

**REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 22 OCTOBER 2007**

**REPORT ON: PROPOSED MERGER OF BELLFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL AND  
PARK PLACE NURSERY SCHOOL - REPORT ON THE  
OUTCOME OF THE FORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**REPORT NO: 540-2007**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report details the representations made during the formal publication and consultation exercise on the proposed merger of Bellfield Nursery School with Park Place Nursery School and seeks instruction as to how to proceed.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) note and approve the content of this report;
- (ii) note the key issues raised during the formal consultation exercise on the proposed merger of Bellfield Nursery School with Park Place Nursery School (Appendix 1) and the concerns communicated by telephone (Appendix 2);
- (iii) note the findings from the evaluation of the pilot 'Drop off and parking arrangement' which was in place since the beginning of the new term (Appendix 3) and instruct the Director of Education to discontinue the pilot;
- (iv) instruct the Directors of Planning & Transportation and Education to identify a long-term solution to the drop off and pick up arrangements for Park Place Primary and Nursery Schools; and
- (v) instruct the Director of Education to implement the merger of Bellfield Nursery School with Park Place Nursery School on the Park Place site with effect from June 2008, and to transfer the staff and any continuing children from Bellfield to Park Place Nursery School with effect from August 2008.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 If the merger goes ahead in August 2008 there will be a saving of £82,400 in financial year 2008-09 and a saving of £131,800 in a full financial year from 2009-10 onwards.

3.2 If the merger is not to go ahead then the Education Committee will need to submit a request to the Policy and Resources Committee for additional capital expenditure of £320,100 as outlined in paragraph 5.5 of this report.

3.3 No capital expenditure has been included in the current 3year capital plan for Bellfield Nursery because other works have had a higher priority within the amount available to the Education Committee for capital works.

#### 4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 At its meeting of 11 June 2007, the Education Committee considered a Report No.283-2007 'Merger of Bellfield Nursery School and Park Place Nursery School' and agreed that the outcome of the consultation exercise on the proposed merger should be reported to the Education Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> August.

4.2 The Director of Education subsequently published and consulted on the proposals in terms of the 'Education (Publication and Consultation etc) (Scotland) regulations 1981' during the period 12<sup>th</sup> June to 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2007. Parents and carers of children who attended, or who were on the waiting lists at Bellfield Nursery and Park Place Nursery, were invited to attend meetings held on either 27<sup>th</sup> June or 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2007. In addition, and beyond the requirements of the statutory consultation, staff from both nursery schools were invited to attend a meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June. Minutes of all consultation meetings are included in Appendix 6.

4.3 In addition, 30 letters and e-mails were received from nineteen parties. Eleven children were represented in the correspondence.

4.4 A summary table of the key recurring issues raised following formal consultation is attached at Appendix 1. These issues covered the following topics:

- Parking, congestion and health and safety issues at Park Place
- Overall reduction in nursery places available in west end of Dundee
- Timing of the proposal and timescale of the consultation exercise
- Outdoor space at Bellfield an asset, Park Place does not offer grass and slope, outdoor resources at Bellfield have been enhanced by parental fundraising
- Requests for further detail and breakdown of the property costs required to maintain Bellfield
- General opposition to closing a nursery with a good reputation
- General dissatisfaction with the way in which the proposal and consultation has been administered
- The merger is to do with finance and the aim is to sell Bellfield site to fund other projects
- The size of the unit at Park Place is considered to be too large and this may impact negatively on quality of education and level of attainment
- Expectation is that the population of children in the West End will increase in the next few years
- Concern that staff have been moved in advance of a final decision being taken

4.5 Given that there would be no final outcome on the proposed merger before the start of the new term it was necessary to protect the interests of the children. It was therefore decided by the Education Department that four-year old children would continue into their second year of pre-school education at Bellfield Nursery School but no further three-year old children would be enrolled. Three-year old children were offered places at Park Place Nursery School, Law Nursery School or at a range of other nursery schools across the city.

- 4.6 At an early stage in the consultation process it was evident that there were increasing concerns about the difficulties in dropping off very young children at Park Place, in terms of volume of traffic, congestion and the safety of children.
- 4.7 In response to these concerns, the Directors of Education and Planning & Transportation considered a range of options with regard to making alternative arrangements. Report 382-2007 'Drop off and Parking Arrangements at Park Place Primary and Park Place Nursery' was considered by the Recess Sub-Committee on 1 August 2007. This report recommended that the Directors of Education and Planning & Transportation implement, monitor and evaluate a proposed pilot.
- 4.8 The pilot arrangement involved using part of the rear playground of Park Place Primary School as a drop off and pick-up area. The pilot arrangements were monitored in the period Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2007 until Friday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Additional monitoring took place on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September, to ensure that monitoring took place when the university term was underway.
- 4.9 The results of the survey are detailed in Appendix 3. The main findings which have emerged from undertaking the pilot are outlined below.
- The highest usage was on Wed 5<sup>th</sup> September when 21 cars dropped off children between 8.30 am and 9.30am. This number was reduced to 16 for the same period on 26<sup>th</sup> September.
  - There were no more than 11 cars in the drop off area at any one time.
  - The parents and children of Park Place Primary School voiced significant concerns, both in letters and in two signed petitions, about the loss of the playground area.
- 4.10 In addition, a nursery parents' questionnaire was issued at the end of August 2007. 86 out of a possible 107 forms were returned. Of the 86 returns, 36 respondents walked to the Nursery, 10 used the bus and 40 used the car. Of the 40 car user respondents 3 used Temple Lane to access the Nursery, 19 used Park Place and 18 used Cross Lane.
- 4.11 The implementation of the pilot alternative arrangements for drop off and parking has demonstrated that there is not a high level of use of the Cross Lane access facility. The level of use does not justify removing the substantial amount of valuable playground area. Therefore it is proposed that the pilot be discontinued with immediate effect.

