

**REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE- 20 DECEMBER 2004  
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE- 20 DECEMBER 2004**

**REPORT ON: RATIONALISATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY NURSERY EDUCATION SERVICES**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION and ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (MANAGEMENT)**

**REPORT NO: 841-2004**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This Report seeks approval to implement proposals for managing and rationalising the current over provision of nursery places in the local authority nursery schools and classes.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee notes and approves the contents of this report and agrees:

- i. to formally publish and consult on the Director of Education's proposals to close Cotton Road Nursery School and Sidlaw View Primary School Nursery Class from end of June 2005 and to close Mossgiel Primary School Nursery Class from end of June 2006. A further report will be brought to Committee on 21 February 2005 outlining the outcomes of this.
- ii. to delete teaching posts from the Education Department staffing establishment and to re-deploy teaching staff as set out in Appendix 1 of this Report

2.2 It is recommended that the Personnel Committee approves and agrees:

- i. the deletion of non-teaching posts from the establishment of the Education Department and the re-deployment of non-teaching posts as set out in Appendix 1 of this Report

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 These proposals, planned for implementation from 30 June 2005, will generate cost savings of £141,440 in a full financial year

## **4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

## **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

## 6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 These proposals are designed to ensure that nursery education services continue to have the capacity and support to meet the needs of children and families in the City today and in the future. Nursery services for young children have been a longstanding and proud feature of Dundee's society and have been valued by generations of families. In 2004, the nursery sector in Dundee faces some important strategic challenges. These can be summarised under the following themes:

- the mixed and competing economy of provision
- workforce issues
- demographics and the continuing and significant needs of the child and family population in the city.

### 6.2 The Mixed And Competing Economy Of Provision

6.3 The Government has delivered universal provision of a part time pre-school education place for all children from the start of the term following their third birthday until the start of primary school. This has been achieved across the country by the development of a mixed economy of provision, where a range of providers including the local authority nursery schools and classes, the private sector and the voluntary sector offer services which parents can select according to what best meets their own needs and those of their child.

6.4 In addition a key plank of the Government's Childcare Strategy has been to grow pre-school education and childcare services together through the delivery of integrated services. Many parents in Dundee currently combine their entitlement to a free part time pre-school education place with additional childcare services which providers charge for. From April 2003, new integrated tax credits have been introduced to support working adults in low or mid income households or who have a disability. The tax credit can help meet up to 70% of the costs of registered childcare.

6.5 The local authority has traditionally been the key provider of pre-school services in Dundee. The local authority services have responded to the growing demand for more childcare across the city by expanding provision of childcare in all nursery schools through developing early morning and evening "wrap around care" services for working parents and those in education and training. The uptake of these places varies across the city. Feedback from parents indicates that these services are highly valued. However workforce related issues have meant that opening services all year round has proved to be complicated and expensive when the core workforce is employed during school terms only. This means that local authority services may not fully meet the needs of parents whose work continues during school holiday periods.

6.6 The private sector, in not facing the same staffing constraints, has rapidly expanded across the city to provide competitively priced (and in some cases relatively low cost) all year services. An increasing number of Dundee parents (currently just more than a quarter of the total pre-school population) are now taking up services within this sector. The growth of the private sector and downward trend in the number of pre-school children in the city means that some local authority nursery provision is currently under used and there is a related surplus staffing implication.

### 6.7 Workforce Issues

6.8 As already stated, developing more flexible local authority services, available all year round, has been hampered by issues primarily related to the structure and employment conditions of the current workforce. An industrial dispute over local authority nursery nurses pay and conditions ended in Dundee in June 2004. Although nursery nurses had

been consulted over the Education Department's desire to and vision for establishing new models of service through the creation of improved job status and career progression for nursery nurses in return for delivery of more family friendly services, these proposals were not accepted. The local agreement of the dispute meant that there is very little change in the current working arrangements for nursery nurses. Certainly there is not sufficient change to allow the Department to deliver all year services with the capacity to provide working parents with the flexibility and availability of services required to suit their requirements. The Trade Unions accept that the Council's nursery provision is in direct competition with that provided by the private sector and if local authority provision is to continue at the current level of provision, working hours must change. However, it takes time to negotiate change and assess demand from parents for additional hours.

