



## Policy and Performance Coordinating Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thursday, 12 February 2015</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>6.00 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall</b>

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### AGENDA

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To record any apologies for absence received.

**2. CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (DISPOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS) REGULATIONS 2012, INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when the item is reached.

Members are reminded that they should also declare whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

**3. CHAIR'S BRIEFING NOTE (Pages 1 - 12)**

As the Call-in meeting held on 12 November 2014 was adjourned and it was not possible to reconvene it until 12 February 2015, the attached Briefing Note has been provided, at the request of the Chair, as a reminder of the proceedings of the Call-in so far.

**4. CALL-IN OF A DELEGATED DECISION - MINUTE NO. 54 - EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES (Pages 13 - 66)**

A report by the Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources is **attached**.

**5. URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR (PART 1)**

To consider any urgent business that the Chair accepts as being urgent.

**6. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RECOMMENDATION:

That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

**7. URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR (PART 2)**

To consider any urgent business that the Chair accepts as being urgent.

### **PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2014**

In attendance: Councillor M McLaughlin (Chair) and Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, C Blakeley, P Brightmore, P Doughty, D Elderton, L Fraser, P Gilchrist, R Gregson, W Smith, M Sullivan, I Williams, J Williams and J Williamson.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W Clements, A Hodson, M Hornby, A Leech, C Muspratt and S Williams.

**2. CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RELEVANT  
AUTHORITIES (DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS)  
REGULATIONS 2012, INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS**

Councillor P Hayes, Lead Member and signatory to the Called-in decision, declared a personal interest because of this and by virtue of being a Director of Overton Community Centre that ran a Nursery. Councillors B Berry and L Fraser declared a personal interest by virtue of them being signatories to the called-in decision. It was noted that no Member of the Committee was subject to the Party Whip.

**3. CALL-IN OF A DELEGATED DECISION - MINUTE NO. 54 - EARLY  
YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

The Committee had before it for consideration a report by the Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources that included the relevant documents in relation to the called-in key decision of the Cabinet following the Early Years and Children Centre Review. (Cabinet Minute No. 54 refers.)

Appended to the Strategic Director's report were the following documents:

Appendix 1 - Call-in Procedure which included the names of the witnesses provided by both the Lead Member and Signatory to the Call-in and the Decision-Taker.

Appendix 2 - The Call-in Notice.

Appendix 3 - The Cabinet Report.

Appendix 4 - August 2014 – Wirral Early Years & Children's Centre Review.

Appendix 5 - An Extract from the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 September 2014. (Minute No. 54)

The Committee was reminded in the report that the Call-in Procedure had been agreed by at its meeting held on 24 June 2013 and

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subsequently revised at a further meeting held on 15 October 2014. The Call-in Procedure had been revised to ensure that:

- (a) witnesses to a called-in decision, who attended the meeting had the flexibility to read out a written statement to the Committee within a timescale not to exceed five minutes; and
- (b) the relevant Cabinet Member and the Lead Member and Signatory to the call-in could be questioned once they had made statements to the Committee.

The Committee noted that the decision had been called-in by Councillors P Hayes, J Green, G Watt, I Fraser, J Hale, G Ellis, L Rennie, T Anderson, S Williams, B Berry, A Sykes and E Boulton. It was also noted that the Signatories had raised the following four significant points:

‘We are concerned that such a huge reduction in service provision will have a real and adverse impact on those communities who have come to rely upon the valuable services offered through our Children’s Centres.

A decision so crucial to the Council’s provision of early year’s services should be subject to further member scrutiny.

Mindful of the concerns raised over alleged deficiencies with the consultation on the closure of the Lyndale School, we require further details as to how future consultations to ‘progress’ the recommendations will take place and its format.

We are concerned that the Leader of the Council is reported to have said that the plans mean the Council will retain the buildings and “hopefully have a new government next year and we can build these services back up”. Is the mothballing of buildings in the hope of a change in government conducive to a well thought through Early Years policy? Is the Leader confident a different government would allow for the ‘building up’ of these services and what is the evidence of this? These are questions which should be further explored.’

## **Chair’s Opening Remarks**

The Chair on opening the meeting asked Members, Officers and Witnesses in attendance to introduce themselves and they duly obliged. The Chair then proposed that the Call-in Procedure be varied so that the Leader of the Council, Councillor P Davies, a Call-in Witness and also a Witness for the Decision-Taker, could leave the meeting at 6:45pm to attend to other Council business. On a question from a Member the Head of Legal and Member Services confirmed that the Committee could vary its procedure if it saw fit to do so. The Chair’s

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proposal was then seconded and a vote was taken and it was agreed (10 for and 5 against (with Councillor C Blakeley voting against) that the call-in procedure be varied and Councillor P Davies be the first witness to come forward and make his opening statement and answer any questions that the Committee may have.

The Lead Member and Signatory to the Call-in asked the Chair if he could address the Committee on a matter before the Leader began to give evidence. The Chair agreed to his request.

The Lead Member and Signatory to the Call-in informed that he had wanted to call as a witness a representative of Unison but unfortunately, she had been unable to attend the meeting. The representative had formulated some written remarks and he sought permission to present them to the Committee.

The Chair informed that the Call-in Procedure did not allow for written witness evidence to be presented at a meeting if the actual Witness was not in attendance. A similar request had been considered previously by the Committee and Members, when they considered this very issue, had also considered that it was very important that the Committee had the opportunity to question all witnesses and/or seek clarification on any points raised by witnesses. The Head of Legal and Member Services confirmed that the Chair was correct in her understanding and that the Committee had previously exercised its discretion and refused a written statement from a Witness who was not in attendance at a Call-in meeting.

The Chair then proposed that the Committee adhere to the procedure it had used in the past and that the written statement of the witness who had been unable to attend be not accepted, this was seconded and a vote was taken and it was agreed (10 for and 5 against (with Councillor C Blakeley voting against) that the procedure this Committee has used in the past be adhered to and the written statement of the Witness who had been unable to attend this meeting be not accepted.

## **Explanation of the Call-In by the Lead Member and Signatory, Councillor Paul Hayes**

Councillor P Hayes informed the Committee that the Cabinet had made a very important decision which he considered could benefit from further scrutiny. earlier in the meeting. The Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services had previously informed that he was a strong advocate of Early Years and what could be achieved. The cross party view was important and consequently his view was that the Key Decision should be considered again.

The Early Years and Children Centre Review had ticked all the boxes in terms of strategic thinking and partnerships but Councillor P Hayes

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questioned whether this really was the case in respect of this Review as the partners felt left out and hood winked and the staff felt let down by the consultation.

Councillor P Hayes considered that this Key Decision had been more about funding cuts than presenting a plan to ensure Early Years remained a priority for the Council. It was not evidenced based but was emulating another local authority who had a set of different circumstance to that of Wirral.