## **5.0 COMMENTARY ON ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

### **5.1 Parking, congestion and Health and Safety**

5.1.1 Paragraph 4.11 above refers.

### **5.2 Reduction of Nursery Places in West End**

5.2.1 The Education Department considers that there are sufficient places available to serve the population of the west end of Dundee. Currently there are places available in both Park Place and Law Nurseries.

### 5.3 **Timing of the proposal and timescale of the consultation exercise**

5.3.1 It is regrettable that the timing of the proposal was very close to the end of the summer term. However, the period of time for consultation met the statutory requirement. The views of parents, carers, relevant trade unions and members of the community were presented and have been considered.

### 5.4 **Outdoor space at Bellfield an asset, Park Place does not offer grass and slope, outdoor resources at Bellfield have been enhanced by parental fundraising.**

5.4.1 The outdoor space at Bellfield had been made as attractive and useable as possible. The moveable resources at Bellfield will be moved to Park Place. It is planned to introduce a grassy area at Park Place. Park Place does have a safer and larger area available for play on level ground. As the surface dries more quickly it is also more usable in inclement weather.

### 5.5 **Requests for further detail and breakdown of the property costs required to maintain Bellfield.**

5.5.1 The estimated property costs included in the earlier report are shown in Appendix 4.

5.5.2 Since then the Technical Officers have been asked to update these costs to current prices and to inspect in more detail the works required. The revised cost as shown in Appendix 5 is £320,100 and it is estimated that a contract to undertake all these works would take at least 20 weeks. The Nursery would need to be closed to allow these works to be undertaken. If it were possible to phase the contract this would result in more disruption over a longer period of time.

### 5.6 **General opposition to closing a nursery with a good reputation.**

5.6.1 Undoubtedly Bellfield Nursery has an excellent reputation. Parents indicated extremely high levels of satisfaction with all local authority nursery provision in the Parental Survey carried out in March 2007. It is expected that Park Place Nursery School and all other nursery provision in the city will continue to provide excellent pre-school education.

### 5.7 **General dissatisfaction with the way in which the proposal and consultation has been administered**

5.7.1 It is regrettable that some respondents were unhappy about the way in which the proposal and consultation were administered. The process was conducted in accordance with the usual procedures and all stakeholders were provided with the same information.

### 5.8 **The merger has been driven by finance with the aim being to sell the Bellfield Nursery site to fund other projects**

5.8.1 This is not the case. Finance is indeed a factor but it is not the only factor. The Education Department would not benefit directly from any sale of the Bellfield site. No plans have been made for the sale of the site and the local authority is not relying on the sale of the Bellfield site in order to fund any current or future projects.

5.8.2 The merger has been proposed as a result of the Education Department addressing the overprovision of nursery accommodation across the city. Bellfield Nursery School and Park Place Nursery School are in very close proximity. Bellfield Nursery School is in need of significant maintenance. Law Nursery School is located within a mile but serves a different geographical area. Some children who require nursery provision live nearer to Law Nursery school and there is spare capacity at Law Nursery School.

5.9 **The size of the unit at Park Place is considered to be too large and this may impact negatively on the quality of education and level of attainment**

5.9.1 The increase in size of provision at Park Place would bring the school to the same level of roll as the Woodlea Children's Centre. Woodlea Children's Centre serves the population of Beechwood and is highly regarded. It incorporates provision for 3-5 year olds and 2-year olds. The adult /child ratios are the same no matter what size the unit. The space in Park Place Nursery School would be divided and used appropriately. The Education Department continues to strive to provide the highest quality of pre-school education in order to deliver raised attainment. The quality of the leadership and staff is the factor which is most likely to impact on raising attainment.

5.10 **Expectation is that the population of children in the West End will increase in the next few years**

5.10.1 The overall pupil population in the west end of Dundee has decreased over the last 10 years, and there is currently spare accommodation. In the event of the population increasing significantly in the next few years there is space to accommodate this increase in the local primary schools.