## **6.9 Demographics and The Continuing And Significant Needs Of The Child And Family Population In The City**

- 6.10 There is currently over- provision of nursery services within the City. There are currently 134 less children taking up nursery services than compared with the same time last year. In addition 23 more children have taken up places in the private sector compared to the same time last year. Also as communities have moved within the city as a result of new housing developments and demolition of old housing stock, demand for services has changed across the city. A key aspect of this proposed service rationalisation is therefore designed to ensure that services are available in localities where families need them and to look in particular at services which have in recent years seen a significant downturn in uptake of places.
- 6.11 However these concerns need to be weighed alongside the continuing needs of our child population and therefore these proposals seek to ensure that local authority nursery services will be safeguarded for those children who need them. "For Scotland's Children" published in 2001, tells us that in Scotland there are still some children starting nursery at 3 and a smaller minority starting school at 5 who have significant, unknown or unaddressed needs which may be relatively minor or of far greater consequence. In addition economic and social issues within families may mean that children's life opportunities are compromised by a complex set of problems for which a single solution cannot be the answer.
- 6.12 There is considerable work going on to ensure that every child in Dundee realises his/her full potential, is in good health, attains well at school and can move successfully into a world of fulfilling work and economic prosperity. However there is clear recognition that some children in the city and across Scotland face enormous difficulties in their journey to adulthood, difficulties meaning that some do not fulfil their true potential. There is significant evidence that children's lives are compromised daily by a range of family, health, social and educational circumstances which may have a profound impact on their childhood lives and future outcomes.
- 6.13 Effective early years services continue to be an important aspect of improving outcomes for children and families. Through the delivery of high quality, tailored and responsive services we can impact positively on the lives of young children and improve their chances of being able to benefit fully from their future educational and life opportunities.
- 6.14 It is therefore important to ensure that effective support is available to young children in all early years settings. A significant number of children in Dundee, currently more than a quarter of the pre-school population, take up a nursery place in the private sector. The majority of these children will return to the local authority at the start of their primary school education. Central support services available to local authority nurseries are now being extended to private nurseries to ensure that all children can access specialist support if that is required. These proposals reflect the need for this work to be further developed and strengthened to ensure that children's needs are identified and

addressed as early as possible therefore reducing the requirement for intensive support later and to reduce the potential for inequality of access to services across the sectors.

## 7.0 PROPOSAL

- 7.1 These proposals have been carefully considered to ensure that Dundee will continue to provide a strong early years service as a result of effective partnership across the local authority, private and voluntary sectors. The proposals have been considered as part of the design and implementation plans for the new SUCCEED (Sure Start, Childcare and Early Education in Dundee) initiative, which is the subject of a related report (refer to Report Number 842-2004).
- 7.2 The proposals also reflect the need for such services to be delivered efficiently and for services to have the capacity to adapt and respond, as family needs change and to reflect the diversity of need. There is an opportunity now to look again at what we are doing for our youngest citizens in Dundee. Projects currently developing as part of the Sure Start and Childcare Strategies are helping us to inform direction. This paper therefore makes recommendations about how current services within the local authority can be rationalised and the deployment of staff can be reviewed in order to:
- ensure that parents continue to be offered choice and diversity in the services available to them
  - ensure that children can continue to access high quality early years services within the local authority
  - ensure that all services have effective levels of support to ensure that children's needs are met
  - build on the strong legacy of successful service provision in Dundee matched to current demographic trends
  - rationalise over capacity and increase the capacity and flexibility of remaining services
- 7.3 Currently there is surplus staffing in several local authority nurseries. This is common for the time of year since nurseries will continue to enrol 3 year olds as they reach their birthdays. It is however anticipated that some local authority places will remain unfilled throughout the course of the current school year. Movement of children due to proposed closures of provision will fill up some vacant places across the city.
- 7.4 In addition provision in particular parts of the City has seen a significant downturn in recent years. The nursery classes at Mossgiel Primary School and Sidlaw View Primary School are currently running with very low numbers. The class at Sidlaw View is staffed by a half time teacher (currently filled by supply) and is open in the mornings only and currently has 4 children enrolled. In Mossgiel there are only 9 children enrolled in the morning and 7 in the afternoon. This class has capacity for 20 children morning and afternoon and is staffed by a teacher and nursery nurse. Cotton Rd Nursery has 18 children enrolled am, 15pm and 14 full time. This nursery has capacity for 56 children and is staffed by a nursery Head Teacher (due to retire March 2005), a teacher (recently appointed to Sure Start), 3 nursery nurses and a part time clerical assistant.
- 7.5 An informal consultation has taken place with parents whose children attend these nurseries. It was initially proposed that these provisions should close from the end of the current financial year on 31 March 2005. Parents expressed strong antipathy towards this proposal and felt that disruption to their children was likely to be lessened if the provision stayed open at least until the end of June 2005, when pre-school children would be moving onto primary school.

