



CABINET MEMBER DECISION
13 September 2016

**OPTIMISING THE USE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRE
BUILDINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF EFFECTIVE PREVENTION
SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Relevant Cabinet Member
Mr M L Bayliss

Relevant Officer
Director of Children, Families and Communities

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families is recommended to:

(a) note the information in this report and accompanying background information and the detail contained in Appendices 1 to 6, including statutory duties, detailed appraisal of consultation responses and district specific equalities impact assessments;

(b) approve the proposal to allocate a one-off sum of £30,000 which is used to support the universal provision to become self-sufficient (as outlined in detail in paragraphs 29 and 33);

(c) approve the recommendations to change the use of 18 children's centre buildings as outlined in paragraph 34 and detailed in Appendix 1 and authorises the Interim Director of Commercial ETBT1 0 0 1 32/(n)-3(g57.69 3540uETBT1 0 0 7

Background

2. This report needs to be read in conjunction with the report to Cabinet on 16 June

Provider	2016/17 Contract Budget	2017/18 Contract Budget
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Parenting aspiration and parenting skills, and
Child and family health and life chances.

The 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service along with the (renamed) Parenting and Family Support providers will be responsible for delivering the children's centre core purpose in the future and this will be overseen by the Starting Well Transformation Board.

15. Worcestershire County Council owns 32 buildings which are designated as Children's Centres and are currently used by Early Help Providers as key delivery sites. These buildings are some of many community assets where early childhood services and activities can be located and are not the only vehicle for delivering the children's centre core purpose.

16. As part of the re-design of 0-19 prevention services (as described in previous paragraphs) there needs to be even greater focus on supporting children, families and communities and there is no requirement for the (renamed) Parenting and Family Support Providers to deliver from all these buildings in the future. It is envisaged that other community assets will be utilised, and of course much of the service (intensive home visiting or digital advice and information) does not rely on buildings at all. This supports the statement in the statutory guidance that Children's Centres are as much about making appropriate and integrated services available, as it is about providing premises in particular geographical areas as well as more recent reports and studies (such as the DfE study on the impact of Children's Centres published in December 2015 and an All Party Parliamentary Group on the future of Children's Centres as Family Hubs see background information).

17. However, as an important community asset and given the relatively recent capital investment, every effort should be made to ensure the 32 buildings are used to their full potential by the communities they are located in. Therefore a centre by centre review has been carried out taking into account how each centre is currently used (they are all used differently), their location, feedback from the initial consultation held in December 2015 – January 2016, discussions with schools, community groups and existing providers along with the Council's need to increase good quality early years' education places. This review concluded with a set of proposals outlining the future use of each centre. (See the six documents in supporting information (Appendix 1) which summarise the current use of the buildings within each district including details around current access by disadvantaged communities (30% Super Output Area (SOA)), the proposed leaseholder, detail of the proposed future use and a summary of responses gathered through the consultation).

18. The June 2016 Cabinet report set out these proposals, which if implemented would mean no closure of County Council-owned children's centre buildings (the Council has

24. Within the consultation timeframe, a Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting was held a link to the minutes is included in the background information.

25. A total of eight elected members attended the specific Member briefing with Members being referred back to the on-line survey to formally register their views. A further email was then sent to all Members summarising the purpose of the consultation and likely impact.

26. Schools responded positively to the letter seeking their agreement to taking over the lease and subsequent use of the building on their school site. The detailed discussions and formal agreement around change of use will take place following the completion of the decision making process.

27. In addition to the activity described in paragraph 19, the Council has also been made aware of a 'Stop Proposed Children's Centre Cut's Petition co-ordinated by Worcestershire Mum's Network which at the time of writing had been signed by 1057 individuals. This Petition has been considered as part of the development of the recommendations.

Consultation and Equality Impact analysis

28. The recent consultation (phase 2) was centre-specific and focused on seeking views on the proposed changes in order to better understand their potential impact. All responses were free text with no opinion poll type questions. No conclusions can be drawn from the difference in volume of responses by centres and comments are of equal weight.

29. The six district focused documents (Appendix 1) and the consultation summary document (Appendix 2) provide a breakdown of the feedback received from the consultation as well as specific centre by centre/district area responses. The main headlines from all the feedback, including those within the Petition, can be summarised in four points:-

The support for the continued provision of universal activity sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and support sessions such as breastfeeding groups. These sessions are currently delivered in a variety of settings (not only the buildings known as Children's Centres) and by a variety of providers. The majority of responses highlighted the value of these sessions within communities and asked for them to continue. In response to this, a recommendation is being made to invest in a 'transition fund' to support this type of provision to become self-sustaining.

Some concerns around the capability of the proposed new lease holders (i.e. schools) about managing the building and continuing to deliver early childhood services. In response to this, a recommendation is being made to initiate a 6-9 month transition period to provide assurance that buildings are being managed

Potential positive impact in relation to children aged 0-5 and their parents/carers where provision of childcare/nursery provision will be increased under the proposals or additional activities and services will be delivered. Examples of this include additional funded nursery places, before and after school provision, community use, parenting groups and family learning, activities during school holidays, space for meetings with families (all proposals for centres included in the consultation have an element of expanded or additional provision)

No potential disproportionate impact was identified for other Protected Groups (in particular, Disability and Race). The mitigating action outlined at paragraph 29 will mitigate impact for all users of the affected Children's Centre buildings.

Recommendations

32. The Cabinet Member is asked to note the information in this report and accompanying background information and the detail contained in supporting information, including detailed appraisal of consultation responses and centre specific equalities impact assessments.

33. In response to the majority of comments around support for universal activities (such as Stay and Play) a one-off sum of £30,000 is made available to support this provision to become self-sustaining.

34. The Cabinet Member is recommended to agree the proposed use of 18 Children's Centre buildings included within the recent consultation, as summarised below and read

training and employment services to assist parents or prospective parents,
and
information and advice services for parents and prospective parents;
Information and advice services for parents and prospective parents (e.g. leaflets or
displaying website information) are made available

arrangements must include as far as reasonably practicable sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need and consideration of whether early childhood services should be provided through them. These duties will be specifically discharged through the provision of the 0-19 Integrated Public Health Nursing Service and the Parenting and Family Support Providers. Complementing this provision and contributing to improving outcomes to a broader early childhood services offer will be new lease holders of the children's centre buildings and the full range of early years education settings operating across Worcestershire.

43. There are no HR implications for staff employed by Worcestershire County Council. However, the Parenting and Family Support Providers and 0-19 Integrated Public Health Nursing Service providers