5.11 **Concern that staff have been moved in advance of a final decision being taken**

5.11.1 Staff became aware of the proposed merger as part of the consultation process. It was expected that staff would either remain at Bellfield or would transfer with the children to Park Place. This is the case for the majority of the staff. It is not possible to deny staff other opportunities when these are presented. Two members of staff have moved on to new posts: this was not at the direction of the local authority.

## 6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. The emerging issue is:

- **Sustainability – Energy and Water**  
The closing of a school building which is surplus to requirements will reduce energy consumption.

## 7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Head of Finance and the Director of Planning and Transportation. The EIS representative has also been consulted.

**8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report No 283-2007 'Merger of Bellfield Nursery School and Park Place Nursery School'

Report No 382-2007 'Drop off and Parking Arrangements at Park Place Primary and Park Place Nursery'

ANNE WILSON  
Director of Education

Date:15 October 2007

## Summary of Key Issues raised during formal consultation process

		No of times raised in letters/emails	Item raised at public consultation meeting
1	Parking Congestion & Health & Safety Issues at Park Place	10	<b>v</b>
2	Overall reduction in nursery places available in West End of Dundee	10	<b>v</b>
3	Timing of the proposal and timescales of the consultation exercise	8	<b>v</b>
4	Outdoor space at Bellfield an asset, Park Place does not offer grass and slope, outdoor resources at Bellfield have been enhanced by parental fundraising	8	<b>v</b>
5	General opposition to closing a nursery with a good reputation	8	<b>v</b>
6	Requests for further details and breakdown of the property costs required to maintain Bellfield	7	<b>v</b>
7	General dissatisfaction with the way in which the proposal and consultation had been administered	6	<b>v</b>
8	Costs and timing for Park Place adaptation	4	<b>v</b>
9	The merger is to do with finance and the aim is to sell Bellfield site to fund other projects	4	<b>v</b>
10	Not meeting claim that children in West End can continue to access high quality pre-school education	4	<b>v</b>
11	Two drop-off points for parents with children at Blackness or St Joseph's	4	<b>v</b>



		No of times raised in letters/emails	Item raised at public consultation meeting
12	Concern that staff have been moved in advance of a final decision being taken	4	
13	Request not to close Bellfield until August 2008	3	
14	Increase in carbon foot print as more parents have to transport children by car	3	<b>v</b>
15	The size of the unit at Park Place is considered to be too large and this may impact negatively on quality of education and level of attainment	2	<b>v</b>
16	Expectation is that the population of children in the West End will increase in the next few years	2	<b>v</b>
17	Costs should be found elsewhere in council budget	2	
18	Vandalism at Park Place	2	
19	Should build new nursery near Blackness & St Joseph's	1	
20	Director's letter was difficult to understand	1	
21	How can three-year olds enter Bellfield if decision not to merge	1	<b>v</b>
22	Require more information on reason to merge	1	<b>v</b>
23	Park Place does not improve accessibility	1	<b>v</b>

		No of times raised in letters/emails	Item raised at public consultation meeting
24	More information required about nursery rolls over last 5 years	1	
25	Summary requested of criteria which would provide grounds for valid objections to proposal	1	
26	Request Director attend public meeting	1	
27	Request copy of proposal to go to Education Committee on 13.08.2007	1	
28	Merger would weaken links with St Joseph's and Blackness Primary Schools	1	<b>v</b>
29	What has been the impact of two-year old provision at Park Place on the three-year old applications?	1	
30	Where will the money saved be spent?	1	<b>v</b>
31	What effect will imbalance of 3 and 4 years have across the two sites?	1	
32	The loss of a Head Teacher is a poor money saving device	1	
33	Cost of maintenance not high when compared to the total Education budget	1	<b>v</b>
34	Park Place also in need of improvement	1	
35	Why were Park Place parents excluded from consultation?	1	

		No of times raised in letters/emails	Item raised at public consultation meeting
36	Work could be done on Bellfield Nursery during 12 weeks of school holidays	1	<b>v</b>
37	Money going on PPP schools but should be spent in West End	1	<b>v</b>
38	Bellfield children feed into Harris which has good level of attainment - based on good early years' experiences	1	<b>v</b>
39	Park Place classrooms on a different level	1	<b>v</b>

### Key issues raised by E.I.S representatives

40	Request for assurance on appropriate staffing levels for the nursery as it operates across two sites
41	Given increased numbers at Park Place it is expected that the Head Teacher would be removed from the adult child ratios and an additional teacher would be in post
42	Require assurance that the appropriate adaptations are undertaken at Park Place