## **Explanation of the Decision Taken by the Cabinet – Councillor T Smith – Cabinet Member – Children and Family Services**

Councillor T Smith set out the chronology and reasoning of how the Cabinet arrived at its decision to resolve

- '(1) That the Wirral Early Years and Children's Centre Review undertaken between April – July 2014 and detailed in August 2014, be endorsed.
- (2) That Cabinet notes that a key consideration of the review has been to ensure that efficiencies of £2m (agreed in December 2013), can be chieved for the 2014 – 2015 period. The review has noted and acknowledged that there will be continued financial pressures on public sector services.
- (3) That the recommendations detailed in the Review be progressed through to a public consultation.
- (4) That a six week consultation period be undertaken to progress the recommendations detailed in the Review, which will advise a future delivery approach for the Early Years and Children's Centre Service, namely that –
  - (i) The Children's Centre offer becomes an integral part of the Early Help offer through effective identification and support of children and families who need targeted early help. An overarching aim is to safely reduce the number of children referred to social care or accessing specialist/statutory services. *Noting*, as key to this, that in 2013 the former Children's Centre Family Support Resource shifted to become an integrated part of the Borough's wider Family Support offer, aligned and co-ordinated based on need and demand to the Gateway and as part of targeted services.
  - (ii) Work to establish strategic and operational policies and procedures to ensure that a joint service offer across the Borough's early childhood services develop – reducing

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duplication, and cost and improving outcomes. This will see formal commissioning partnership arrangements drawn up between the Council and health visiting and the Council and Jobcentre Plus (as statutory partners). These will include agreements for effective and robust information sharing. This will see wherever possible a health visiting and Jobcentre Plus service delivered through Children's Centres and built around integrating delivery plans aligned through the outcomes framework (see page 7 of the Review).

- (iii) Staffing Structures are developed for four Constituency Areas, designed around need and population. A Central Business Support Team will also be developed to secure the wider Early Years and Childcare remit and offer essential support to the operation of Children's Centre activity.
- (iv) To secure one main Children's Centre (which will be designated with DfE as full core purpose offer centres) in each of the four Constituency Localities. This will give a named Children's Centre for every child and support the local authority to carry out its statutory function to evidence sufficient Children's Centre activity. It is anticipated that all other current buildings will be preserved through partnership working with key stakeholders such as schools, health, and the voluntary, private and independent sector to offer an element of targeted support in those areas where there is a high local need identified. This will see the 18 Children's Centre buildings deliver as:
  - 4 Main Hubs or Designated Children's Centres
  - 4 Outreach or Satellite of the Main Hubs
  - 2 work as an extended nursery school to offer service
  - delivery alongside the poverty hub schools
  - 4 potentially transferred to be delivered by schools
  - 4 to be further developed with schools and partners'

Councillor T Smith referred to the current financial position of the Council, informed that further reductions in funding were anticipated and that Early Years had not been the subject of a review since its inception in 2002. The current practice and approach to the delivery of Children's Services did not reflect well enough the Government Guidance introduced in 2013. In short he informed that the Early Years and Children's Centre's Services and general approach were out of step but he was confident that the Review would address this for the good of the Services going forward.

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## **Evidence from Call-In and Decision-Taker's Witness Councillor P Davies**

Councillor P Davies provided the Committee with a short statement and informed that he had seen the wording of the Call-in Notice. He then reminded the Committee why Early Years and Children's Centres had been the subject of discussion since 2010. Councillor P Davies told the Committee that public services had been absolutely savaged by Central Government and that the Council was only half way through the period of austerity that had been planned, witnessing unprecedented cuts and that this would continue to impact on a local authority like Wirral. The Early Years Intervention Grant had been completely cut from the Council's budget and the Council was now witnessing a scorched earth approach.

Councillor P Davies referred to the recent report of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and reminded the Committee that areas in the North of England had suffered greater cuts than those in the South. He informed that the reality of all of this was that the Council had to make profound decisions on its services in order to ensure that the books balanced. He considered the report to be a good starter for ten, subject to the six week consultation to look at how the Council could reshape Early Years and Children's Centres, in the light of the funding cuts it had to make. The end result must be that the Council lived within its means whilst delivering a good quality service.

Finally, Councillor P Davies made reference to the fact that he had been quoted in the Call-in Notice. He reported that it was not an accurate quote and he considered that, given the cuts the Coalition Government was making, the Council should try to retain Children's Centres, One Stop Shops, Libraries etc. with a reduced service so that if, in the future, a more enlightened Government was elected, the Council could build them up again. Councillor P Davies informed that his Political Group accepted that the Council's deficit needed to be driven down but that this should be done in a more humane way for local authorities like Wirral that had high levels of social deprivation.

Members then asked Councillor P Davies a number of questions which he answered accordingly. Issues raised during this session included the following:

- Money the Council had loaned and the income it had generated over the last five years.
- The cost to the Council of servicing its loans? Councillor Phil Davies as unable to answer this question as he had not received any notice of it but agreed to write to the Member who had asked this question with the answer in due course.
- A Member claimed that in the last five years the Council had spent £77m in interest payments and queried whether the

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approach that was being adopted was good financial management.

- A Member informed that the Leader had been quoted as saying that the Council would not be closing Children's Centres like other local authorities and queried whether this was a sensible approach. Councillor P Davies replied that he considered that it was and that it would be short sighted to close buildings in the Council's ownership because it was difficult to open them once they were mothballed. Quite often they were the subject of vandalism. However, the Council did have a policy to reduce the number of buildings it owned but it was Councillor P Davies' view that Libraries, One Stop Shops and Children's Centres etc. provided a valuable service and with a more enlightened Government in the future, they could be built back up.
- A Member's view was that decisions were been taken based on hope for the future and that he had seen the Council's approach to Children and Young People in respect of its proposal to close the Lyndale School where no savings would be made.
- A Member referred to the staffing levels on page 51 of the agenda (page 35 of the Review document at Appendix 4) and queried how the Council would get to the new levels and target the new service to meet need and asked what work had been done to show that the new structure suggested met the need. Councillor P Davies responded that broadly, the Council needed to have a model of hubs and satellite Children's Centres. Some would be taken over by schools and services delivered in partnership. The Council needed to be more robust in identifying families in the deprived areas of the Borough and robust in recording the outcomes that were delivered. The Council had been good at recording outputs and activity but Councillor P Davies questioned whether it was addressing the deep levels of poverty. It needed to capture the impact that would be delivered going forward. • Councillor P Davies asked what the cost to the Council had been of capitalising the redundancies of 1100 members of staff.
- A Member asked if Councillor P Davies had made his objections clear to Central Government and if it had received cross Party support. Councillor P Davies replied that he had made numerous representations but unfortunately, the Government did not listen. The Key Decision, subject to the call-in, was based on a sensible analysis of what the Council had to do to make savings and deliver services. He was happy with an all Party approach to protesting about the level of cuts and would be happy to join a delegation to see the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to tell them that the level of cuts the Council was being forced to make was unacceptable and point out the level of misery that the 'Bedroom Tax' was causing.
- This approach was the only way to target the Council's services and the only way forward. The Council had to be more strategic, tailor its services and find new ways of delivering them. It was a

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problematic solution and in an ideal world Councillor P Davies would not want to do this.

- Reference was made by a Member to the Council lending money to Carlisle Council at an interest rate of ½%. Councillor P Davies informed that the money the Council lent generated additional funding it would not have had otherwise. This was a Treasury Management Policy that all Councils used.

