

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## Children's Sub Committee

23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2015

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Early Years and Children's Centres</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All Wards</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>Councillor Tony Smith</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>No</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Early Years and Children's Centre Review which outlined a new delivery model was agreed by Cabinet on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015.
- 1.2 The new delivery model is supported by an outcomes framework to ensure that Wirral's youngest children have the *best possible start in life*, which will be evidenced through their readiness for school and improvements in the numbers of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- 1.3 The current position for the service is moving into an implementation process, where steps will be taken to make the necessary workforce changes, redefine the use of assets and put into place key service development requirements with partners.
- 1.4 A corporate project group established to oversee this work continues to meet regularly. The group has representation from: Business Transformation, Legal Services, Human Resources, Marketing, Finance, Early Years and Asset Management along with Senior Officer support from the Children and Young People's Department and is chaired by the Director of Children's Services. This group is continuing to have project oversight of the implementation programme.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The report presented to Cabinet in July 2015 regarding the delivery of early years and children's centre services was developed following extensive consultation with members of the public and wider partners. Following full consideration of the consultation feedback and responding to the current financial context for the service, a revised delivery model for the Councils early year's services was set out.

- 2.2 The model agreed was a weighted funded model which takes account of levels of deprivation and need across pre-determined reach footprints within constituency areas. Whilst the funding is reduced, the revised funding model will bring clearer parity to resource allocation.
- 2.3 The report highlighted the need for a flexible and well trained workforce, enhanced partnerships and recommended that services are commissioned and delivered through a range of different disciplines, including the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- 2.4 The overall outcome and the outputs that the service is seeking to secure, with partners, aligns with the *Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision*, which pledges that children are ready for school. Through the delivery of outcome focused early interventions and engagement with families, the emphasis is on ensuring that every child has the emotional, social and developmental skills to be ready to start school and learn. In addition, the approach the early years and children's centres services are setting out, provide an important conduit for achieving the ambition of the Wirral Vanguard work (now called *Healthy Wirral*) which is to deliver integrated health and care services to meet need as early as possible in local communities - *ensuring children have the best start in life*.
- 2.5 The methodology, at this stage in the development of services, includes delivering outcome focused provision in an integrated way with partners in local communities through: three hubs, six satellite buildings and commissioned services including those through two nursery schools. The hubs and satellites are shown in Appendix 1
- 2.6 In addition, to the services outlined above, resources will be aligned to meet the Council's statutory duties for early years including: the information duty, childcare sufficiency assessment, administration of the two year old entitlement and the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). There will also be focused support to childcare providers - where they are not meeting the regulatory framework set by Ofsted.
- 2.7 A number of expressions of interest have been received by services and organisations who are interested in the use of buildings, shared use of buildings or to work in partnership with the Council in providing services. Further work to progress this and to support transitional arrangements, will take place alongside the corporate asset management team as part of the implementation plan.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 There continues to be a potential for reputational risk from the disruption to services which will be required to achieve the necessary changes over the next few months and as implementation is progressed. This will be mitigated wherever possible through close partnership working. A risk log that records and assesses this has been collated as part of the overall project plan. This is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the aforementioned project group.

- 3.2 Reaching a final decision for a service redesign has been underway for a considerable period of time which has created a difficult environment for staff teams. Staff will unavoidably continue to be affected until the new working models are fully implemented. The process to implement new staffing arrangements will require a clear plan and relevant human resource processes applied and systematically followed. The relevant trade unions are fully engaged and an issues log that records and responds to matters raised through the process will be put in place. The development of the work will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the project group.
- 3.3 The risk that the Department for Education (DfE) could claw back capital grant funding in respect of children's centres will be reduced and mitigated wherever possible through the proposed future usage of the buildings and an agreement of a deferral which is required by the DfE will be progressed with them.

#### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Following a comprehensive review and extensive consultation a range of options for the service have been considered.
- 4.2 The decision to progress to three hubs or main centres and six satellites, will ensure sufficient geographic coverage across all constituency areas, continue to provide a named children's centre for every child under five years, reduce the amount of administrative overheads and deliver within the available funding envelope. The hubs and satellites are shown in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 Additionally, the indicative figures set out in the consultation document were revised based on the application of a balanced funding formula built on need and the use of proven tools and models.
- 4.4 This revised position outlines a model which most closely meets the needs of the local population, and has been arrived at through extensive engagement with stakeholders and families. It considered data analysis of need and deprivation, geographic cover as well as feedback received from people using the services. It will be kept under review as the model develops.

