

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENTS**  
**Meeting: EDUCATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE**  
**Date: 25 March 2008**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its meeting of 29 January 2008, the Education and Leisure Committee agreed that Education Services undertake consultation on proposed reconfigurations of early years provision in Falkirk, Camelon and Grangemouth.
- 1.2 This paper provides an update to members on the consultations that have been carried out and makes recommendations on the way forward.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The report on early years to Education and Leisure Committee in January 2008 formed the basis of the consultation exercise in the three identified areas of Camelon, Falkirk and Grangemouth and set out the case for the proposed amalgamations.
- 2.2 A number of agreed priorities for the development of early years provision had been agreed by Falkirk Council in 2004:
- Creation of more baby and toddler places with appropriate hours to meet demand.
  - More extended day and year provision to meet demand.
  - Nursery classes in the primary schools which do not have them.
  - The development of early years centres by amalgamating existing nursery schools and day nurseries to provide integrated education and childcare all year round.
- 2.2 The benefits for the children and parents of meeting these objectives can be summarised as:
- Effective early intervention to promote learning and attainment through early years education.
  - Affordable childcare 0-5 as part of the economic development strategy.
  - Meeting the needs of parents and families as flexibly and at as local a level as possible.
- 2.3 The creation of early years centres by amalgamating day nurseries and nursery school provision enhances the management structures of each component. As already developed in Denny, they combine childcare and education, serving local communities and the needs of parents, offering opportunities for more flexible staff deployment and service delivery. The combined strengths of a headteacher leading curricular developments and a manager dedicated to childcare arrangements and workforce development results in better quality of provision.

- 2.4 Given the tight financial situation, the only way to achieve these outcomes is through a more efficient and best value use of existing resources, particularly in relation to staffing arrangements, in areas where surplus capacity permits a reconfiguration of current provision.

### **3. CONSULTATIONS**

- 3.1 Following agreed procedures for consultations of this nature, copies of the consultation document agreed by Education and Leisure Committee were distributed to the parents of all children currently attending the day nurseries, nursery schools and the nursery classes in primary schools in the three areas. Public meetings were organised for each of the three areas with notification in both the consultation papers and the Falkirk Herald. In addition, two consultation sessions were organised for staff in relevant establishments. Copies of the consultation papers were also sent to the appropriate staff associations.

- 3.2 Thirty members of the public and 44 members of staff attended the various meetings. In addition, 3 written responses were received.

- 3.3 The main issues/concerns that were raised were:

- Loss of provision to the immediate local area
- Environmental issues because of a potential increase in the use of transportation
- The increased scale of the new amalgamated nurseries which could affect the existing cultures/atmospheres
- The timescales in which the amalgamations would occur
- The management structures to be adopted
- Changes to current working conditions and practices
- Potential increased workload for headteachers and managers
- Maintaining quality of provision and accommodation, especially in the baby rooms
- Issues of continuity for individual children and siblings
- Parental involvement in future planning, especially in relation to accommodation
- Communication of plans and arrangements if the amalgamations go ahead
- Fears of a take-over by the receiving establishment
- Strong support for a nursery class in Beancross Primary School
- Effects of change on young children

- 3.4 Notes of the public meetings and copies of the written responses are available for the perusal of elected members.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The responses received were a very low proportion of the parents who were consulted and the relatively small number of issues raised would imply a broad acceptance of these proposals. Only 2 responses were opposed in principle to the amalgamation.
- 4.2 There is strong support in the Grangemouth area for the opening of a nursery class in Beancross Primary School but the only way that this could be justified, given the current surplus of places, would be through the proposed amalgamation of the day nursery and the nursery school.

- 4.3 In taking forward any agreed amalgamations, it would be essential to ensure effective management at local level to address the concerns raised. In particular, it would be necessary for Education Services, including headteachers and managers, to produce a project plan that would chart the modifications to be made in accommodation and working practices, set clear and achievable timescales and above all to engage continuously with parents, staff and staff associations in developing the project plan and implementing it. This project plan would need to address the specific concerns raised in paragraph 3.3.
- 4.4 These are exciting and innovative proposals to develop a new service that builds on the strengths of existing day nurseries and nursery schools to give integrated education and childcare and enhanced provision for the parents and families of Falkirk. To recognise the innovative nature of these developments, it would be opportune to re-name the new amalgamated early years centres and thus create a new identity and avoid any suggestion of a takeover.

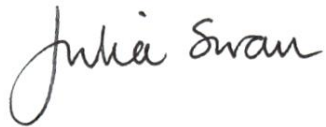
## **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 Given the great benefits to be derived from reconfiguring provision, it is proposed to amalgamate:
- Glenfair Nursery School and Camelon Children's Centre on the latter site
  - Woodburn Day Nursery and Queen Street Nursery School on the latter site
  - Grangemouth Day Nursery and Inchyra Nursery School on the latter site.
- 5.2 The amalgamated establishments would operate as integrated centres providing education and childcare during the working week from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm for a 50 week year.
- 5.3 The provision of existing nursery classes in each of the areas will be maximised according to demand.
- 5.4 It is proposed to declare the premises currently occupied by Glenfair Nursery School, Woodburn Day Nursery and Grangemouth Day Nursery as surplus to early years requirement.
- 5.5 It is proposed that a nursery class be opened at Beancross Primary School as soon as resources can be made available.
- 5.6 It is further proposed that Education Services, in conjunction with the headteachers and managers in each of the proposed amalgamated centres be requested to begin joint planning and negotiation with parents, staff, trades unions and other services on issues such as:
- Management arrangements
  - Contractual arrangements
  - Proposed changes to accommodation
  - Timescales for implementation of the amalgamations
  - The future names of the new amalgamated centres
  - Communication processes with all stakeholders
  - the functions and priorities of the new establishments
  - The issues and concerns raised in paragraph 3.3

5.7 A project plan for development in each of the three areas would set out the above arrangements for sharing with stakeholders.

**6. RECOMMENDATION**

6.1 That Committee notes the proposals set out in Section 5 and submits them to Policy and Resources Committee for approval.



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**Director of Education**

**Date:** .....

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**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**NIL**