## **Questioning of the Lead Member and Signatory by the Committee**

Members were afforded the opportunity to question Councillor P Hayes. Issues raised during this session included the following:

- Councillor P Hayes believed that the review should be a review of the service as a whole and that it should not just be based on cutting the service. It needed to be a mixture of both of these.
- Councillor P Hayes considered that there needed to be more targeting of service but not by using a broad brush approach and that certain officers had been operating in silos and not consulting on what they were doing.
- Councillor P Hayes was of the view that the consultation process had not been carried out properly. A fundamental review to change the way the Council worked clearly needed proper consultation with partners, families and staff. There was little evidence of any work in this regard.
- A Member admitted confusion with the way the Call-in Notice had been worded and referred to a statutory Government Report published in 2013. Councillor P Hayes advised that the Government has said that local authorities need to look at a targeted approach but it had to be done working collaboratively with partners etc.
- A Member informed that Officers had tried to come up with targeted services to address inadequacies on the Wirral. Councillor P Hayes informed to do this they needed to speak to staff; families and partners but currently, they had no ownership of this.
- Many of the Centres were providing services very well but the report did not recognise this.
- A Member asked who were the partners and where were they, who had been consulted and who had not. Councillor P Hayes informed that this would be made plain to the Committee when his witnesses were invited to give evidence.
- Councillor P Hayes was asked if he had a specific interest in Early Years. He informed that he hoped that Early Years would make a dent in child poverty in Wirral.
- Councillor P Hayes was asked if he had any involvement with Early Years. He informed that he had only as a Borough Councillor and that he did not have children.
- Councillor P Hayes considered that the Council's staff were well placed to provide quality services and the Council needed to

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work with them to shape them. They had not had any involvement in any shape or form.

- Councillor P Hayes was of the view that there should have been a proper review document.
- A Member informed that he was not convinced that Councillor P Hayes understood the report and what was being done and queried whether he was using the call-in process for political gain, as he had been a signatory to a number of call-ins.

## **Questioning of the Cabinet Member – Children and Family Services by the Committee**

Members were afforded the opportunity to question Councillor T Smith. Issues raised during this session included the following:

- A Member asked for details of the consultation exercise undertaken before the Key Decision was taken. Councillor T Smith informed that there had been pre consultation, one of the most extensive pre consultation exercises carried out by the local authority. It had involved all partners and had been done extremely well. Officers had put in a lot of time and effort in to consulting in a rigorous and robust way.
- A Member asked to see evidence of the pre consultation results and asked why the consultees had not received copies of the notes taken. Councillor T Smith informed that the Minutes would be made available to the consultees.
- A Member referred to the fact that there had not been a review of this service area since 2002 and asked if expectations in respect of Early Years had changed since this time. Councillor T Smith informed that there had been some tremendous legislation in 2002, brought about by a Labour Government and outcomes for children in the most disadvantaged areas had been as good as they could have been. He wanted the best for all children on Wirral and this was the purpose of the review. Councillor T Smith reported that in 2012, when he became a Cabinet Member, he began to review the situation. He also informed that because of funding cuts he was aware that 500 Children's Centres had been closed across the country since 2011.
- A Member considered that it must be established whether the pre consultation process on which the Key Decision had been based had been flawed. Councillor T Smith reported that, in his opinion, the pre consultation had been as extensive and robust as it could have been carried out by a local authority.
- A Member asked why if Councillor T Smith wanted the best for all the children in the Borough, when it was also proposed to close the Lyndale School when it was within budget.

{The Chair informed that this question was out of order and advised Councillor T Smith not to answer it.}

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- There had been some pre consultation and there was to be another consultation period of six weeks and partners would be involved. The Council aimed to provide the best opportunities for all children in the Borough and to do this would go the extra mile to support them. The six week consultation would be robust and the views of partners, schools and other interested parties in Early Years would be sought. There had not been a review since 2002, the world and families had changed, the Council did not have all of the knowledge and would need to look at any best practice. The aim was to improve outcomes for all Wirral children in a smarter way, even if savings could not be made. Councillor T Smith indicated that he would listen carefully to those who provided suggestions/solutions to improve outcomes for those children who lived in disadvantaged areas, with an open mind, so that when they transferred to school they were 'school ready'.
- A Member noted that Appendix 3 and Appendix 5 (Pages 15, 53 and 54 of the Agenda referred to reducing duplication and queried what duplication should be reduced, referring in particular to health visiting. Councillor T Smith informed that he wanted no duplication of what health visitors did and that the Council needed to work closely with them. All organisations involved needed to play a part in the Early Years and the Council must work smarter with the Health Service.
- Councillor T Smith considered it imperative to ensure that more funding was provided in the areas of greatest deprivation in order to ensure good parenting and that their children were encouraged to participate from ages one, two and three.
- A Member queried whether the further six weeks of consultation was adequate and had the Christmas period been taken into account. Councillor T Smith informed that he had spoken to Lead Members in other Councils who had only had three weeks of consultation but he was flexible, especially over the Christmas period. He had received very robust feedback.

It was then proposed and seconded and it was agreed that the Committee adjourn for five Minutes so that members could have a comfort break.

Adjournment

## **Evidence from Call-in Witnesses:**

**Cathlyn Hughes, Head of Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre; Lynn Loughran, Wirral Link Forum Member; and Steve Vasey, Children and Family Services Manager, Wirral Autistic Society**

Members were afforded the opportunity to question the three witnesses listed above. Issues raised during this session included the following:

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- The view of one witness was that there had not been any meaningful consultation with voluntary organisations and the families with whom she worked. Voluntary organisations and families had been unaware that a pre consultation exercise of such importance had been taking place and the voice of these people should be heard.
- It was important that there were effective services providing best outcomes and services for the families with whom the witnesses worked.
- One witness informed that he had some first-hand experience of the pre scrutiny. He had been invited to a meeting on 30 April 2014 as a member of the Bromborough Steering Group. Issues discussed had been recorded on a flip chart. On 24 September 2014 a document had been discussed at the Link Forum. It had become apparent to him that he had been the only person who had attended a consultation meeting. Link Forum members had shared their concerns that they had not been consulted. He accepted the need for funding and that it had to be targeted but was confused about what he had been engaged in and concerned about difficult to reach families.
- A witness informed that she understood the Council's position regarding funding cuts and that new ways of working had to be identified. She was also aware that the Council needed to make its decisions as fair as possible. However, the recommendations in the report did not meet that aspiration.
- It was considered that the detail of the review was unclear.
- High aspirations were embedded in the SEN Code of Practice.
- Nursery School Teachers believed that they had been omitted from the first round of the consultation.
- No consultation meetings had been held in the Leasowe and Moreton areas.
- The witnesses were worried about the huge reduction in funding and that it was not targeted enough on the most vulnerable. Cuts continued to be made in funding to Leasowe Children's Centre and delegated schools savings. Service delivery had been built up whilst making savings and staff had not been made redundant.
- The effect of the Voluntary Intervention Programme was discussed. It was noted that there were more children with challenging behaviour and there were more children who were not 'school ready'. This made families more vulnerable not less vulnerable.
- A witness believed that budget allocation had not been done in a clear way and money had been syphoned off. Staff structures did not provide enough capacity. As a result, children and families would fall through the net.
- A witness was concerned that there were no options being put forward on which to consult and considered the review to be fundamentally flawed. Opportunities had been missed to maximise the service. It was accepted that the further consultation would be robust but what consultees were being consulted on was a worry.

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- On being asked by the Chair whether the witnesses would like a responsive consultation process, a witness informed that his concern and that of his organisation was that the document being reviewed did not go far enough and it was obvious that the specific needs of families on the Wirral was not understood. He queried how the decisions had been arrived at. It was a difficult time and disaffected families did not understand the processes being gone through. Outreach Workers were the life's blood of these families. From them decisions were made on how to support the services. Too much funding had been taken away and there were no longer enough Outreach Workers to support these families.