**Summary of Queries/Issues Received by Telephone**

Date	Query/issue
12.06.07	Explaining situation about her own child
12.06.07	Requesting place at Park Place for child
12.06.07	Requesting all information on building spend on Bellfield since it was built
12.06.07	Requesting information on transferring her child from P1 in Park Place to P2 in St Joseph's PS
13.06.07	Expressing concern about the short timescale and the possible increased numbers of children in the expanded Park Place, particularly in relation to how children with additional support needs cope in larger groups
15.06.07	The fact that a letter has been sent out informing that three-year olds will not be admitted to Bellfield in Aug 07 confirms that the consultation is a sham and that the decision has already been made. Asked if the reason for there not being funding to repair Bellfield is due to the fact that the money has been spent on the introduction of the two-year old pilot projects.
15.06.07	Clarifying the situation regarding her 4-year old daughter being able to move to Bellfield or Park Place for her deferred pre-school year. She has been at Invergowrie for her pre-school year.
15.06.07	Extremely unhappy about the letter received regarding making a placing choice for her three-year old child. Her view is that the Council has no regard for parents. The timescale of the proposed merger and consultation period is an insult to parents. The decision not to admit three-year olds to Bellfield is prejudging the Education Committee decision re the future of Bellfield Nursery. She is also requesting answers to the questions she has sent in on e mail. What is the legal position with regard to the local authority not offering places to three-year olds in August?
15.06.07	Expressed serious concern about the timescale and the timing of the information. He feels parents are entitled to more information on the detailed costings of maintenance and property. No evidence of improved access for disabled at Park Place.
18.06.07	Desire for her child to go to nursery with children who will move onto P1 at Blackness Primary School. Her preference may be to take a place at Menzieshill Nursery School.
18.06.07	Requested more information about the location of all the nursery schools listed in the letter offering choice.
21.06.07	Raised issues about the total number of places for 3-5 year olds in Park Place. Concerned about the high number. Required information about how the children would be grouped and how the space would be used.

25.06.07	Requested assurance that her child would continue to receive a full-time place if the child attends Park Place Nursery
25.06.07	Requested a place at Menzieshill.
26.06.07	Requested responses to the questions raised in her husband's e mail. The decision not to offer places to three-year olds at Bellfield in August 2007 pre-empts the decision of the Education Committee. When will parents know if Bellfield will be able to accept three-year olds in Jan 08? Have the police been consulted with regard to the potential increased congestion at Park Place when numbers increase in the nursery.

	Cross Lane					
	Total No. of Cars	Cars dropping off children	Drop Off		Pick Up	
			No. of NURSERY children	No. of PRIMARY children	No. of NURSERY children	No. of PRIMARY children
<b>0830 to 0930</b>						
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	9	8	6	5	0	0
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	13	12	7	7	0	0
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	11	11	6	5	0	0
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> August 2007	12	11	11	0	0	0
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2007	11	11	10	1	0	0
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	18	18	12	7	0	0
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	21	21	17	4	0	0
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	15	14	14	2	0	0
<b>1100 to 1330</b>						
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	6	5	0	0	2	4
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	5	4	2	0	4	0
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	7	7	0	0	6	2
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> August 2007	6	6	2	0	4	0
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2007	9	9	2	0	7	0
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	11	11	2	0	9	0
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	13	13	1	0	12	0
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	14	14	3	0	11	0
<b>1500 to 1530</b>						
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	3	2	0	0	0	2
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	12	7	0	0	3	5
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	5	5	0	0	4	2
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> August 2007	7	6	0	0	4	2
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	5	4	0	0	4	1

	Park Place					
	Total No. of Cars	Cars dropping off children	Drop Off		Pick Up	
			No. of NURSERY children	No. of PRIMARY children	No. of NURSERY children	No. of PRIMARY children
	31	31	9	27	0	0
	45	41	11	37	0	0
	50	42	7	40	0	0
	47	39	7	39	0	0
	46	44	8	45	0	0
	64	47	15	42	0	0
	60	44	16	37	0	0
	57	41	17	32	0	0
	45	25	8	2	8	11
	35	22	5	1	10	9
	54	20	5	1	12	5
	39	16	4	3	7	4
	42	18	6	1	11	6
	52	17	6	0	11	0
	59	19	6	0	15	0
	34	19	14	0	6	0
	25	25	0	0	9	17
	14	10	0	0	0	11
	30	20	0	0	5	18
	27	22	0	0	8	18
	15	11	0	0	7	8

## APPENDIX 3

2007						
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	10	10	0	0	4	6
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2007	8	8	0	0	8	3