- 7.6 In addition it was suggested in the informal consultation meeting with parents at Mossgiel Primary School that as this primary school would be part of the PPP initiative to combine Mid Craigie Primary School and Mossgiel Primary School in a new school due for completion in 2006, it would be less disruptive if the children could complete their nursery education at Mossgiel and that the class would close at the time of the merger and relocation. It is therefore now proposed that the nursery class at Mossgiel would remain open for a half day until end of June 2006 and would accommodate the 7 remaining children and one nursery nurse member of staff. No other children will be admitted to the nursery during this period.
- 7.7 Although there was considerable sadness and regret expressed by parents of children attending Cotton Rd Nursery School at the proposal to close this long established nursery provision, in individual meetings with parents there was some degree of acceptance of the change. A strong view was expressed from several parents that they would prefer a clear decision that was not drawn out and that if the nursery has to close they would prefer that this happened in June 2005 rather than prolonging the process for a further year. In every case alternative provision has been discussed and it is likely that the majority of children due to return to nursery for a further year would move to Wallacetown, with some others taking up places at Dens Rd, Frances Wright and Glebelands. It is therefore proposed that Cotton Road Nursery School will close at the end of June 2005.
- 7.8 In the same way those parents whose children currently attend Sidlaw View Primary School Nursery Class expressed regret at the proposed closure of their nursery provision. However only 2 children are due to return to Sidlaw View nursery in August 2005 and the majority of children starting Primary One at Sidlaw View Primary School attend Jessie Porter Nursery School (in the current Primary One Class at Sidlaw View only 2 children came from the nursery class at the school). It is therefore proposed that Sidlaw View Nursery Class is closed at the end of June 2005.
- 7.9 The teacher and nursery nurse Trade Unions have also been consulted about these proposals and have welcomed the changes from the original proposals to close all provision on 31 March 2005. No other objections related to these proposals have been raised by the Trade Unions.
- 7.10 A formal consultation process will now take place with those parents affected by the closure proposals. A further report will be brought back to Committee outlining the outcomes of this.
- 7.11 Although these proposals aim to make the nurseries more sustainable, further consideration may require to be given to additional rationalisation across the city in the future.
- 7.12 Staff currently employed within the nurseries proposed for closure will be re-deployed. The Head Teacher of Cotton Rd Nursery School is due to retire in February 2005 (although she has indicated that she would continue until the end of June 2005) and it is therefore proposed that this post is not replaced. The nursery teacher at Cotton Road has recently taken up a Sure Start Early Intervention post and the post at Cotton Road is currently covered by a supply teacher. It is proposed that on closure of Cotton Road this post is therefore removed from the staffing establishment. The part time clerical post is also covered by supply following the retirement of the recent postholder and it will therefore not be replaced. The part time nursery teaching post at Sidlaw View Nursery Class is also covered by a supply teacher and it is proposed that this post is also removed from the staffing establishment. The present post holder will however be offered an alternative contract if the proposals are agreed. The nursery nurse at Mossgiel will be offered a half time contract at Mossgiel for the duration of the school year 2005-6 and will be offered alternative employment for the other half of the day. This

means that 1 teacher and 3.5 nursery nurses will be available for re-deployment. Arrangements for this will be discussed with the individuals and their Trade Unions. There are currently some vacant posts for nursery nurses in the city and in addition the delivery of the SUCCEED initiative will have staffing implications which will provide re-deployment opportunities. (Refer to Report No 842-2004)

**8.0 CONSULTATION**

8.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Director of Social Work, and Head of Communities. Consultation has also taken place with the relevant Trade Unions.

**9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

Anne Wilson  
Director of Education

Jim Petrie  
Assistant Chief Executive, Management

10 December 2004

AW/JP/CR

## APPENDIX 1- STAFFING and FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CLOSURES

### STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

#### Assuming closure of Cotton Rd Nursery School

Delete 1 Nursery Head Teacher Post  
 Delete 1 Nursery Teacher Post  
 Delete 1 part time clerical assistant  
 Re-deploy 3 Nursery Nurses\*

#### Assuming closure of Sidlaw View Nursery Class

Delete 1 half time Nursery Teacher Post

#### Assuming closure of Mossgiel Nursery Class

Redeploy 1 Nursery Teacher\*  
 Redeploy 1 Nursery Nurse\*\*

\*Redeployments (Total of 1 Teacher and 4 Nursery Nurses) will be undertaken as part of SUCCEED initiative (Refer to Report No 842-2004)

\*\*If the proposals are approved a half time nursery nurse will be required at Mossgiel Nursery Class for the school year 2005/6 only. This means that a reduction in savings of £15,150 will apply to the next financial year only.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

#### Nursery Education Service in Dundee

#### Nursery Education Service in Dundee

#### Rationalisation Report

<u>Designation</u>	<u>fye</u> <u>2005/06</u>
	£
Head Teacher	£50,300
Teacher (1.5posts)	£54,843
Clerkess (16hrs)	£6,300
Possible Saving	£111,443
	fye
Closure of Cotton Road	2005/06
	£
Other Staff Costs	£2,000
Property Costs	£22,000
Supplies & Services	£10,000
Income	-£4,000
Possible Saving	£30,000
Total Saving	£141,443

**Rounded to nearest £10**

**£141,440**

**APPENDIX 2- UPTAKE OF PLACES IN PRIVATE SECTOR AND LOCAL AUTHORITY NURSERIES**

	<b>No. of children taking up places in the local authority</b>	<b>No. of children taking up places in the private sector</b>
<b>August 2003</b>	1745	484
<b>August 2004</b>	1588	507