The Chair announced that there was an emergency in the local area as two buildings had collapsed into the street. This meant that the Town Hall had to be evacuated before Brighton Street was closed. She proposed, it was seconded and it was agreed that the meeting be adjourned because of an emergency in the local area to a date and time to be agreed as soon as possible.

Adjournment

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### POLICY AND PERFORMANCE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

12 FEBRUARY 2015

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<i>CALL IN – EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN CENTRE REVIEW</i>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<i>ALL</i>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<i>JOE BLOTT STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION &amp; RESOURCES</i>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<i>CLLR ANN MCLACHLAN</i>

#### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out the relevant documents in connection with the call in of a Cabinet decision relating to the Early Years and Children Centre Review. Members of the Coordinating Committee are requested to consider these documents as part of the call in process.

#### 2.0 CALL IN PROCEDURE

2.1 The procedure for dealing with a call-in was agreed by the Coordinating Committee on 24 June 2013 and subsequently revised on 15 October 2014. The procedure was revised to ensure that:

**(a) witnesses to a called in decision, who attend the meeting have the flexibility to read out a written statement to the committee within a timescale not to exceed five minutes; and**

**(b) The relevant Cabinet Member and the Lead Member to the call-in can be questioned once they have made statements to the Committee;**

2.2 A revised call-in procedure is included as Appendix 1 and sets out the framework for how evidence will be presented and the call in meeting will be conducted.

#### 3.0 CALL IN DOCUMENTATION

3.1 The Form which sets out the signatories to the Call In is included as Appendix 2. This also indicates the reasons put forward by the signatories as to why the decision has been called in.

- 3.2 The decision called in was taken by Cabinet on 11 September 2014. The Cabinet report and appendix provided to inform this decision are included as Appendix 3 and 4 and the relevant Cabinet Minute is included as Appendix 5.

#### **4.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 In accordance with Minute No. 34 of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 October 2014, the revised Call-in Procedure note presented as Appendix 1 to the report of the Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources be adopted; and.
- 4.2 the Committee be requested to consider the documents provided along with the additional evidence submitted at the meeting to inform the scrutiny of this Cabinet decision.

## APPENDIX 1

### CALL- IN PROCEDURE

#### **Chair's opening remarks (5 minutes)**

The Chair will open the special Committee meeting convened to consider the call in and set out the procedure as follows:

#### **Explanation of the call in by the lead signatory (5 minutes)**

The Chair will invite the lead signatory to set out the reasons for the call in. Members of the Committee will be invited to ask the lead signatory questions.

#### **Overview and explanation of the decision taken by the relevant Cabinet Member (5 minutes)**

The Chair will invite the Cabinet Member to explain the reasons for the decision. Members of the Committee will be invited to ask the Cabinet Member questions.

#### **Evidence from call in witnesses**

The Chair will invite the following witnesses to come forward. Witnesses may read out a written statement (not to exceed 5 minutes) if they wish, prior to questions from Members of the Committee.

1. Councillor Phil Davies, Leader of the Council
2. Cathlyn Hughes- the Head of Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre.
3. Lynn Loughran- Wirral Link Forum Member
4. A representative from Unison.
5. Steve Vasey – Children and Family Services Manager, Wirral Autistic Society

#### **Evidence from decision-taker's witnesses**

The Chair will invite the following witnesses to come forward. Witnesses may read out a written statement if they wish (not to exceed 5 minutes), prior to questions from Members of the Committee.

1. Councillor Phil Davies, Leader of the Council
2. Julia Hassall, Director of Children's Services
3. Deborah Gornik, Head of Targeted Services

#### **Summary of the lead signatory (5 minutes)**

The Chair will invite the lead signatory to summarise the key points of evidence given in support of their case.

#### **Summary of the decision-taker (5 minutes)**

The Chair will invite the decision-taker to summarise the key points of evidence given in support of the initial decision.

**Committee Debate**

The Chair will invite comments, observations and discussion from members of the Committee.

**Committee Decision**

The Committee having considered the evidence and debate may:-

- Refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.
- Refer the matter to the Council. Such a referral should only be made where the Coordinating Committee believes that the decision is outside the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget. The procedures set out in those rules must be followed prior to any such referral.
- Uphold the decision - If the Coordinating Committee agrees with the initial decision the relevant Senior Officer may implement it without delay.

In the event of any political group not agreeing with the majority decision of the Coordinating Committee, it may prepare a written minority report for consideration by Council when the minutes of the Coordinating Committee are considered. Any such report must be handed to the Head of Legal and Member Services in accordance with Standing Order 7(2).

The Leader of the relevant group or his/her representative will have an opportunity to explain the minority report to the Council and the Council may discuss and vote for/or against such a report without prejudice to any decision already implemented.



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CALL-IN PROCEDURE  
(Standing Order 35)**

**Decision of Cabinet to be called in:**

Date of meeting	11 September 2014
Minute number	54
Subject	Early Years and Children’s Centres

**Reason(s) for call-in (use additional sheet if required):**

We are concerned that such a huge reduction in service provision will have a real and adverse impact on those communities who have come to rely upon the valuable services offered through our Children’s Centres.

A decision so crucial to the Council’s provision of Early years services should be subject to further member scrutiny.

Mindful of the concerns raised over alleged deficiencies with the consultation on the closure of the Lyndale School, we require further details as to how future consultations to ‘progress’ the recommendations will take place and its format.

We are concerned that the Leader of the Council is reported to have said that the plans mean the Council will retain the buildings and “hopefully have a new government next year and we can build these services back up”. Is the mothballing of buildings in the hope of a change in government conducive to a well thought through Early Years policy? Is the Leader confident a different government would allow for the ‘building up’ of these services and what is the evidence of this? These are questions which should be further explored.

**Called in by [signature(s) to be inserted]:**

Councillor	Paul Hayes
Councillor	Jeff Green
Councillors:	
(1)	Geoffrey Watt

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(2)	Leah Fraser
(3)	John Hale
(4)	Gerry Ellis
(5)	Lesley Rennie
(6)	Tom Anderson
(7)	Steve Williams
(8)	Bruce Berry
(9)	Adam Sykes
(10)	Eddie Boulton

**\*Received by:**

Signature:	Date	Time
On behalf of the Head of Legal and Member Services	1 October 2014	

**Referred to:**

Policy and Performance Co-ordinating Committee	Date 15 October 2014
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\*This form must be received by the Head of Legal and Member Services by **no later than 5.00 pm** on the fifth working day following notification that the minutes have been published.

### STANDING ORDER 35

#### Calling in of decisions

(1) All decisions of:

- (i) the Executive Board,
- (ii) an individual member of the Executive Board or
- (iii) a committee of the Executive Board, and
- (iv) key decisions taken by an officer;

shall be published, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within 2 days of being made. All members of the Council will be sent a copy of the decision.

