



CONSULTATION REPORT

FUTURE PLANS FOR TOWER NURSERY SCHOOL

Introduction

- 1.1. On 16 December 2010, Clackmannanshire Council approved a request from the Education Service to consult on a proposal to close Tower Nursery School as a stand alone establishment and establish it as the nursery class of Park Primary School.
- 1.2. The consultation was conducted in line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This Act requires a consultation process that is robust, open, transparent and fair. The process requires authorities to actively involve and consult children and young people, staff, parents/carers, parent councils and other school users. The authority must also include an educational benefits statement stating its assessment of the effects of the proposal on children and young people. There is a minimum consultation period of six weeks which must be in school term time.
- 1.3. As part of the consultation process, the Education Service undertook the following activities:
 - Consultation papers were distributed to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties
 - The consultation period ran from 26th January 2011 to 16th March 2011 inclusive, a total of 31 school days
 - A notice to advise of the consultation arrangements was placed in the local press
 - A dedicated Clackmannanshire Council web page was established for all information on the consultation and any updates and minutes of meetings
 - A public meeting was held on 24th February 2011
 - A Parent forum meeting was held on 1st March 2011
 - A joint meeting with staff from Park Primary School and Tower Nursery School was held on 15th March 2011

- Children from Tower Nursery School and Park Primary School were involved in the consultation process
- 1.4. In relation to the proposal, a public meeting was held in Alloa Academy. Approximately 15 people attended this meeting. The questions and issues raised at this meeting are contained in Appendix F.
 - 1.5 One parent attended the parent forum meeting held on 1 March. Following the presentation, no additional issues were raised.

2.0 Response to the consultation

- 2.1. A total of 60 responses to the proposal were received.
- 2.2. One of the 60 responses was on behalf of Alloa Central Community Council..
- 2.3. The breakdown of responses by respondent category is detailed in Appendix A.
- 2.4. A list of respondents to the consultation document is detailed in Appendix B.
- 2.5. The majority of the responses were in favour of Option 2 which is to merge the management of the two schools but retain the existing, separate accommodation. A breakdown of numbers selecting each option is detailed in Appendix C.
- 2.6. Consultation was also undertaken with pupils in both schools using the guidance issued by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People. The outcome of the pupil consultation is attached as appendix G.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1. The education provided at Tower Nursery School is highly valued by the parents/carers.
- 3.2. A number of respondents selected the option to merger the management of the schools (option 2) but stated that they would prefer things to continue as they are with a separate headteachers.
- 3.3. The responses to the consultation and the public meeting highlighted the following areas of concern:
 - There was concern expressed about how the nursery parents would access the primary school Headteacher. The expectation is that, in the first instance, the headteacher will be around as much as possible when the children arrive and depart from the nursery so that parents will not have the need to make an appointment.
 - Several respondents expressed concern about the job of the acting nursery headteacher. The arrangement is that she will return to her substantive post as a nursery teacher employed by the Council.

- Some of the respondents raised the issue of the cost of providing a gate for ease of access between the school and the nursery. They felt that this was a waste of money and the money would be better spent elsewhere.
- 3.4. The pupil consultation for Park Primary School and Tower Nursery School was carried out during the week of 14th March 2011. Two visits were made to Tower Nursery School to consult with the nursery children in their key worker groups. Park Primary School class teachers facilitated a discussion in class and recorded the pupils responses. Park primary pupils prefer option 1 which was to move the nursery into the school. Tower Nursery School pupils would prefer to stay in their current building. The outcome of the pupil consultation exercise is attached as Appendix G.

4.0 HMIE report

- 4.1. The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 requires Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to be involved in the formal consultation process and as part of this process HMIE undertook a number of activities in considering the educational aspects of this proposal
- 4.2. The HMIE report is attached as Appendix D. Paragraph 4.3 summarises the key elements of that report.
- 4.3. HMIE state that a sound case has been made for the proposal to merge Tower Nursery School with Park Primary School and that the proposal is likely to lead to educational benefit, particularly for children in the nursery class. There is the potential for the children to benefit from a more continuous and consistent range of curricular opportunities and there is also the potential for an increased level of joint staff development, shared understanding about Curriculum for Excellence and broader whole school improvement. HMIE state that the proposal also achieves the Council's aim of ensuring that early years' education is provided within the campus of a primary school wherever possible. There is a significant saving in keeping Tower Nursery School in its current building rather than relocating it. The report suggests that the Council should make sure that arrangements for the staffing and management of the nursery class are set out more clearly and that improvements to the perimeter of the new campus are carried out.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1. The Council may not decide to implement the proposal until the expiry of three weeks starting from the day on which the consultation report is published in both electronic and printed form.
- 5.2. Once a final decision has been taken on the closure, the Council must notify Scottish Ministers of this decision within a period of six working days. Ministers have the power to issue a call-in notice regarding a closure decision, but only where it appears to the Scottish Ministers that the council has failed in a significant regard to comply with the requirements of the act, or to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision to implement the proposal. Ministers have six weeks to decide whether or not to issue a call-in notice. During the first three weeks of the six week period, any

person or group will be able to make representation to the Scottish Ministers on whether a decision would be called-in. Any relevant representations must be taken into account by the Scottish Ministers when deciding whether or not to issue a call-in

- 5.3. The Council carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix E). This did not identify that any child or young person would be treated less favourably on the basis of, for example, disability or race.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1. The preferred option of the merger of the managements of the two schools will result in a saving of around £40 000 in a full financial year. The cost of providing a secure access point, to make access to and from the school to the nursery easier, will cost around £3,500.

7.0 HR Implications

- 7.1 The merger of the nursery school and the primary school will allow the deletion of the post of Headteacher, Tower Nursery School. This post is currently filled in an acting capacity.
- 7.2 Dependent on the roll of the nursery class staffing ratios will remain the same to meet the statutory requirements.

8.0 Recommendations from the Consultation

- 8.1 It is recommended that Clackmannanshire Council approves the proposal to close Tower Nursery School in June 2011 and reopen it, in its current building, as the nursery class of Park Primary School in August 2011.

9.0 Appendices

- A Number of responses to proposal by category
- B List of respondents to consultation document
- C Breakdown of numbers selecting each option
- D HMIE report
- E Equalities Impact Assessment
- F Notes of public meeting
- G Pupil consultation notes