

# CITY OF PLYMOUTH

**Report:** City Solicitor  
**Subject:** Transfer of Summerfield Children's Unit to Oakleigh Buildings  
**Committee:** Executive  
**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2002  
**Ref:** 5/SP/EG/NK E X 6 2 0 2 / 0 3  
**Part:** I

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## Executive Summary:

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2002, considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Education and Children's Services on the transfer of Summerfield Children's Unit to Oakleigh Buildings and referred the report to the Executive with a recommendation that Officers consider the management issues in respect of the report.

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## Recommendations

- (1) the Executive consider the recommendations of the Panel;
- (2) Officers consider the management issues in respect of the report.



## CITY OF PLYMOUTH

**Report:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Education and Children's Services

**Subject:** Transfer of Summerfield Children's Unit to Oakleigh Buildings

**Committee:** Scrutiny Commission

31<sup>st</sup> October 2002

3/OSC/E&CS

**Part:** IA

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**Executive Summary:** The purpose of this report is to submit recommendations to the Executive Committee following meetings of the scrutiny panel responsible for reviewing the consultation process prior to transfer of Summerfield Children's Unit to Oakleigh Buildings.

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**Corporate Strategy:** The establishment of Scrutiny and Overview Panels forms part of the corporate strategy for implementation of that part of the modernisation agenda relative to new democratic arrangements.

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**Financial Implications:** Cost associated with future consultation. Not quantified at this stage.

**Other Implications:** None.

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**Recommendations** It is recommended that -

- 1 The Officers provide to the Director an outlined business case of service proposals before initiating consultation;
- (2) The Officers be provided with appropriate project management training;
- (3) the consultation and information process should be initiated as early as possible;
- 4) survey objectives be clearly identifiable before distribution;
- (5) response by management to residents needs to be equal;
- (6) access to senior staff made available to local residents ;
- 7) ensure good relationships between staff and local residents.

- (8) ensure regular meetings are held to facilitate ongoing communication between staff and local residents

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**Background papers:**

- (i) Delegated Decision (OSP ECS 13 02/03) – Transfer of Summerfield Children’s Unit to Oakleigh Buildings
- (ii) Call-in Return form for pre-decision scrutiny (OSP ECS 19 02/03) – Transfer of Summerfield Children’s Unit to Oakleigh Buildings.
- (iii) Key Points
- (iv) Report regarding Thornbridge Children’s Unit
- (v) Committee Report and Decision of 21/11/01

DECISION	RECORD OF DECLARATION OF INTEREST
REASONS FOR DECISION	
ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED	
REASONS FOR REJECTION OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS	RECORD OF PAPERS CONSIDERED

**REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - EDUCATION AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

**POST-DECISION SCRUTINY OF THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION PRIOR TO TRANSFER OF SUMMERFIELD CHILDREN’S UNIT TO OAKLEIGH BUILDINGS**

**1.0 Introduction**

The Scrutiny Commission agreed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2002, that the Panel for Education and Children’s Services be requested to scrutinize the delegated decision taken on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002, to transfer Summerfield Children’s Unit to Oakleigh Buildings. The decision was urgent and was called-in for post-decision scrutiny on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2002.

**2.0 Panel Structure**

Councillors

Councillor Mrs Jones, in the Chair.  
 Councillor Camp, Vice Chairman.  
 Councillors Mrs Ford, Jordan, Mrs. Foster, Horler and Jordan

Co-opted Members

Mrs French  
Mr Gale  
Mr Milon  
Prebendary Philpotts

Witnesses

Councillor Simmonds – Ward Councillor  
Mr Main – Local resident

Lead Officers

Lesley Reid – Director for Social and Housing Services  
Paul Mansell – Children’s Replacement Manager, Social and Housing Services

Panel Administrator – Christine Crown, Legal and Democratic Services Department.

**3.0 Reason for Call-in**

Lack of pre-decision consultation as previously promised to local residents – seen to be a breakdown in trust.

**4.0 Hearings**

The Panel met on one occasion, Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October, to consider background papers, hear from witnesses and formulate a report of recommendations to the Scrutiny Commission on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2002.

**5.0 The Panel’s Findings**

- 5.1 On the evidence of the Director for Social and Housing Services it was accepted by The Officers that the consultation which had been carried out was flawed;
- 5.2 The survey distributed to local residents, which had been for gaining information only purposes, had been unclear in its objectives, which led the residents to believe it had been part of a consultation process; about whether Oakleigh should remain as a children’s home or close.
- 5.3 Previous poor relationships between staff and local residents also hindered the information process.

**6.0 Panel’s Recommended Action**

- a. The Officers provide to the Director an outlined business case of service proposals before initiating consultation;
- b. The Officers be provided with appropriate project management training;
- c. the consultation and information process should be initiated as early as possible;

- d. survey objectives be clearly identifiable before distribution;
- e. response by management to residents needs to be equal;
- f. access to senior staff made available to local residents ;
- g. ensure good relationships between staff and local residents.
- h. ensure regular meetings are held to facilitate ongoing communication between staff and local residents

## 7.0 Chairman's Summary

The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, would like to -

- (a) confirm that the topic of the consultation process prior to Transfer of Summerfield Children's Unit to Oakleigh Buildings has been considered with conscientious and serious application;
- (b) thank all the officers and witnesses concerned for their contributions to this Scrutiny Panel.