

# Consultation on nursery closures

A report proposing that a consultation should be carried out into the closure of two city nurseries will be presented to a special meeting of the Children & Families Committee next month.

Princess Elizabeth and High School Yards nurseries are currently significantly under-capacity and projections suggest that rolls will get even lower.

In recent months the Council has reviewed the city's 16 nursery schools as part of a drive to ensure that child places are matched as closely as possible with demand.

"We are completely committed to early years and nursery provision to ensure that Edinburgh's children get the best possible start in life.

"However, our extremely challenging financial situation means that we must ensure that the services we provide are efficient and effectively targeted. We have a good spread of nurseries across the city but in some areas there are more than we need. These empty places cost a lot of money and it's important that we get best value from every penny we spend."

Sixteen of the current roll at High School Yards would remain at the nursery next year and it is expected that six of the current roll at Princess Elizabeth Nursery would be there next year. The capacity of High School Yards is 40 full time equivalent (FTE) places and capacity at Princess Elizabeth is 24 FTE.

It is proposed that these children could be accommodated at other local centres allowing for annual revenue savings of £200,000 which will protect other early years services.

According to valuations, capital receipts from the sale of buildings could amount to £250,000 could be reinvested in the Children & Families estate.

If closures were to be confirmed, children from High School Yards would be offered places at Royal Mile Primary School nursery class and at St Leonard's Nursery School. Children from Princess Elizabeth Nursery would be offered places at Cameron House Nursery School and Prestonfield Primary School nursery class. However, parents can apply for their children to attend any nursery in the city.

Over the past ten years forty new or refurbished nursery class buildings have been funded in Edinburgh because of a series of estate reviews and through efficient use of buildings.

The Council runs 79 nursery classes based in primary schools alongside the 16 standalone nursery schools. The Council also funds places in 120 partner provider centres run by the voluntary and private sectors.

The special meeting of the Children & Families Committee takes place on Tuesday 12 October 2010.

If the committee agrees with the report's recommendations a public consultation would begin on 27th October and would run until 7th December. Public meetings would take place locally for each of the proposed closures. If closures were confirmed the two nurseries would close in June 2011.