(2) That Minute(s) will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, unless the decision is called in for scrutiny by 5:00p.m. on the final day of the call-in period of five clear working days from the date of publication. (Adjusted by a maximum of one day if there is one or more Bank Holidays in that period)

(3) (a) During that period, the Chief Executive shall Call-In a decision for scrutiny by the Co-ordinating Committee if so requested by any six members of the Council who have given detailed reasons for the Call-In of the decision. The detailed reasons must be provided by the Lead signatory, by the Call In deadline. When a Call In is requested the Chief Executive shall liaise with the Member listed first on the Call-In schedule, to ensure there is sufficient information provided to enable the Call-In to proceed. As long as there is a clear reason given, the call-in should be allowed. He/she shall then notify the decision-taker of the Call-In. He/she shall call a meeting of the Committee on such date as he/she may determine, where possible after consultation with the Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee, and in any case within 15 working days of the decision to call-in.

(b) The relevant Chief Officer and all members will be notified of a call-in immediately and no action will be taken to implement the decision until the call-in procedure has been completed. A decision of the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet or individual Cabinet member may be called in only once.

(4) Having considered the decision, the Co-ordinating Committee may:-

- (i) refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or;
- (ii) refer the matter to full Council. Such a referral should only be made where the Co-ordinating Committee believes that the decision is outside the

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policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget. The procedures set out in those rules must be followed prior to any such referral.

- (5) If a decision is referred back to the decision making person or body it shall be reconsidered in the light of the written concerns of the Co-ordinating Committee before a final decision is made.
- (6) If following a call in, the Co-ordinating Committee does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body and does not refer the matter to Council, the decision shall take effect on the date of the Co-ordinating Committee meeting. If the Co-ordinating Committee does not meet the decision shall take effect from the date when the Committee should have met.
- (7) If the matter is referred to full Council and the Council does not object to a decision which has been made, then the decision will become effective on the date of the Council meeting.
- (8) If the Council does object the Council may take a decision, which is outside the policy and budgetary framework. Otherwise the Council will refer any decision to which it objects back to the decision-making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision making body or person shall choose whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was taken by the Executive Board as a whole or a committee of it, a meeting will be convened to reconsider within ten working days of the Council request. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within ten working days of the Council request.
- (9) Call-in should only be used in exceptional circumstances where members have evidence which suggests that the decision was not made in accordance with the principles of decision making in the constitution.
- (10) Call-in and urgency
  - (a) The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by the Cabinet is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay is likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interest. The record of the decision and the notice by which it is made public shall state whether, in the opinion of the decision making person or body, the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call-in. The Chief Executive must agree both that the decision proposed is reasonably in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. Decisions taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.
  - (b) The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored annually, and a report submitted to Council with proposals for review if necessary.

**WIRRAL COUNCIL****Cabinet****11 September 2014**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Early Years and Children Centre Review</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED: All</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>Yes</b>

**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To endorse the Early Years Review (attached) undertaken between April – July 2014 and detailed in August 2014.
- 1.2 To note a key consideration of the review has been to ensure efficiencies of £2m (agreed in December 2013) can be achieved for the 2014-2016 period.
- 1.3 To agree to the recommendations detailed in this report being progressed through to a public consultation.
- 1.4 To approve a six week consultation period being undertaken to progress the recommendations which will advise a future delivery approach for the early years and children centre service.

**2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 2.1 The Sure Start Children's Centre offer in Wirral was developed (from 2002 - 2010) as part of a long term government strategy to deliver integrated early childhood services for children pre-birth to five and their families. This national programme was supported by significant grant funding (capital and revenue) and saw Wirral realise its target to develop and deliver 16 designated Children's Centres (by 2010).
- 2.2 Wirral to date continues to deliver 16 designated (by the government) Children's Centres, they operate through 18 buildings (original delivery was from 24 buildings - 6 buildings transferred to schools in 2013 and 1 mobile classroom was condemned and is no longer in use).
- 2.3 Each of the 16 designated Children's Centres deliver a full core purpose offer [including as a minimum health, education, employment advice and family information], across a ten hour day and all year round, as defined by government guidance and the Ofsted Framework.

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- 2.4 This position has been sustained despite changes to the statutory guidance (2013). Statutory guidance endorses a more flexible approach based on local need and circumstance.
- 2.5 This position has been sustained despite previous efficiency savings (2012 - 14). The previous position reduced management and back office functions and protected as far as possible front line delivery, this approach cannot sustain or support further efficiencies.
- 2.6 The Early Years' service (which is responsible for the Children's Centres) has not been subject to a review since the inception of the children's centre offer 2002.
- 2.7.1 A review of the Early Years and Children's Centres offer (2014) was directed by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services in April 2014. This was to respond to required finance efficiencies (agreed December 2013) and changes to national guidance (April 2013).
- 2.8 The process was undertaken and managed through a core group of cross organisational representatives, during April – July 2014. The report following the review was detailed in August 2014 and was based on the findings from the review. The review has considered:
- The Councils financial position
  - The Councils corporate priorities
  - Partner requirements and collaboration
  - National policy and direction
  - The statutory responsibilities for the service
  - Requirements to deliver a targeted offer and alignment to the early help approach
- 2.8 The review has made explicit the necessity to achieve financial efficiencies of £2m agreed in December 2013, for the period 2014 -16. It has referenced the ongoing financial pressures that the Council continues to experience.
- 2.9 It is important to note that the extent of Early Years has a far wider sphere of activity than Children's' Centres, much of which is legislative and is delivered as part of statutory duties levied at the Local Authority. This includes the Family Information Service, the 2, 3 and 4 year old early education offer and support for the wider early year's private, independent and voluntary sector.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 Funding reductions not met in the time frame.
- 3.2 Likely disruption to families as they adjust to a service offer delivered differently.
- 3.3 Future cuts across Public Sector could impede desired future delivery and approach.

## **APPENDIX 3**

- 3.4 Claw back of capital grant, if appropriate use of buildings by partners is not secured.
- 3.5 Incompatibility of data and systems, could present challenge to collaboration.
- 3.6 Not meeting regulatory requirements.
- 3.7 Partners and key agencies not delivering to the outcome framework or the recommendations and impacting negatively on the ambition to integrate and drive associated costs down and outcomes up.
- 3.8 Adverse media coverage and damage to the reputation of the Council and partners.
- 3.9 Not securing a resource to implement or communicate a different offer to service users.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 A wide range of options have been considered through the review and noted in the report (attached).

### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The review has been progressed and managed as a consultative and inclusive approach, through a strategic multi-agency core group during April – August 2014. During this period four workshops were held to consider ways forward.
- 5.2 A further 20 consultation discussions to ensure service specific information was considered – this was on a one to one or small group basis and progressed as part of the review process during April – August 2014.
- 5.3 107 local consultation activities with service users and partners took place to gather views to advise the review. This approach was advised as an outcome of the first workshop (April 2014) and took place during May 2014.
- 5.4 Public consultation to progress the recommendations which will advise a future delivery approach for the early years and children centre service will be required.
- 5.5 Formal HR consultation will be applied for all staff affected by the resultant changes to the current position.

### **6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

- 6.1 There is work taking place to consider the future of five day nurseries that are still directly delivered (not achieving full cost recovery) by the Council. Funding to support a subsidy (approx £778,000) required by the day nurseries has already been removed (2104) from the budget.
- 6.2 This piece of work was approved by Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and is currently undergoing consultation with key partners and families. There are implications

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in respect of four of the children's centre buildings (subject to the review) and associated school partners, who have indicated a strong interest in working collaboratively regarding early education including taking on the direct responsibility for the 2 year old offer, but this position has yet to be confirmed.

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

7.1 The options for consideration may have positive implications for voluntary, community and faith groups in that the review will look to strengthen and further develop partnership working with the sector, enabling and facilitating them to become more closely involved with the planning, decision making and delivery of services and further supporting access to buildings and resources.

