, parents and others.
5. The central team advises the Council on educational matters. It provides strategic direction to schools. It also provides support and advice and gives access to other sources of support.
6. It manages specialist support services such as the Educational Psychologist and Quality Improvement services.

Whilst this list does not exhaust the functions of senior management, it does illustrate the significance and centrality of their activities. The senior team has to have the capacity to carry out these functions at the same time as remaining in close communication with schools.

Some aspects of the role of the central team vary according to the size of the service. It is, for example, clearly a larger task to provide support to 200 schools than to 20. On the other hand, Clackmannanshire's statutory responsibilities are the same as those of Glasgow or Edinburgh. The same functions require to be carried out and the same forms of accountability apply. The requirement to develop policies is the same for both (although the task of implementation increases with scale of operation). Small Councils are thus affected by significant diseconomies of scale that have an impact on the capacity of central management (although not on management at school level).

Small Councils have thus had to engage several very senior staff (although at lower salary levels than in large authorities), a team concerned with supporting and advising schools and a number of senior managers and administrative staff. Over recent years, this model has had to be slimmed down as a result of financial constraints but it has not been fundamentally altered. It remains a command and control approach that has adapted only to a limited extent to the changing context described above. On the other hand, it is a tested method of working that has a strong track record of working in authorities of all sizes and circumstances. For this reason, the Council would need to be confident that any alternative approach offered worthwhile advantages before deciding to depart from the norm.

Were the council to opt for the traditional approach, it would need to ensure that the central team had the capacity to give effective assistance to schools to take forward *Curriculum for Excellence*, raise standards of attainment and narrow the gap. At the same time, building capacity within schools and encouraging collaboration between them would also be essential and would be dependent on support from the centre. This would require an impressive level of expertise at the centre although not necessarily a large group of people. In other words, given the way in which the essential function of the local authority in relation to school education is shifting from administration and operational management to strategic leadership, the key figures in the central team would need to be of a calibre capable of undertaking their roles in the way that contemporary circumstances require.

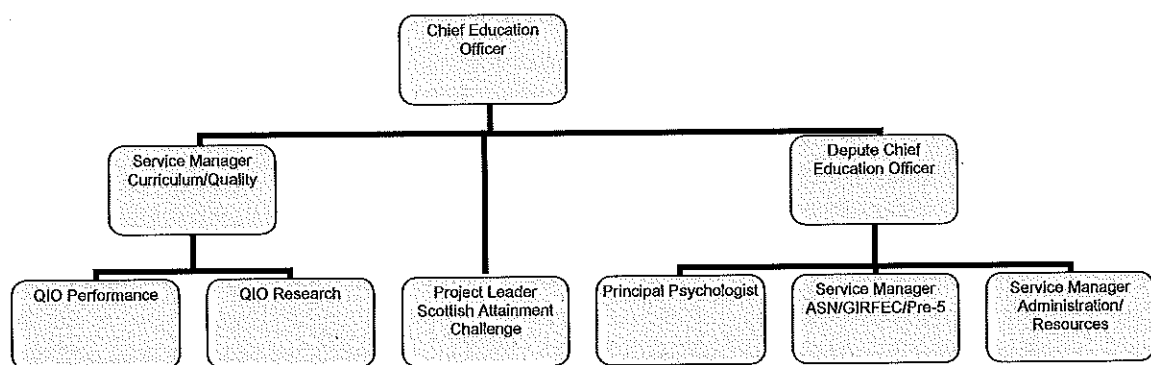
Of course, the traditional model is not incompatible with an increased measure of delegation of powers and responsibilities to school level. For example, the council's scheme of devolved school management could be revised in ways that would give schools increased discretion in relation to matters such as staffing standards. It would, however, be very difficult, if not impossible, within the traditional model to increase the management capacity of small schools. As the policy agenda becomes more complex and demanding, this is likely to limit their capacity to collaborate with other schools and partners, to pursue effectively the full agenda of *Curriculum for*

Excellence or to take the action needed to raise standards while closing the gap.

The current central management structure of the shared service consists of 17 professional staff, excluding clerical and administrative support. These comprise the Director, three Heads of Service, seven Service Managers and six Quality Improvement Officers. There are, in addition, two management posts in the Psychological service and seven less senior managers and project officers.

The total cost of the more senior group is £1.3m of which Clackmannanshire's share is £510k. (The additional group adds £490k and £200k respectively). This share of the total senior group is sufficient to finance around seven posts (although the exact number would be dependent on decisions in relation to the salary levels).