29	23	0	0	2	24
34	23	0	0	5	21

Use	Property	Report Sort	Description	Location	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Later Years
NS	Bellfield NS		Carry out portable appliance testing 2nd Quarter 2005	Main Building	1,000				
NS	Bellfield NS		Cut down trees	Main Building	1,588				
NS	Bellfield NS		Larder Fridge	Main Building		142			
NS	Bellfield NS		Ramps to sheds	Main Building	650				
NS	Bellfield NS		External Paint	Main Building		1,526			
NS	Bellfield NS		Pinboards to main play area	Main Building		200			
NS	Bellfield NS		Design and upgrade exterior lighting installation	External stairs					500
NS	Bellfield NS		Design and upgrade lighting installation Inc Boilerhouse	Boilerhouse					10,000
NS	Bellfield NS		Add gas heaters in corridors to gas service contract - Throughout building	Main Building	500				
NS	Bellfield NS		Replace shingle roof	Main Building					50,000
NS	Bellfield NS		Brander & replasterboard ceiling	Main Building					30,000
NS	Bellfield NS		Window replacement at north elevation, west and east	Main Building					20,000
NS	Bellfield NS		Upgrade heating system per report on file	Main Building					11,000
NS	Bellfield NS		Upgrade staff toilets and install nappy change	Main Building					7,500
NS	Bellfield NS		Replace weatherb'b to east elevation	Main Building					1,500
NS	Bellfield NS		Upgrade kitchen inc fly screens	Main Building					12,000
NS	Bellfield NS		Public Access	Main Building					36,000
					<b><u>3,738</u></b>	<b><u>1,868</u></b>			<b><u>178,500</u></b>



### Bellfield Nursery School

Description	Total
Upgrade exterior lighting installation to external stairs	£1,100.00
Allow for renewing lighting installation incl of emergency lighting	£16,900.00
Replace shingle roof	£68,700.00
Brander and replasterboard ceilings	£29,500.00
Window replacement	£29,600.00
Allow for upgrading heating system	£26,000.00
Allow for upgrading staff toilets incl install nappy changing	£6,000.00
Allow for new weatherboarding to east elevation incl framing	£7,400.00
Allow for upgrading existing kitchen incl fly screens	£12,000.00
Allow for providing ramped access to building (Public Access)	£43,300.00
Allowance for timber treatment	£15,000.00
Cost of disabled toilets	£10,000.00
	<b>£265,500.00</b>
Extra over cost for cost of flattening playground etc	£54,600.00
	<b>£320,100.00</b>
All the above costs are inclusive of fees	

## DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

### Note of Consultation Meeting with Staff

on Monday 18th June 2007 at 3:30pm

in Bellfield Nursery School

#### Purpose of this meeting:

To provide the opportunity for all staff members from Bellfield Nursery School and Park Place Nursery School to meet with the Early Years Manager and express their opinions, raise issues and offer comment regarding the proposed merger of Bellfield and Park Place nurseries.

#### In attendance:

Liz Gillies	Early Years Manager (EYM)	
Charlotte MacCrimmon	QIO	
Maggie Llanwarne	Bellfield NS	Acting Head Teacher
Moirra Clark	Bellfield NS	Nursery Nurse
Shona Martin	Bellfield NS	Nursery Nurse
Lynne Tyrie	Bellfield NS	Nursery Nurse
Geraldine Gardiner	Bellfield NS	Teacher
Roisin Kelly	Bellfield NS	Nursery Nurse (FTC)
Christine Hindman	Bellfield NS	Nursery Nurse
Roz Sturrock	Bellfield NS	Clerical support
Wendy McDonald	Bellfield NS	Auxiliary
Patricia Neil	Bellfield NS	Auxiliary
Tricia Cowan	Park Place NS	Acting Head Teacher
Diane Irving	Park Place NS	Birth to 3 Coordinator
Norma Narey	Park Place NS	Nursery Nurse
Maggie Bowden	Park Place NS	Teacher
Anne Beattie	Park Place NS	Clerical support
Mary Donald	Park Place NS	Nursery Nurse
Susan McKelvie	Park Place NS	Nursery Nurse (PPPM)
Christine Duff	Park Place NS	Nursery Nurse
Janet Croll	Park Place NS	Nursery Nurse

#### Welcome

Liz thanked everyone for coming to this consultation meeting. She also expressed thanks to Maggie and the staff of Bellfield NS for agreeing to host the meeting.

#### Background

Liz began by assuring everyone that the Education Department regretted the need for considering the proposed merger between Bellfield and Park Place nurseries. Disruption of services and staffing is never desired.

A number of factors in recent years have forced the Department to look closely at pre-school service demands across Dundee. These include the falling population of 3 to 5-year olds, the amount of spare capacity in nurseries across the city and the number of children moving to private sector nurseries for childcare purposes.

Dundee City Council has a duty to Dundee's citizens to manage nursery provision efficiently and effectively. Therefore nursery buildings across Dundee have been assessed to determine how fit they are for purpose. In 2005, Cotton Road NS was identified as being run down and too costly to upgrade and maintain. Cotton Road NS was closed, the children were moved to other settings and staff were re-deployed. Now Bellfield NS has been identified as being in poor condition and would require substantial sums of money to be spent

if the building were to be upgraded for 21st century nursery provision. This information was included in the report put up to the Education Committee on 11th June 2007.

The Education Department is well aware of the very good work undertaken by staff in both nurseries. Parents have been very clear in expressing their appreciation for the staff and the work they do in both Bellfield and Park Place nurseries. The HTs of both nurseries have been very impressed by the professionalism of staff in dealing with parents at this difficult time and have made a point of informing the EYM of this. The Director is also aware that both staff teams have been at the forefront of dealing with parents during this emotional time.