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

8.1 There is a requirement to reduce the current budget of £6m by £2m (2014-16). The current budget can be broken down as: Staffing £3.8m (this includes £1.1m already agreed (2013) to deliver family support as part of the wider targeted service offer and fixed pension costs of £0.5m). Supplies, services and premises costs £1.6m and recharges £0.6. This leaves a total of £2.3m for a new service delivery approach.

8.2 A saving of £500,000 in 2014 has already been achieved. This has been realised by vacancy control, streamlining commissioning arrangements and reducing spend against equipment and resources.

8.2 It is expected that the saving of £1.5m for 2015-16 will be achieved by;

- Implementing a staffing model delivered as outreach teams (based on need and demand) and an early year's business team.
- Retaining four designated Hub Children's Centres (the current position of sustaining 16 designated Children's Centres that all deliver the full core purpose offer is not viable)
- De-designated 12 children's centres – four of which will be retained as outreach provision of the Hub Children's Centres
- Supporting two of the 12 de-designated (Leasowe and Ganney's Meadow nursery schools) to offer extended services as part of the nursery school provision and alongside the poverty hub schools.
- Exploring the option for four of the de-designated children's centre buildings to be transferred to collocated school sites, to deliver the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer as part of the wider school offer.
- Explore with partners the potential to use the remaining four buildings differently as a wider partnership offer.

8.2 Proposals for the remaining budget of £2.3m see:

- A staffing resource of £1.15m - staffing structures will be developed as outreach teams in each of the constituency locality areas. This will secure early childhood services in each area and services will be based on levels

## APPENDIX 3

of need. A Central Business Support Team will be developed to support the wider early year's services and meet the Local Authority's statutory duties.

- A building and premises resource of £600k to support 16 buildings - this will be focused on supporting the 4 main Centres and the correlating satellite/outreach buildings. It will also be used to provide an element of support for buildings being used as a partnership offer.
- A commission of £150k - will be allocated for each of the two extended nursery school (£300k) This will be in addition to the Delegated Schools Grant (DSG) under Single Formula funding arrangements. It will enable both schools to continue to provide an extended early years service offer and compliment the co-located Poverty Schools Hub work and the wider early years outreach offer.
- A commission of £200k - for use by the 4 children's centre advisory boards to secure supplies and services This will be used to resource and facilitate early childhood activity including outreach work, resources for parents attending targeted parenting groups, to meet costs of focussed family group and associated targeted work with families.
- A commission of £50k - for use by the business team to secure supplies and services this will support the delivery of statutory requirements including the Family Information Service publicity and awareness raising, training resources for new and existing childcare providers, room hire for training events, etc.

8.3 Work has been undertaken to detail a proposed staffing establishment to ensure a fit for purpose work force. The new staffing structure will be much less dependant on buildings to deliver children's centre activity and be developed as an outreach resource aligned to constituencies and linked to wider neighbourhood developments.

8.4 Work will continue to detail new job descriptions. Staff currently employed by the service will progress through formal consultation and be ring fenced for posts. Longer term they will be supported to undertake new roles.

8.5 Outreach delivery was established early in the Sure Start programme and continues to be noted and renowned nationally for its effectiveness in its delivery. This model of service delivery is already established within many public services such as Health visiting and social work. The future approach will therefore deliver services based on local need and use a broader range of buildings, this will include family homes, community buildings, church halls and schools, etc.

### 9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Sure Start Capital grant that was allocated to Local Authorities to support the building of Sure Start Children's Centres is subject to a 25 year claw back clause that has implications for the use and allocation of buildings and resources. The service delivery model has considered this. It is anticipated that by continuing to use the buildings through schools and partners delivering children's activity the Council will mitigate this risk.

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- 9.2 There is a statutory obligation placed on the local authority to ensure there are enough children's centre services to meet local need. The review and the proposed approach for future delivery, will ensure that the right type and level of early childhood services (delivered through the council and its partners), to meet need and targeted to those children and families in greatest need will still be delivered. This will include the universal health and education offer and a targeted approach.

### 10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

(a) Yes and 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 Not known – the proposal to use buildings differently and through partnership delivery is likely to see similar types of usage, however length and type of usage is not confirmed at this stage, which could impact on carbon reductions and environment. .

### 12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None identified at this time.

### 13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 13.1 That cabinet endorse the Early Years Review (attached) undertaken between April – July 2014 and detailed in August 2014.
- 13.2 That cabinet note that a key consideration of the review has been to ensure efficiencies of £2m (agreed in December 2013), can be achieved for the 2014-15 period. The review has noted and acknowledged that there will be continued financial pressures on public sector services.
- 13.3 That cabinet agree to the recommendations detailed in the review report (attached) being progressed through to a public consultation.
- 13.4 That cabinet agree to a six week consultation period being undertaken to progress the recommendations detailed in the review report (attached), which will advise a future delivery approach for the early years and children centre service, namely that:
- The Children's Centre offer becomes an integral part of the early help offer through effective identification and support of children and families who need targeted early help. An overarching aim is to safely reduce the number of children referred to social care or accessing specialist/ statutory services. *Noting*, as key to this, that in 2013 the former children's centre family support resource shifted to become an integrated part of the Boroughs wider family

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support offer, aligned and coordinated based on need and demand to the Gateway and as part of targeted services.

- Work to establish strategic and operational policies and procedures to ensure that a joint service offer across the Borough's early childhood services develop – reducing duplication, and cost and improving outcomes. This will see formal commissioning partnership arrangements drawn up between the Council and health visiting and the Council and Jobcentre Plus (as statutory partners). These will include agreements for effective and robust information sharing. This will see wherever possible a health visiting and Jobcentre Plus service delivered through Children's Centres and built around integrating delivery plans aligned through the outcomes framework (see page 7 review report).
- Staffing Structures are developed for four constituency areas, designed around need and population. A Central Business Support Team will also be developed to secure the wider Early Years and Childcare remit and offer essential support to the operation of Children's Centre activity.
- The review has considered savings through a reduced estate and associated cost, to allow the council to protect, as far as possible front line staff and service provision - acknowledging that people not buildings deliver services. The recommendation is therefore to secure one main Children's Centre (which will be designated with DfE as full core purpose offer centres) in each of the four Constituency Localities. This will give a named children's centre for every child and support the local authority to carry out its statutory function to evidence sufficient children's centre activity. It is anticipated that all other current buildings will be preserved through partnership working with key stakeholders such as schools, health, and the voluntary, private and independent sector to offer an element of targeted support in those areas where there is a high local need identified. This will see the 18 Children's Centre buildings deliver as:
  - 4 main hubs or designated children's centres
  - 4 outreach or satellite of the main hubs
  - 2 work as an extended nursery school to offer service delivery alongside the poverty hub schools
  - 4 potentially transferred to be delivered by schools
  - 4 to be further developed with schools and partners

### 14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 14.1 The recommendations will ensure that the service can deliver to the funding available (achieving the required £2m budget reductions 2014-16).
- 14.2 The recommendations will ensure the Council responds effectively to the changes to Government guidance (2013) for children's centres.
- 14.3 The recommendations will ensure the Council meets its statutory responsibilities.