The following table sets out a minimal senior management structure. This consists of nine posts, including a Principal Psychologist included in the additional list above and a Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) project leader paid for by the Scottish Government. It would cost approximately £100+k more than Clackmannanshire's current contribution to the shared service.



Bringing costs within the current level of expenditure would involve the deletion of one post and other adjustments. This would further weaken the Council's capacity to support improvement and attainment and would appear an unwise option.

The suggested senior management structure has a number of potential strengths:

- It allows for the appointment of a Chief Education Officer at a reasonably senior level
- There is a second senior post
- There is provision for expertise in relation to ASN and related areas
- The SAC is integrated into the central apparatus

On the other hand, the resource available for advising and supporting schools is small. It is intended that the Chief Education Officer would have direct responsibility for school improvement and raising attainment. However, this would involve only a relatively small part of the Chief Education Officer's

working week. He/she would be supported by a single third tier post with an extensive remit including curriculum, pedagogy, CPD and responsibility for a minimal team of two Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs). The QIOs would be expected to maintain a close knowledge of the schools, to have charge of performance data and to possess the knowledge necessary to provide a kind of brokerage function, locating and putting schools in touch with sources of support and advice outwith the Council as well as supporting internal collaborations. This would be a very demanding role.

Of course, the Council could decide to invest more in its central management structure. It could, for example, pursue an option developed by the shared service management to reduce teacher staffing levels in secondary schools to a level more consistent with much of the rest of Scotland and reorganise and reduce teacher input into nurseries. While this would bring a financial penalty from the Scottish Government, it would yield a net saving of around £280k. This would finance an expansion of about four - five posts in the central team at a cost of around 15 school-based posts. It seems unlikely that this would be perceived as a good bargain either by schools or by the public at large.

In conclusion, it is perfectly possible for Clackmannanshire to establish a workable management structure of a traditional type. Doing so will involve the expenditure of at least £100k over and above the cost of the current commitment to the shared service. At a time of serious financial constraint, this will be unwelcome. However, the scale of additional expenditure is not large. The resulting structure will be modest but larger than those operating to an apparently satisfactory level in the Island authority areas.

7. The cluster-based approach

The Context

Recent years have seen a growth in interest in the notion of the "cluster" of schools, operating to some degree as a unit. The cluster is sometimes seen as the group of primary schools associated with a single secondary school but more often as a cross-sector grouping involving a secondary, the associated primaries and any other schools (such as special schools or free-standing nursery schools) in the area.

The cluster is seen as having a role in promoting coherence and continuity from pre-school until the end of secondary. Clusters are often given responsibility for easing processes of transition, particularly from primary to secondary, but also from the pre-school sector into P1. By promoting closer working among schools, clusters are expected to improve arrangements for the transfer of pupil information and thus improve pastoral care. Clusters can have a role in curriculum planning, creating some degree of commonality of approach among the primary schools and establishing a common baseline for pupils entering S1. Some clusters have developed projects that span P7 and S1, thus creating a degree of curricular continuity.

Cluster groupings offer opportunities for sharing expertise, particularly among the primary schools. Given the emerging consensus on the importance of inter-school collaboration as a tool for school improvement, this is potentially an important function. It must be recognised, however, that it does not serve the needs of collaboration within the secondary sector.

Many education authorities have arrangements whereby headteachers meet regularly on a cluster basis. Sometimes other groups of staff may meet for particular purposes. Clusters may share staff for reasons such as specialist subject provision in primary schools, liaison with parents or coordinating initiatives in literacy and numeracy. Arrangements of this latter kind are a feature of some initiatives within the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

A separate development, mainly in rural areas, has been the growth of "shared headships" in which a single headteacher takes charge of more than one school. The motivation has often been to make savings while keeping open a school that might be threatened with closure. Shared headships may also been seen as a step towards a form of cluster management.

No authority has yet sought to make the cluster its basic unit of management although, at an early stage in its history, South Lanarkshire went some distance in this direction before being required to make savings that put the process into reverse. Nevertheless, the establishment of formal cluster structures can be seen as the logical end point of the current trend towards promoting joint planning and activity among the group of related schools.

Cluster-level management arrangements could, in principle, take any of a wide range of forms. At one end of the spectrum, the cluster could be managed as a unified entity - in effect, a super-school - with a single head teacher and joint management team. At the other end of the spectrum is a variety of federal arrangements with defined responsibilities being attached to the "federation" and to the individual school units.