Tayside House has also received numerous calls and e-mails from parents clearly stating their views about the proposed merger. All comments and opinions are being gathered and will be placed before the Education Committee for consideration in due course.

The Department finds itself coping with a difficult situation within tight time-frames. The amendment to the proposal before the Education Committee on 11th June has meant that decisions (based on full consultation with key stakeholders) are now deferred until 13th August 2007. This means that whatever the eventual outcome, Bellfield NS will open to *returning* children on 14th August 2007. Staffing, too, is affected by this delayed decision and this has caused anxiety and concern. Consequently the EYM has agreed to meet with each member of Bellfield's staff team to discuss each personal situation.

<b>Staff issues/questions/comments</b>	<b>Response by EYM</b>
When exactly will individual meetings with the EYM be held?	Dates for these will be arranged at the end of this meeting.
What will happen to support staff eg auxiliaries and clerical staff?	The proposal indicated that additional clerical support would probably be needed at Park Place. Other staffing demands would also be reviewed. Clerical support staff will report for work at Bellfield as normal on 13th August 2007. The Department has been gathering projected staffing demands for August 2007 across the City. This will help to inform decisions when and if they arise. Relevant staff will be told as soon as possible if any re-deployment is required.
When would packing at Bellfield begin?	We do not know yet if there will be a need to pack.
What would be the name of the new merged nursery?	If there is a new merged nursery, then elected members of the Council would choose its name.
If the eventual decision is to delay a move/merger until August 2008 would Bellfield's building be repaired?	If there is money available for this.
Is there any chance of early retirement for more mature staff members?	Probably not. The EYM will mention this query to the Head of Education Resources.
If the Primary 1 classroom at Park Place is used will this be permanent?	Only if it is needed.
Will the 2-year old programme at Park Place continue past 2008?	Only if it is agreed by the Education Committee and if money is available. Currently this is a pilot programme funded by the Scottish Executive.

What teaching staff will be needed if the merger goes ahead?	Additional children require more staff. Given the proposed numbers a second teacher may be considered. Staffing needs will be considered fully.
The number of multi-lingual children in Park Place is significant. Bellfield too caters for children with additional languages. This will make for some serious challenges, as some Eastern European children already arrive with no English. For instance, for 2007 - 08 in Park Place it is projected that 23 of 35 children in the afternoon will come from multi-lingual backgrounds. This will surely have a bearing on staffing allocations?	All issues such as this will be considered. The needs of the children and good support for staff will be central to staffing decisions.
Car parking is already problematic for staff at Park Place NS. How is this to be resolved if the merged staff team is even larger?	This is already being discussed and reviewed by the Director of Education in conjunction with the Director of Planning & Transportation. The Department is also aware that another important consideration is parking and other traffic issues for parents dropping off or collecting children.
Parking costs in town are high and if staff have to use public parking spaces this would be a major concern for them.	The Director is well aware of parking issues for staff and is seeking ways to overcome them.
Park Place NS is currently losing prospective children to the private sector because parents need to make arrangements for August 2007 <u>now</u> . They cannot afford to wait any longer for an offer of a place by the Education Department.	That is regrettable but understandable.

Liz agreed to arrange one-on-one meetings with Bellfield staff on:

- Thursday 21st June from 12:30pm to 3:30pm and
- on Friday 22nd June from 2:30pm onwards.

The meetings are to be held at Bellfield NS.

(At the close of this meeting, the EYM took time to meet with 3 staff members individually).

### **Finally**

Liz thanked everyone for their contributions, for listening and for sharing their points of view.

The meeting closed at 4:30pm.

## DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

### Consultation meetings with Parents and Carers regarding the proposed merger of Bellfield Nursery School and Park Place Nursery School

Wednesday, 27th June 2007 at 7:00pm in St Joseph's Primary School

#### Consultation Panel members included:

Alex Stephen	Chief Executive
Laurie Bidwell	Education Convener
Anne Wilson	Director of Education
Lina Waghorn	Head of Primary Education and Early Years Education
Liz Gillies	Early Years Manager

The Chief Executive opened the meeting by explaining that these meetings are part of the consultation process for relevant parents and carers to raise issues and concerns arising from the proposal to merge Bellfield and Park Place Nursery Schools into one nursery on the Park Place site.

Notes from these meetings will be passed to the Education Committee for consideration prior to their meeting on Monday 13th August 2007.

(Where issues relating to specific children and families were raised, the parent was asked to speak directly to the Early Years Manager as soon as possible so that the matter could be discussed and resolved as soon as possible.)

The meeting commenced with the Chief Executive asking for a show of hands from parents concerned about the increased distance and travel time for their child to walk to Park Place NS instead of Bellfield NS.

- 12 hands were raised

The Chief Executive then asked for a show of hands from those with older children at Blackness or St Joseph's Primary Schools who escorted the older child to school before taking their younger child to nursery.

- 17 hands were raised.