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- 14.4 The recommendations will also establish a viable working model and approach that is less dependant on buildings, that aligns with the developing neighbourhood offer and which can respond more flexibly to changing needs and requirements and which will future proof the service.
- 14.5 The recommendations and the review acknowledge that there will be continued financial pressures on public sector services.

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### APPENDICES

#### BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL

#### BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY

Briefing Note	Date

#### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet Report - Consultation Findings (what really matters) 2013	10.12.2013
Cabinet Commissioning of 6 Day Nursery Provision	13.6.2013
Council Budget	February 2013
Day Nursery Provision	7.7.2014



“Every single child without exception should be equipped, emotionally, socially and developmentally to start **school ready** to learn and to reach their own true potential, regardless of their ability, background or personal circumstance”

The ambition and expectation of this review is that proven best practice becomes common practice.

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## Foreword

I am a great advocate of early year's services and have openly supported the developments over the last decade or so. However I also recognise that we still have a distance to travel to not only narrow the gap and improve school readiness for some of our most disadvantaged youngsters, but to eradicate the impelling intergenerational issues influencing and impeding our communities.

I am pleased to have led on the development of Wirral's strategic review of Early Years and Children's Centre services and although the current climate is one of significant austerity that has given way to significant challenge, reducing costs has not been the main driver in the process. The approach and purpose has been to ensure that the services on offer and the providers of those services for our youngest children remain progressive and fit for purpose.

Throughout the period of this review and the work undertaken to progress it, I can confidently report that there is a shared consensus across partners, the workforce and our communities that we must continue to strive to improve what will be available to our youngest children and their families going forward. Whilst the resource won't be comparable to what we have had in recent times, there is a genuine belief that it will be through our collective energy and shared resource, on our onward journey where we will have the biggest impact and make the biggest difference. Working independently or in silos is no longer an option that we can afford to let happen.

We need to challenge this position, ensure that we spend the Wirral pound wisely and ensure that our youngest children get the recognition, support and respect they deserve.

I also wanted to make explicit that the findings from this review do not dispute that there is strong and validated evidence of some outstanding practice and very effective partnerships across our early childhood services.

"I have made no secret of my own expectation that every single child without exception should be equipped, emotionally, socially and developmentally to start school ready to learn and to reach their own true potential, regardless of their ability, background or personal circumstance"

**Councillor Tony Smith,  
Cabinet Member Children and Family Services, Wirral Council**

## Executive Summary

A project brief outlined the scope of the strategic review of Early Years and Children's Centres in March 2014 and has seen it progress through a strategic group of cross organisational representatives. It has been directed by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, led by the Director of Children and Young People's Services and progressed by the Head of Targeted Services from April to August 2014.

The strategic review of Early Years and Children's Centres has considered the local approach against a backdrop of internal (to Wirral) and national developments and the required financial efficiencies for 2014-16. It has reviewed available data to anticipate future need and has detailed options for a redesigned service offer, setting out the requirement of Children's Centre buildings. This will ensure ongoing borough wide coverage for a Children's Centre offer. Essential to this has been the requirement to review (as a parallel approach) and confirm future governance arrangements for the centres, in order to future proof the offer.

The review has considered changes to statutory guidance (2013) which gives much more flexibility to how services are offered and advises that the core purpose must relate directly to the wider duties that Local Authorities have to improve the well-being of and reduce inequalities between young children in their area.

It has reviewed the Childcare Act 2006, as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the ASCL Act) which places a duty on local health services and Jobcentre Plus to work together with Local Authorities to secure integrated early childhood services to improve the well-being of young children.

It has reflected available research and deliberated statutory partnership requirements and the wider stakeholder offer. Integral to the ethos is how we target the future offer as a fundamental component of the early help approach, - which is key to managing demand and improving outcomes for those children and families most in need and linking through a whole family approach to the Troubled Families programme (known locally as the IFIP or Family Intervention Service).

Fundamental to the review has been the requirement to consider and achieve financial efficiencies of £2m, agreed for the period 2014-16. These are in addition to previous budget cuts for the service which progressed through a remit to protect front line delivery and reduce layers of management. It is clear on a number of levels that this as an approach will not sustain or support further efficiencies and will splinter an already fragmented infrastructure for the service.

There is no doubt that the review has evidenced that the service offer requires significant transformation and strategic and political endorsement from across the range of organisations and agencies.

There is a need to challenge not only the Local Authorities approach, but those departments, organisations and agencies that are inter-dependent to making the wider offer effective and efficient to take the service forward.

However the overarching aspiration for the review was much wider, with an ambition to realise a context for future delivery that is comprehensible to service users, communities and professionals, regardless of who provides the service.

Key issues to come from the consultation sessions have been grouped into seven overarching concepts applied to progress the report and guided objectivity and to some degree supported a self-regulating role in the process. It is envisaged that each will require substantial consideration through the planning and implementation stage.

The approach taken to progress the review has considered the extensive range of information that has been made available. High level responses have been collated into eight themes that have progressed from the review, which are reflected on and advise the 4 high level recommendations; Targeting the offer, Integration and Collaboration, Staffing Structures and Children's Centres.

**An outcome framework was developed and agreed as the most effective way to align delivery, services, agencies and organisations.**

# Outcomes Framework

Overarching outcome	<b>School Readiness</b>				
	It is noted that school readiness will be measured by the age of five (the end of the foundation stage) and that contributory factors along the child's journey and developmental trajectory are reliant on and influenced by a child's family, the successful blending of the wider health, education and social offer and the child and its family's community environments.				
High Level Indicators	Health	Child Development	Parenting Capacity and Resilience	Parents ready to work and ready to learn	
Targets	Low birth weight of babies	Early Communication, Speech and Language	Physical health	Jobcentre Plus. Return to work target 43% of income support customers to off flow by week 52	
Breastfeeding prevalence	Physical development	Emotional well-being	Keeping your children safe		
Smoking status at time of delivery	Social & Emotional development	Social networks	Education and learning		
Under 18 conceptions	Intellectual development	Boundaries and behaviour	Volunteering		
Excess weight at age 4-5 years		Family routine	Peer and community advocacy		
Vaccination coverage		Home and environment	Qualifications		
Infant mortality and tooth decay in children aged 5			Physical health		
Attendance at A&E Department for accidental injuries			Access to Childcare		
Service deliverables		Health Weight Management Programmes including HENRY & cookery classes	2, 3 & 4 year old early education	Targeted parenting groups inc Solihull, Parenting Puzzle & ADHD	Inspire JCP programme
Breastfeeding Support		Active Tots	Young Parents' Group	Family & Community Learning Team inc ESOL, Literacy & Numeracy	
Smoking cessation	Child Health programme	Grandparents Group	Volunteer programme		
Antenatal support	Messy Play	Bumps to Babies	Work Clubs		
Now you are a Parent (practical workshops)	Baby Bounce & Rhyme	Parents to Be Ante-natal Group	Brokerage & support for childcare		
Infant Feeding support	Wiggles to Giggles	Home Learning programme	Confidence building programmes		
Baby Massage	MaKaton	Family Support	Budgeting support		
Home Safety Checks & funded safety equipment	Discovery Play	Parenting support in the home	Wirral Advocacy 1:1 support		
	Rainbow Group		Free Legal Advice		
	Child Development Service				

The work of the review has considered relevant and current research and the Wirral-based study funded by the Westminster Foundation & conducted by the Centre for Family Research & Psychometrics Centre, University of Cambridge agreed to adopt the school ready indicators it has produced.

