

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Council Meeting: 26 May 2010

Subject: Strategic Review of the Management of Early Education and Childcare Centres

1. Purpose

- a) To inform members of proposals to change the management of some Early Education & Childcare Centres.
- b) To seek approval to conduct formal consultations under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 in relation to the management of 9 Early Education and Childcare Centres and K.E.Y.S. (Kilpatrick Early Years Service).
- c) To outline proposals to review the potential for relocation of five Early Education & Childcare Centres into Primary School buildings.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Review of Educational Services by Michael O'Neill recommended that a strategic plan is produced to have Early Education and Childcare Centres managed by the Head Teacher of the Primary School in which they are located, and if they are not already within schools, move them into school accommodation where this is appropriate.
- 2.2** There are 22 Early Education and Childcare Centres currently managed by 21 Heads of Centre. This includes 2 who are Head Teachers on conserved salaries. Vale of Leven Early Education and Childcare Centre and Renton Early Education and Childcare Centre are managed by 1 Head of Centre on a split site.
- 2.3** Vale of Leven Early Education and Childcare Centre is in St Martin's Primary and as part of the savings approved on 28 January 2010, Renton Early Education and Childcare Centre will be amalgamated with Vale of Leven Early Education and Childcare Centre and moved into St Martin's Primary School in August 2010.
- 2.4** There are 2 Heads of Centre vacancies at Auchnacraig Early Education and Childcare Centre and Linnvale Early Education and Childcare Centre.
- 2.5** At the Council meeting on 28 April 2010 elected members agreed that no action will be taken to close Gartocharn and Garshake nurseries. As a result no proposals and no savings figures for these two centres are included in this report.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Proposals to change the management of Early Education and Childcare Centres currently within schools

3.1.1 There are currently eight Early Education and Childcare Centres based within school accommodation providing a service which could be managed by the Primary Head Teacher.

1. St Eunan's Early Education and Childcare Centre
2. Linnvale Early Education and Childcare Centre
3. Ladyton Early Education and Childcare Centre
4. Vale of Leven Early Education and Childcare Centre
5. Gavinburn Early Education and Childcare Centre
6. Jamestown Early Education and Childcare Centre
7. St Peter's Early Education and Childcare Centre
8. St Mary's Early Education and Childcare Centre

(See Appendix 1 for details of service offered in each centre.)

3.1.2 In addition, Kilbowie Early Education and Childcare Centre is on the campus of Kilbowie Primary School and provides a service which could be managed by the Head Teacher of the Primary School, in the same way as the 8 Early Education and Childcare Centres above.

(See Appendix 1 for details of service offered.)

3.1.3 K.E.Y.S. is based within Kilpatrick Special School and provides a service to a small number of children with high level medical and educational needs, which could be managed by the Head Teacher of Kilpatrick School as in the 9 Early Education and Childcare Centres above in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.

The service was previously managed by the school but is currently managed by one of the Deputies in the Network Support Team. As the Network Support Team will be restructured and devolved to school management, deleting the team management posts, alternative arrangements require to be put in place for KEYS. The most appropriate solution would be to revert to the previous arrangement and place it again under the management of the Head Teacher of Kilpatrick School.

3.1.4 The external consultant Michael O'Neill stated that the West Dunbartonshire Council model of 22 free-standing early years' establishments, each with its own Head of Centre or Head Teacher is unsustainable in the current climate. Most authorities have moved to a mixed provision for a variety of educational and financial reasons.

For example, where the early years' provision is a nursery class running during school term time, then it has often been located in spare (or new build) accommodation within a Primary School, managed by the Head Teacher. Where the provision is extended day 52 week provision, it has often been a separately managed Early Education and Childcare Centre.

3.1.5 The educational benefits of locating nursery classes within a primary school managed by the Head Teacher can be summarised as follows:-

- i. it allows flexibility in access to a teacher
- ii. it enhances the transition from early years to primary one
- iii. it supports the delivery of a 3 – 18 curriculum within the framework of a Curriculum for Excellence. This requires a new link between primary schools and nursery provision through the 'Early Level' of the programme. Nursery classes could offer very close links to the primary school curriculum if they were managed by the Head Teacher of the Primary School.
- iv. it will assist in the development of collaborative assessment and moderation across sectors delivering the Early Level.
- v. it facilitates cross-sectoral staff development and collaboration.

3.1.6 In addition to the educational benefits outlined in 3.1.5, the proposed management model also brings financial savings due to the deletion of a management post in early years. If the nursery class came under the management of the Head Teacher who receives a salary enhancement this would be more than offset by the saving in not having a separate Head of Centre / Head Teacher post.