#### The Consultation Process

- The term *consultation* implies that no decision has been reached. However, the letter informing parents that no 3-year old child would be offered a place at Bellfield from August 2007 has led parents to believe that the decision to close Bellfield NS has already been reached.
- Why have the Council not included parents from all 3 nurseries involved (Bellfield, Park Place and Law) in the consultation process?
- How many members are there on the Education Committee?
- If the decision reached is that the merger will not go ahead will each child's nursery placement be re-considered?
- Will Law NS be closed next?

#### The increased numbers of children at Park Place NS

- How many children will there be at Park Place at one time?
- How can 90 children and families all arrive at Park Place NS at one time?

- What about the 2-year old provision at Park Place? Will this group be moved out of Park Place?
- How many children currently attend Park Place's 3 - 5 programme at one time?
- The reception/hallway area at Park Place is already crowded with children and families at opening and closing times. How can it possibly accommodate an extra 30 children and families at one time?
- Staggering arrival times for parents and children is no solution for working parents who have to be at work by specific times.
- There will be far too many children at Park Place NS if the nurseries merge.
- How can a child benefit in a class of 60 when only last week politicians were aiming for classes of 18 in early years education?
- What if Park Place Primary rolls begin to increase?

### **Property Issues**

- How much is it costing DCC to upgrade and convert the Primary 1 room in Park Place PS for the additional nursery children?
- Has the Property Officer been to all nursery premises across Dundee, and if so, is Bellfield NS the one needing most work done?
- Law NS is an old building on leased land. If this proposed merger is not about DCC making money from land sales, why not close Law NS instead?
- For 3 years now Bellfield NS has been promised new toilets but this has not happened. Because running repairs have been allowed to slide, the costs for upgrading are now greater than they needed to be. The Council should have maintained Bellfield's building.
- The HMIe Report in 2003 states that Bellfield is in a "good state of repair". How can this no longer be the case?
- If the decision to merge is denied and Bellfield NS remains open, will the building work be done?
- If work on Bellfield's building will require money to be taken from elsewhere in the budget, then why not just do this now and keep parents happy?
- It's all about money and not what's best for the children.
- What does the Council intend to do with the money they get from the sale of Bellfield and its land?
- Can the proceeds from the sale of Bellfield be used to open another nursery school e.g. at St Joseph's?

### **Demand for Nursery Places across Dundee**

- It has been stated that there are 500 surplus nursery spaces across the city. What is the situation in the West End?
- The West End is growing unlike other parts of the city. There will probably be a need for a third nursery again - possibly within 3 years.
- Ardler, Whitfield etc may have a smaller population but the West End is maintaining its population and may well grow in the near future.
- Blackness PS is enjoying its highest intake of pupils for years.
- What about pre-school aged children who will attend Bellfield NS during 2007 - 2008? If one of those children were to defer entry to Primary One until August 2009, then that child would have to move nursery in August 2008.
- How many children at Bellfield NS deferred entry to Primary 1 in 2006 - 07?
- Is there space for a nursery in St Joseph's PS?
- What is the current percentage of capacity at St Joseph's PS?
- What is the current percentage of capacity at Park Place PS?

### **Quality of Education and Attainment**

- According to reports Dundee schools are consistently under performing. All political parties acknowledge that nursery education is important. Academic studies support the importance of high quality nursery education. So what evidence does the Council have that closing Bellfield NS will improve educational outcomes?
- If this evidence is not available then would the Council commission an independent consultancy to research and determine the impact on educational outcomes? The educational needs of the children are obviously secondary to financial gain. Law NS has not been considered for closure because DCC do not own the site and cannot make money from it.
- Dundee schools are consistently under performing. The solution is to reduce class sizes. How can merging nursery schools into larger settings achieve this?

### **Traffic and Access issues**

- How much will it cost for improved traffic controls and parking to accommodate the additional children and families arriving at Park Place NS?
- Has DCC consulted with the University of Dundee's School of Architecture to come up with other solutions?
- The falling number of children on the roll at Park Place PS proves that parents do not want their children to go there because of parking and traffic difficulties.
- Has the Director of Education met with the Police and the Department of Planning & Transportation as was recommended at the Education Committee meeting on 11th June 2007?
- Why was a feasibility study regarding traffic and parking issues not undertaken prior to the Education Committee meeting on 11th June 2007?

## DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

### Consultation meetings with Parents and Carers regarding the proposed merger of Bellfield Nursery School and Park Place Nursery School

Thursday 28th June 2007 at 9:30am in St Joseph's Primary School

#### Consultation Panel members included:

Lina Waghorn	Head of Primary Education and Early Years Education
Liz Gillies	Early Years Manager

Lina Waghorn gave apologies from the Director of Education and the Chief Executive who were unable to attend the morning meeting.