A cluster-based approach potentially contrasts positively within an intrinsic feature of the traditional model. In that model the respective responsibilities of the centre and the school are sharply demarcated and do not overlap. All the policy making responsibilities are concentrated in the centre. The school has discretion mainly in relation to operational decisions. Furthermore, there is a prevalent assumption that, if it is not clear where decision-making power lies, it is for the centre to decide. All this may make for clarity but it also tends to create a degree of alienation; the development of a sense of "us and them". School-level management does not necessarily feel commitment to decisions made centrally. There is a risk of some antagonism emerging and of a blame culture becoming established.

A major potential benefit of a cluster-based approach to management, therefore, is that managerial responsibility will be more genuinely shared between the centre and the school. Decisions will be informed by an understanding both of the school context and of the external constraints - in terms of finance and policy - within which the system must operate.

There is a further benefit that is of a highly pragmatic character. Emerging from a recent Audit Scotland review, the current shared service senior management team has established that the management structure of Clackmannanshire secondary schools is among the most expensive in Scotland. About 10% extra is currently spent beyond the Scottish average, without any apparent benefit in terms of performance. If this additional resource were kept in place, it would be possible for clusters to make a significant input into the overall management of the system without an adverse impact at school level. In this context it is worth recalling that the entire senior management structure of the joint service amounts to approximately 25 FTE (of which perhaps 9 can be attributed to Clackmannanshire), while more than 120 senior personnel in Clackmannanshire schools hold posts with some degree of management responsibility.

The cluster-based approach thus offers the possibility of integrating school and system management in a positive way that would encourage collegiate behaviour and bring together the perspectives of the school context and of more strategic system-level considerations.

Management at cluster level

Clackmannanshire clearly comprises three school clusters, centred on the three secondary schools. The membership of each cluster consists of the secondary school, the associated primary schools and any pre-5 establishments in the area. The issue of those schools and services dealing with pupils with additional support needs is more complex. Such schools and services obviously serve the whole of Clackmannanshire. While they might benefit from the collegiality of a cluster, they will need to continue to collaborate with schools in all parts of the Council's area. On balance, therefore, it would seem more appropriate to exclude them from any cluster-based management arrangements. Instead, they should link to a senior member of the central staff. The headteachers would have the right to attend cluster meetings as appropriate.

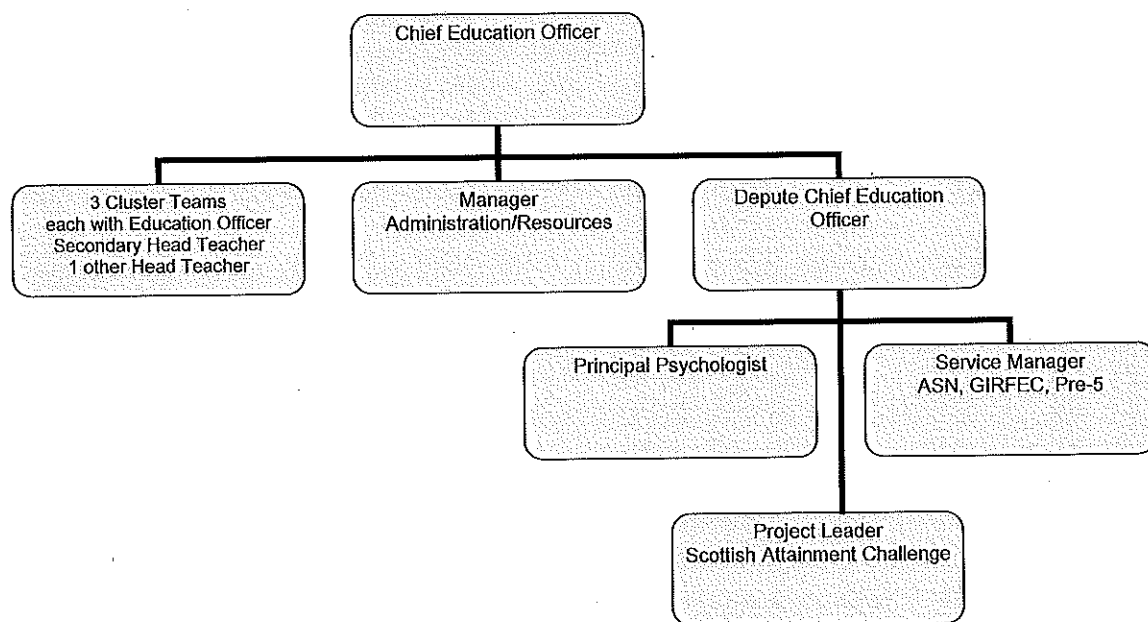
As indicated above, there is a very wide range of possibilities for establishing a significant tier of management at cluster level. In reaching a preferred view, it is necessary to strike a balance between, on the one hand, imposing solutions that may appear logical but would be likely to cause strong opposition and be difficult to implement and, on the other, failing to create a management structure that would be effective and purposeful. The following paragraphs describe a model that is by no means the only possible option but is one that has a good prospect of being found acceptable by senior management, school staff, parents and other stakeholders.