3.2 Consultation Procedures

3.2.1 Consultation on such proposals as these would generally be the remit of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee. However because of the timescales inherent in the process and the fact that the Michael O'Neill review has previously been considered by Council, it is considered appropriate for the decision on the commencement of consultation to be taken by Council, with the Educational and operational merits of the proposal, subsequent to the consultation process, being reported back to Education and Lifelong Learning Committee in (December 2010/February 2011).

3.2.2 Proposals which establish a new stage of education in a school require to be the subject of consultation within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 which came into force on 5 April 2010. In terms of these proposals, this would entail a consultation process for each school and Early Education and Childcare Centre, involving all affected staff, parents, pupils Trade Unions, Community Councils and any other relevant affected groups. Legal advice indicates that moving an early years centre into a school constitutes adding a new stage of education, and thus brings the proposed change

of management of EE&CCs into the scope of the Act. Michael O'Neill's report makes no mention of the implications of the Act.

- 3.2.3** As a result, there will require to be a full formal consultation process for each school affected by the proposed change of management of an EE&CC, involving all affected staff, parents, pupils, Trade Unions, Community Councils and any other relevant affected groups.
- 3.2.4** The Act also stipulates that the Education Authority must involve HMle in the consultation process. Their main purpose is to prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal. This report by HMle must then form part of the Consultation Report prepared by the authority.
- 3.2.5** If approval is given, the formal consultation process will be launched on 19 August 2010. Within the terms of the Act, the process must last for a minimum of 6 weeks, to include 30 school working days. In the case of this proposal, the consultation would run until Friday 29 October 2010. The collated, written and verbal responses to the consultation require to be submitted to HMle for consideration prior to HMle submitting their report to the authority within a 3 week period.
- 3.2.6** Given the number of individual consultation exercises contained within this proposal and the requirements of the Act, it is anticipated that the formal Consultation Report, including the HMle submission, would be reported to a special meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee in January 2011, at the earliest.
- 3.2.7** Following consideration of the Consultation Report, if approval is given to proceed with the proposal, implementation would begin from the start of the school summer term 2011, (ie in April 2011), depending on Head of Centre vacancies as a result of early retiral, voluntary severance, resignation, or redeployment.

3.3 Relocation of Early Education and Childcare Centres not based in a School building or campus

The report by Michael O'Neill also addressed the issue of free-standing Early Education and Childcare Centres.

- 3.3.1** There are 5 Early Education and Childcare Centres which offer a service which could be managed by the Head Teacher of a Primary School currently located in free-standing accommodation. These are as follows:-

1. Brucehill Early Education and Childcare Centre
2. Dalmonach Early Education and Childcare Centre
3. Dalmuir Early Education and Childcare Centre
4. Whitcrook Early Education and Childcare Centre
5. Andrew B Cameron Early Education and Childcare Centre

(See Appendix 2 for details of service offered.)

- 3.3.2** In addition to the stream-lined management and educational benefits outlined in 3.1, Michael O'Neill also highlighted the fact that locating nursery classes within a primary as suggested would have a number of additional benefits. In financial terms, it offers savings on buildings which can be declared surplus, generating a possible capital receipt whilst also saving on rates, heating, lighting, repairs and maintenance and janitation. This is especially true if the provision is relocated into existing spare accommodation where property costs, etc., are currently being incurred. Similarly, use of spare primary school capacity could reduce underoccupancy of the schools involved.
- 3.3.3** As members will be aware, a number of our primary schools have considerable spare capacity in relation to accommodation. As school rolls continue to fall, this spare capacity is likely to increase.
- 3.3.4** As noted in 3.2.1, any proposals to relocate an Early Education and Childcare Centre within a Primary School would add a stage of education, which would require formal consultation within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. While the closure of a free-standing Early Education and Childcare Centre in itself does not fall within the scope of the Act, the impact of the relocation of the centre would capture the views of the staff and parents from the EE&CC as part of the formal consultation.
- 3.3.5** The proposal is to review the options for relocation of five Early Education and Childcare Centres into spare capacity within Primary Schools. If approval is given, this review of options would commence from the start of the school session in 2010. The review would require to take account of a range of issues, including geographical spread of services, suitability of accommodation and the financial implications of adaptations.
- 3.3.6** If this review is taken forward, it is anticipated that a further report outlining a range of options would come back to Council at a future date. Given the range of issues to be considered, it is likely that any proposed options would be for implementation over a period of several years. Council would also require to give approval to consult formally on each of the options.

3.4 Arrangement for the remainder of Early Education and Childcare Centres

- 3.4.1** Michael O'Neill in his report distinguished between those centres which can be managed by the Head of a Primary School and those which offer a fully extended service in terms of age range and operating hours and weeks in the year.

