

**ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NURSERY CLASS AT HOMERSWOOD  
SCHOOL, WELWYN GARDEN CITY**

*Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families*

Author: Stuart Freel, East Area Planning Manager, 01992 555863

Executive Member: Robert Gordon

**1. Purpose**

To enable the Cabinet to determine whether or not to publish statutory notices to establish a new nursery class at Homerswood School, Welwyn Garden City, in the light of the response received from a recent consultation exercise.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 Consultations concluded on 28 February, 2002 on a proposal to change the age-range of Homerswood School in order to provide for the establishment of a new nursery class.
- 2.2 The proposal will be considered at the CSF Resources Panel on Wednesday 20 March, 2002 and the Panel's views will be reported to Cabinet.
- 2.3 A single response has been received and is discussed in the attached report to the CSF Resources Panel. Homerswood School's Governors and the Knightsfield Pre-School support the proposal.

**3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is asked to consider whether or not to proceed with this proposal. If the Cabinet wish to proceed, the next step would be to agree to the publication of statutory notices and to authorise the Director for Children, Schools and Families to approve the proposal, if no formal objections are received, or otherwise, to refer the objection(s), with comments on behalf of the Council, to the Hertfordshire School Organisation Committee for determination.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The background to this proposal is set out in the report to the CSF Resources Panel (and appendices) - attached.
- 4.2 Consultations concluded on 28 February, 2002 and a single response has been received. The issues raised by the response and commented on in the report to the CSF Resources Panel on 20 March. The views of the Panel will be reported to the Cabinet meeting.
- 4.3 The support of Homerswood School's governors and of the Knightsfield Pre-School was given prior to launching the consultation exercise.

**APPENDIX**

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES RESOURCES  
PANEL  
WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH, 2002 AT 2PM**

<b>Agenda Item No</b>
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SCHOOL, WELWYN GARDEN CITY**

Author: Stuart Freel, Area Planning Manager, East - 01992 555863.

Executive Member: Robert Gordon

Local Member: Richard Smith

**1. Purpose**

To enable the Panel to comment on the proposal to provide a new nursery class at Homerswood School.

**2. Summary**

Statutory proposals are required to secure the opening of a nursery class at this primary school. Consultation on the proposal ended on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2002.

**3. Conclusion**

The Panel is invited to make a recommendation to the Cabinet.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 At their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1999, the former Education Operations Sub-Committee approved the capital funding necessary to provide a new nursery class at Homerswood Primary School, Welwyn Garden City (location, see map attached).
- 4.2 The intention behind the school's capital bid was to enable the provision of a mornings-only designated nursery class for four-year-olds at the school. The Knightsfield pre-school, a voluntary sector childcare provider currently located on the Homerswood site will continue in the afternoon focussing on three year old provision. This changed approach has the full support of the Homerswood governors and of the pre-school who no longer wish to be the provider of 4 year old places and wish to see a designated nursery class on the school site.
- 4.3 In the surrounding area the following schools have nursery classes with a size equivalent to their reception intake:
- Harwood Hill
  - St John's, Digswell;
  - Rowans
  - Holy Family
  - Templewood
- 4.4 The schools in Welwyn, i.e. St Mary's and Tenterfield can reasonably be treated as a separate area because Welwyn is a separate community, with major roads including the A1(M) intervening.
- 4.5 Authorisation through the statutory proposal process was not sought at the time of the minor works allocation because:
- further discussions with the pre-school and the primary school governors were needed to ensure a smooth, planned transition between the voluntary sector provision and the new formal LEA nursery class;
  - on-site technical problems were known to be a potential obstacle to implementation of the capital scheme and further feasibility work was needed to secure the premises required.
- 4.6 Subsequently, the capital scheme has been successfully implemented and in the interim the pre-school are occupying that accommodation pending the change to formal nursery class provision and their own afternoon operation.
- 4.7 The pre-school management committee and the Homerswood School governors have now agreed appropriate transitional arrangements, with implementation of the change in view for September, 2002. Formalisation of the situation is needed by changing the age-range of Homerswood School.

- 4.8 Consultations were authorised on 7th January, 2002, are being undertaken by letter and were due back on 28<sup>th</sup> February.
- 4.9 The Cabinet meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2002 will be asked to consider authorising the publication of statutory notices. Any views of this Panel will be reported to the Cabinet.

## **5. Consultation Response**

- 5.1 A single response (attached) has been received from Templewood School. At paragraphs 3 and 4 this questions the need for the new nursery class but appears not to recognise that the new nursery class places are in substitution for 4-year old places in the Knightsfield Pre-School.
- 5.2 In terms of the other issues raised, whilst conclusive evidence is not available it is the case that recruitment of children to the various types of early years provision for four year olds is diversifying. Factors include parental work patterns, the availability of accessible and funded day-care places locally and the Working Families Tax Credit. The Childcare Audit shows that the Welwyn Garden City area has limited day care provision and the area is a priority in terms of supporting further development.

## **6. Financial Implications**

### **6.1 Capital**

A new mobile nursery classroom is now available at Homerswood School and is currently occupied by the pre-school.

### **6.2 Revenue**

The per pupil funding for the new part-time nursery places has been included in the development of the overall schools' budget for 2002/03.

**7. Proposed timescale**

Authorisation to consult	7 <sup>th</sup> January, 2002
Consultation ends	28 <sup>th</sup> February, 2002
Panel	20 <sup>th</sup> March, 2002
Cabinet decision to publish statutory notices	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2002
Statutory notice starts	28 <sup>th</sup> March, 2002
Statutory notice ends	28 <sup>th</sup> May, 2002
School Organisation Committee (if needed)	Early June 2002
New class opens	September, 2002

**8. Conclusion**

The Panel is invited to make a recommendation to Cabinet.