It is suggested that each cluster should have a senior management team consisting of three people; an education officer financed from the resource made available centrally by the termination of the joint arrangements with Stirling, the headteacher of the secondary school and one other headteacher,

appointed from among the group of cluster heads. This team would have significant decision-making responsibilities in relation to the cluster. Its three members would be of equal status, with decisions being made by consensus. In the event of deadlock, the Chief Education Officer would have the right to determine the outcome.

The following table sets out the suggested management structure. The central team is smaller than under the traditional model. Its costs could be sustained within the sum available as a consequence of the termination of the joint service. There would, however, be costs at cluster level to be taken into account. These would mainly relate to the three education officer posts (one per cluster) but there would also be relatively modest costs as a result of small increases in salary for those headteachers involved in the cluster level management and in strengthening support in the schools of the non-secondary headteacher cluster managers.

Overall, the cost of the cluster-based approach will be approximately the same as that of the traditional model. However, it would have the benefit of creating a structure much better attuned to the needs of the contemporary educational agenda. In particular, it would offer much enhanced support for school improvement and raising standards of attainment.



The three members of the cluster team would also all be members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the service, along with the Chief Education Officer and his/her depute. This SMT would meet on a regular basis, thus involving the cluster managers closely in the strategic management of the service as a whole. All members of the SMT would carry service-wide functional responsibilities. These could relate to, for example, professional development, *Developing Scotland's Young Workforce*, skills development, the promotion of early language development and so forth.

The question of how the second headteacher would be selected is separate from the issue of the management structure. Several possibilities are

available. It is suggested that the choice be made by inviting expressions of interest from among serving and acting headteachers within the cluster. The appointment would be made following a selection process similar to that currently used for headteachers. The successful candidate, therefore, would normally be a pre-existing member of the cluster but, should this approach not produce a satisfactory outcome, a headteacher could be recruited from one of the other two clusters.

A further separate issue relates to remuneration and support. It is suggested that both headteachers should receive a small salary increase in recognition of the wider responsibilities they would be carrying. In addition, there should be a modest increase in the management capacity of the non-secondary headteacher's school. This might take the form of an addition to the number of promoted posts although probably not the total number of staff.

The cluster would have defined responsibilities. A new Scheme of Delegation would set out the range of functions to be carried out centrally, at cluster level and by schools. The guiding principle would be that each function would be carried out at the most local level consistent with efficiency and coherence.

Thus, though it would be practicable to process placing requests at cluster level, the probability that a number of requests will cross cluster boundaries would indicate that this would be more effectively done at the centre. Conversely, liaison with families is best directed from the school where contact is naturally made and the needs of the individual learner are best understood. Much of the detail of the curriculum is also best decided at school level (or by faculties within secondary schools) but the overall design of the experience from pre-school to the point of transition beyond secondary schooling would be determined at cluster level, subject to a number of service-wide considerations. A general principle should be that control should be delegated from the centre wherever possible and that, to the parent and the learner, management should not seem more remote than at present.

Broader networks

A cluster-based approach would do much to improve communication and collaboration within the primary and pre-5 sectors. Even in these cases, however, it will be important to ensure that nothing is done to artificially limit other networking opportunities. In particular, there should continue to be regular meetings of all headteachers, preferably on a more frequent basis than is currently the case. Informal networks that currently exist across Clackmannanshire and Stirling should continue where the participants find them helpful and there should be nothing to inhibit schools from forming relations with other schools in different parts of the country.

The cluster does not provide networking opportunities within the secondary sector. It will, therefore, be important that the three Clackmannanshire secondary schools continue to act in partnership with each other, in effect constituting a fourth "cluster" of a rather different type. This collaboration will

need to be supported by an infrastructure of meetings, not only of headteachers but also of other groups of staff with interests of common.

Contemporary thinking on school improvement stresses the importance of interschool collaboration. In particular, the experience of the London Challenge, suggests that this is virtually the single most important factor in promoting school improvement. While the cluster has an important part of play in promoting collaboration, wider arrangements are also significant and should be actively developed.