The delivery model will be able to respond to changes to government guidance, work effectively with key partners and offer a more targeted provision based on need – in short it will serve to realign the service and position it to more easily and readily adapt in the future.

The pledge, to give our youngest children the very best start in life adopted as one of twenty pledges to drive the Boroughs agenda, will require further work, policy change, drive and an ambitious approach by all. It is therefore accepted that realigning the service is only the first phase in the overall approach which is required to drive ambitious and sustainable change for future generations.

## **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The approach to the review and the subsequent consultation exercise undertaken represents a comprehensive and genuine attempt to engage with key stakeholders and to take their views on board in the co-design of the new service offer.
- 5.2 Further meetings with key partners for example, schools, health and voluntary sector partners are currently taking place in order to add further definition to the shared working arrangements and future integrated delivery.
- 5.3 Ongoing communication and consultation with parents of children under 5 years and prospective parents will take place as the service transitions into the new delivery model. Ongoing communication and consultation with partners and key stakeholders will take place as the service transitions into the new delivery model
- 5.4 Consultation with Trade Union colleagues and staff will now progress through the Council's agreed framework for such activity.

## **6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

- 6.1 None.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 7.1 During the consultation period, partners were invited to submit expressions of interest for the delivery of services through the Children's Centre buildings. A number of expressions of interest have been received from across the voluntary, community and faith sectors and these will be further progressed in the coming weeks

## **8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 8.1 The children's centre budget in 2015-16 is £3,080,000 and includes a savings target of £1.5 million. Whilst there has been a delay in implementing the changes during this period, the savings will be met in full from 2016/7 onwards. This will represent a significant reduction in early years and children centre services directly delivered by the council and a move to a more facilitative role will be required.
- 8.2 Whilst the funding is reduced, the revised funding model will bring clearer parity to resource allocation. The overall ambition will be to ensure that the available resource will be directed to enable those most in need of services to receive them, in a timely and effective way.
- 8.3 The staffing structure will principally be aligned on the basis of need and will follow due process through full human resources consultation with staff and trade unions.

- 8.4 The requirement for caretaking and cleaning staff will be determined following the agreement of the revised delivery model and future usage of buildings. Consultation will be undertaken as appropriate with the individuals concerned and or their respective employing organisation.
- 8.5 Changes to the service following Cabinet approval means that nine buildings will continue to operate as main hubs or satellites, consideration of the use of the remaining buildings will take place through transitional discussions with partners, including those to schools who are moving to deliver the 2 year old offer and those who have expressed an interest in delivering services from centres, through the consultation or via the corporate asset management team.
- 8.6 The decision taken following the review does not affect the status of nursery school provision or nursery school buildings.

## **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There is representation from Legal Services on the Project Group who will advise on any legal implications in relation to the implementation.

## **10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes, an impact review can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-april-2014/eias-families-wellbeing>

## **11.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The potential changed use of buildings across the borough could bring benefits in terms of carbon reductions

## **12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 None as a direct result of this report.

### **13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 That the content of the report is noted as an update on the implementation of the new delivery model for early years services. The report summarises some of the key issues considered by Cabinet on 27 July, particularly the focus by the Council and its partners on maximising the available resource for the Boroughs youngest children and their families, and sets out how all partners including those with statutory responsibilities will work together to jointly commission and design services in pursuit of the very best possible outcomes

That the report promotes consideration of areas for scrutiny and challenge, and a platform to stimulate further development of local policy and strategy, with partners, to ensure all children have the best start in life, evidenced by their readiness for school.

### **14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

14.1 Ensures that the Council meets its statutory obligation to deliver sufficient early childhood provision as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 (and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) 2009 which inserted new provisions into the Childcare Act 2006).

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### **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1 - Map**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL**

### **BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY**

<b>Briefing Note</b>	<b>Date</b>

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Early Years and Children's Centre Review</b>	<b>July 2015</b>
<b>Early Years and Children's Centre Review</b>	<b>September 2014</b>