The following 7 Centres are in this extended category:-

1. Garshake Early Education and Childcare Centre
2. Gartocharn Early Education and Childcare Centre
3. Auchnacraig Early Education and Childcare Centre
4. Lennox Early Education and Childcare Centre
5. Ferryfield Early Education and Childcare Centre
6. Meadowview Early Education and Childcare Centre
7. Clydebank Early Education and Childcare Centre

(Details of the service provided in each centre is contained in Appendix 4.)

- 3.4.2** It is proposed that the management of these centres remains unchanged from the current arrangement. Previous proposals relating to Garshake Early Education and Childcare Centre and Gartocharn Early Education and Childcare Centre which provide predominantly childcare for working parents, will not now be taken forward as a result of the decision taken at the Council meeting of 28 April 2010.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** If, following consultation, the change of management of Early Education and Childcare Centres is approved, the implementation will mean that we no longer require the Head of Centre posts in these 9 centres in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, and that we remove the management of K.E.Y.S. from the Network Support Team. Heads of Centre who do not seek early retirement, or voluntary severance, will require to be redeployed to vacancies in the remaining centres. The department is currently retaining vacancies to support redeployments, and a number of Heads of Centre have indicated a wish to take up the offer of early retiral. It is anticipated that the removal of the Head of Centre positions can be managed through early retiral and redeployment.
- 4.2** Head Teachers of Primary Schools assuming responsibility for the management of the Early Education and Childcare Centre in their school would require some initial training in specific areas of early years' management, eg., Care Commission Inspections, and ongoing support to take forward developments. This training and support is readily accessible through the existing Early Years' Team and Quality Improvement Service.
- 4.3** Should the consultation go forward as proposed, there will be significant workload issues for staff in Educational Services. Dedicated time will be allocated to the task of collating responses to the consultation from within existing resources.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The financial savings are the cost of a Head of Centre salary less enhancement through job-sizing for the Head Teacher of the primary

and any additional promoted post required. Detailed costs relating to each centre are contained in Appendix 3.

- 5.2** Should the proposal to relocate 5 free-standing centres into Primary School accommodation go ahead, there will be the potential for capital receipts relating to the vacated buildings. This income would be reduced by the cost of any necessary adaptations to Primary Schools. Savings will also be made in respect of property running costs, although it is not possible accurately to quantify these savings at this stage. These costs and savings are likely to be spread over several years.
- 5.3** Given the timescale of the consultation process, there will be no revenue savings in this financial year.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The current arrangements for delivering early education in line with statutory requirements, supporting vulnerable children and families, and providing limited childcare for working parents across Early Education and Childcare Centres are working well and providing high quality service. The service has been developed and expanded as a result of available funding, but if efficiencies cannot be achieved, there is a risk that inadequate funding will undermine quality and consistency.
- 6.2** There may be a risk to the reputation of the Council and Elected Members if the Council's ability to provide statutory services and services to vulnerable children and families is compromised by failure to make efficiencies through changes in management.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** The potential deletion of 14 Heads of Centre posts will have an impact in relation to gender as all staff in post are female and unpromoted staff who are predominantly female would have less opportunity for career progression within the employ of West Dunbartonshire Council.
- 7.2** The service focuses on the needs of young children. The emphasis will be on maintaining the current high quality.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1** West Dunbartonshire Council provides comprehensive and high quality early education and childcare through its own services and through partnership arrangements with 8 private providers. The Council is unique in having all of its nursery provision provided through separately managed Early Education and Childcare Centres. As Michael O'Neill indicates this more expensive model is difficult to sustain in the increasingly challenging financial context.

- 8.2** There is a strong educational case for more closely aligning appropriate primaries and Early Education and Childcare Centres through single management, as is the case in other local authorities.
- 8.3** In order to progress the proposals, we require to conduct formal consultation within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 8.4** If there is agreement to proceed with the change of management for centres within schools, it is the natural next step to consider relocating the other 5 named free standing centres into schools to realise the same educational and financial benefits.
- 8.5** It is therefore recommended that members:-
- a) approve the proposal to conduct formal consultations under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 in respect of 9 Early Education & Childcare Centres starting in August 2010;
 - b) approve the proposal to conduct formal consultation under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 in respect of KEYS, starting in August 2010; and
 - c) note that officers will review the potential for relocation of 5 Early Education and Childcare Centres into Primary School buildings and instruct officers to bring proposals for formal consultation on the options back for approval by the Council.

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Appendices: Appendix 1 –Early Education & Childcare Centres
based in a school Campus which can
be managed by the Head Teacher of
the school – details of service
delivery

Appendix 2 – Early Education & Childcare Centres
not based in a school campus which

could be managed by the Head
Teacher of a school if relocated

Appendix 3 – Financial Savings from proposed
changes in the management

Appendix 4 – Early Education & Childcare Centres
which provide an extended service

Background Papers: Michael O'Neill report 'A Health Check Review of
the Department of Educational Services'

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Wards Affected: All Wards.