Wider responsibilities

This paper is primarily concerned with the management of education. However, the establishment of a cluster-level tier of management could bring significant benefits in relation to the management of other services and Council activities.

The Council aspires to decentralise important aspects of service delivery to community hubs and to make the facilities at schools, especially secondary schools, as widely available as possible. The implementation of this strategy is closely linked to the development of a long-term estates policy. It appears likely that some primary schools will emerge as community hubs, offering access to a range of public services (not all necessary provided by the Council) while secondary school campuses will be widely used for leisure and other purposes.

Broader use of school premises is readily compatible with the notion of cluster management and, indeed, a broader programme of decentralisation. It is not the purpose of this paper to make specific suggestions in relation to these other issues. However, the Council may wish to see the possible establishment of a cluster-based approach as facilitating later initiatives.

The following sub-section describes a possible model for community governance at a cluster level. The specific proposals are related to the needs of education and it would be necessary to modify them if the responsibilities of clusters were to be expanded. However, the principles are capable of being adapted to fulfill a wider role.

Cluster governance

School education is, in large measure, a local government responsibility. Central Government has had from the outset power to inspect schools and has developed strategic policy functions that have expanded over the years. However, the main channel of democratic accountability lies through Councils.

At school level, Parent Councils exist in some but not all schools. They function mainly as consultative forums providing a channel of communication between school management and the parent body. They are not directly involved in formal governance.

The establishment of a tier of management at cluster level would give the Council an opportunity to review these arrangements if it felt so inclined. It would be possible for the Council to establish in each cluster a Board to which could be delegated stipulated governance functions. Thus, the Board could be given the power to:

- Approve the cluster budget
- Be involved in senior staff appointments
- Consider and comment on school performance information
- Commission from senior management reports on relevant matters
- Make recommendations to Council on matters relating to the running of the cluster

This list is intended as illustrative rather than exhaustive or prescriptive.

The Board could be given responsibilities for ensuring close and productive relationships between schools and communities and vice versa. They would thus have an involvement in community use of school premises, volunteering by school pupils, relations with local businesses and a range of similar activities.

It would be important that Boards were representative of the main stakeholder groups in the community. Parents are the most important of these and all schools would need to have at least one representative. There could be places for senior pupils from the secondary school. Local businesses should be represented, as should teaching and support staff. The Board should have limited powers of cooption. The Council would wish to consider whether local Councillors should be members or, perhaps, have rights of attendance but not for voting.

The establishment of Boards could represent a significant extension of grassroots democracy. Real, if limited, power could be delegated by the Council. Schools could benefit from having access to outside expertise. (This is currently a matter of significant benefit to universities, colleges and independent schools). A Board covering the area of a cluster might be expected to attract a high calibre of participants. This would be in contrast to the experience of individual schools, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, which have found it difficult to attract members for parent councils.

Establishing such Boards is not an intrinsic component of establishing a cluster level tier of management. It is an additional and discretionary element that could be seen as strengthening both the overall approach to educational management and community participation and democracy.

8. Some concluding thoughts

The consultations I have undertaken indicate considerable enthusiasm, for example among headteachers, for a dedicated Clackmannanshire education service. This is a good basis on which to build. However, it means that there

is an expectation that Clackmannanshire Council will take over the management of its schools at an earlier date than 31.3.17. The most logical date might be the start of the new school session in August. It is obviously an empirical question whether such an early transfer of responsibilities is possible. It would clearly require early decisions on a number of matters including at least the outline of the future management structure.

A particular instance of this issue of timing relates to the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Although some progress has been made, developments are at an early stage. It is an initiative that relates only to Clackmannanshire: the shared service management team will have no further involvement in it from a Stirling perspective. While certain management arrangements would need to be put in place, there could be a transfer of responsibilities well in advance of the date on which Clackmannanshire assumes control of the school service as a whole.

Unfortunately, it has to be accepted that, as one of the motivations for setting up a joint service was to make savings, a consequence of again establishing a separate one is to incur costs. I have sought to minimise these.

It is important, however, that the maximum value should be extracted from the investment. The Council will need to decide whether this is best done by adopting a traditional approach which, while tried and tested, is not fully attuned to the agenda of supporting school improvement, raising standards and closing the gap, or whether to take a more innovative approach. Regardless of which approach is adopted, it will be essential to ensure that the new service is focussed on making a success of *Curriculum for Excellence*, raising standards and narrowing the attainment gap.

Keir Bloomer
6.12.15