- We want parents to have choice and the Council is taking this away.
- How do staff at Bellfield NS feel about this proposal?
- Provide parents with the original documents showing nursery school rolls. If the Council wants to be in partnership with parents then they must share information.
- How can there be any real consultation if information is not made available to parents?
- This particular consultation process has bred suspicion and distrust.
- Does the Council think that 2 months is long enough between the announcement of a proposed closure and the closure actually taking place?
- One group who have not been involved in the consultation process is parent and toddler groups - those parents whose children are currently 1 or 2 years old and were expecting to send their child to Bellfield NS in a year or two. They were denied entry to last night's meeting.
- Some parents feel that they have been treated in a dishonest way. The first letter said that the West End only needs 2 nursery schools. Then the second letter urged parents to hurry up and choose an alternative nursery for their child because places will fill up quickly. Well, which is it? Are there surplus places or might there not be enough if parents don't hurry up and enrol their child?
- The Council has given the impression that they have to close Bellfield. They have kept parents in the dark and their letters have caused confusion.
- Parents feel that the Education Committee is only pretending to consult. They will decide to close Bellfield despite the parents' wishes. Can parents appeal against the Education Committee's decision?
- If we had wanted our children to go to a larger nursery school then we would have sent them to one.
- Not all (smaller) nurseries can provide the services parents want such as extended hours and full day places.
- The Director of Education should be at this (morning) meeting.
- Crèche facilities should have been provided so that more parents were able to attend this meeting.
- Questions and issues raised at last night's meeting were not answered. The meeting was rushed and there was no proper dialogue. When parents wanted to expand on an issue the Chief Executive moved on to another. The evening meeting was poorly chaired.
- The Director of Education does not want to face parents.
- The tight timescale for consultation has caused problems for proper discussion and dialogue.
- If the decision in August is to close Bellfield from June 2008 what opportunities are there for parents to appeal?



- I want an independent, knowledgeable person to examine this consultation process and all rules pertaining to closing a school/nursery.
- What is the deadline date for submissions to the Education Committee from parents?

### **Property Issues**

- Despite several requests, why has a copy of the Property Report for Bellfield NS not yet been made available to parents?
- If the Bellfield Report by the Property Officer is brief then surely there is no real evidence that the building is needing expensive upgrading?
- What are the timescales for property improvements to Park Place NS?
- Park Place NS building looks as though it needs work done too. Why was it not considered for closure?
- The additional proposed room at Park Place NS has several steps leading to it. Surely this raises issues of access by small children and children with mobility problems?
- We do not want a new building. We are happy with Bellfield.
- Why can't Bellfield be re-furnished? There is a suspicion that Bellfield has been left to run down and the Council will benefit by revenue from its sale.
- Is Bellfield the oldest nursery building in Dundee?
- In the new nursery room at Park Place NS how will the children access outdoor play activities? Bellfield NS has direct access from the playroom.
- Concerns were raised about children moving independently between the new nursery room and the main nursery school in Park Place.
- Schools in Dundee are being knocked down so that the land can be sold for homes to be built.
- Will there be contingency building work undertaken at Bellfield NS in case the Committee's decision is to keep it open?

### **Demand for Nursery Places across Dundee**

- Bellfield NS has been consistently full to capacity over recent years so closing it does not make sense.
- There is a waiting list for places at Bellfield NS but not at Park Place NS.
- Combining the 2 nurseries will mean that waiting lists will be even longer.
- The West End has fluctuations in population. Has this been considered - especially if the population were to rise in a few years?
- There are spare classrooms in Dundee's Primary schools because Dundee does not appoint enough teachers.
- Why not let 3-year olds attend Bellfield in 2007 - 08 along with the 4-year olds? Let parents make the choice for their child.
- If parents live in e.g. Whitfield and do not send their child to a nursery near their home, then that is the choice they have made. They chose Bellfield NS for their own good reasons.

### **Quality of Education and Attainment**

- If this evidence is not available then would the Council commission an independent consultancy to research and determine the impact on educational outcomes
- DCC Education Authority schools are consistently under performing. The important issue is not about buildings, it's about ethos and Bellfield has an excellent ethos.
- Moving children to a new nursery is upsetting to the children because they "lose" the Head Teacher, teacher and other staff whom they know so well.
- People are moving to homes outside Dundee because of the (poor) quality of education provided in Dundee.
- Give me one example why this merger will benefit my child.

- Won't small children be scared in such a large setting (such as Park Place)?
- One parent was concerned that her child will feel "lost" in a bigger nursery.
- Bellfield is a quality nursery - a jewel. It is a big mistake to close a vibrant and in-demand nursery.

**Traffic and Access issues**

- What are the specific costs for providing parking spaces at Park Place and where would these spaces be located?
- Dropping off children is bound to cause queues and bottlenecks around the perimeter of Park Place NS.
- How will traffic be managed at busy times e.g. at 3:15pm when both the nursery school and the Primary school are emptying?
- Why were feasibility studies to improve existing traffic problems at Park Place not done years ago? I think that many parents have elected not to send their child to Park Place because of the constant congestion and parking issues.
- The 4 options displayed (at the meetings) are dependent on parents delivering or picking up their child very quickly.
- If you enlarge the nursery school then the traffic issues grow too.