## Introduction and Background

From 2002 (like all other Local Authorities) the Sure Start Children's Centre offer in Wirral grew quickly. It was part of a comprehensive long term government strategy to develop integrated early childhood services for children pre-birth to five and their families. The national programme which was backed by significant grant funding (capital and revenue) saw Wirral achieve its target to develop and deliver 16 Children's Centres (which was originally delivered through 25 buildings). It very quickly became an established universal service offer locally, which continues to be highly valued by local families.

Wirral continues to have 16 designated Children's Centres, which now operate through 18 buildings (six buildings transferred to schools 2013, one condemned). More recent developments have seen them group together in to four clusters of Children's Centres (one group in each of the four constituency areas). However each centre continues to open for a minimum of 10 hours a day, offer services all year round and all still offer all elements of the service specification, which is despite a significant reduction in both grant and core funding over recent years.

This position is also regardless of changes to the statutory guidance (2013) which gives much more flexibility to how services are offered and advises that the core purpose must relate directly to the wider duties Local Authorities have to improve the well-being of young children in their area and reduce inequalities between young children in the area.

The core purpose of Children's Centres (2013) is noted as being to; improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills
- child and family health and life chances

There is also a considerable and growing body of research and evidence (i.e. Wave Trust, Begins before Birth) that has highlighted the enormous influence that a baby and young child's earliest experiences can have on later life chances.

The impact on outcomes and the financial sense that this makes is a significant factor and the review recognises that Early Years has an absolutely vital role to play.

The Early Years' service, which is responsible for Children's Centres, has not undertaken or been subjected to a fundamental review since its inception in 2002 or completion of the Children's Centre programme locally (2010). Subsequently any changes and funding reductions have been managed in a silo and ad hoc way.

Considering this position the review of the Early Years and Children's Centres offer (2014) has therefore been directed by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, led by the Director of Children and Young People's services and progressed by the Head of Targeted Services for the Council. The process has been undertaken and managed through a strategic core group of cross organisational representatives, during April – August 2014.

Outcomes of the review will be considered at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet in September 2014. This will allow sufficient time to progress a consultation on a new model of delivery and implement recommendations from April 2015.

This review makes it explicit that there is strong and validated evidence of some outstanding practice and effective partnerships. However, it conversely recognises that the service has become out of step with more recent statutory requirements (to deliver to a targeted offer for those most in need) and that the motivation to make explicit the requirement for statutory partners (namely health and Jobcentre Plus) to work together more efficiently and effectively has seemingly gone unchallenged across Wirral's strategic networks.

**The ambition and expectation of this review is that proven best practice becomes common practice.**

## Current Position



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The map highlights the current number (16) of full core purpose offer Children's Centres and illustrates their geographical location and proximity to each other. The circles around the centres symbolise a one mile radius.

## CHILDREN'S CENTRE BUILDINGS AND DELIVERY

Wirral to date continues to have 16 designated Children's Centres. 14 are directly delivered by the local authority and two are commissioned through a service level agreement with two maintained nursery schools.

In 2013 the 14 Children's Centres were clustered in to 4 groups - one in each of the constituency areas. This was in line with an ambition to work to the evolving neighbourhood approach and as part of Wirral's Targeted Service offer. This position is in line with the statutory guidance (2013) that advises that Children's Centres must relate directly to the wider duties Local Authorities have to improve the well-being of young children in their area and reduce inequalities between young children in the area.

Resource for the centres has reduced from £8.8 million to £6 million during the period 2012 - 14 and neither original grant funding nor ring-fenced arrangements have been sustained. There has also been changes to the statutory guidance (2013) and whilst a duty (Childcare Act 2006 the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) 2009) still applies to the Local Authority, to ensure there are sufficient Children's Centres to meet local need, it gives much more autonomy and flexibility in how services are offered.

Despite these changes each centre continues to offer services for over 10 hours a day, offer services all year round and provide all elements of the core offer service specification. This position can clearly not be sustained.

The statutory guidance (2013) stipulates that Local Authorities should ensure that Children's Centres offer differentiated support to young children and their families, according to their needs. However, most Children's Centre services are still offered on a universal basis to all families, within their reach area (children living in the boundaries of a specific footprint of each Children's Centre) and children and families can still access most services regardless of whether or not the child/ren or parent meet the requirements for the service.

Changes to the demographics regarding super

output areas has not been considered in planning to date. The allocation of resource not differentiated and Children's Centres continue to deliver a similar range of services regardless of their location.

## Transformation to reflect local need and changing requirements will be considered.

### 0-5 year old population figures and need

Area	0-5	20%	80%
Birkenhead	6059	4192	1867
South Wirral	3359	474	2885
Wallasey	5034	2559	2475
West Wirral	4481	660	3821

The table above represents the 0-5 population by constituency areas. Highlights the 20% of children living in greatest need areas and also represents the rest of the 0-5 population by constituency areas.

## PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Local Authority values the extensive range of partners and acknowledges the significant contributions they make to the Children's Centres offer. The Council recognises the work carried out to improve the life chances and outcomes for young children and their families and that it will continue to rely heavily on them in the future.

Recommendations from the review will ensure that partners have a significant role both through delivery and as part of the decision making process pertinent through the advisory boards. Local Authorities should ensure that advisory boards have representatives from all interested groups and bodies, inclusive of local community, faith groups and childcare providers.

## STATUTORY PARTNERS

This section of the report accentuates the role of those partners (commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus), who are seen in statute as having a legal duty (Childcare Act 2006 the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and

Learning Act (ASCL) 2009) placed on them, necessitating them to work together with the Local Authority, in its requirements to deliver integrated early childhood services. It goes on to state that wherever possible they must provide early childhood services through Children's Centres. This position will form a fundamental component of any future delivery model. The review has also considered the ongoing transfer of the 0-5 health visiting programme, to the Local Authority and the tender process to secure a provider. The review through the Head of Targeted Services will play an active role in the preparation for future delivery.

## HEALTH

There is evidence of effective working with health and all Children's Centres have a named health visitor. There is a commended neo natal programme in partnership with midwifery services and Arrow Park Hospital and where relationships are strong a joined up approach is evident.

A jointly delivered antenatal parents programme is in place in the Children's Centres, with midwives, health visitors, Children's Centre staff and physiotherapists, taking an integrated approach to service delivery

However information sharing protocols between the Local Authority and commissioners of health services, to enable effective sharing of bulk data (such as live birth data), whilst ensuring that the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legal provisions are complied with, still requires a number of actions to be completed to effectively support improved results in this area of work.

The transition of Health Visitors to the Local Authority will also require infrastructure being put in place to support collaborative working arrangements.

## JOBCENTRE PLUS

Children's Centres have a responsibility to and do encourage families to improve their skills, employment prospects and financial situation. However the reduction of child poverty has to

be given a higher priority for the Children's Centres, going forward and targeted to those families most in need. The review period has not hampered development in this area; arrangements for the Lifelong Learning service to become an integral part of each area offer and developing a closer working relationship and strengthening links with the Jobcentre Plus is underway. In turn, Jobcentre Plus have established training programmes with local skills and training providers to assist parents who will become eligible to move from income support to job seekers allowance in the near future.

This approach will enhance the statutory offer for targeted support to assist families in gaining access to employment support and advice, debt advice and volunteering opportunities. The current developmental work as advised through Guidance (2013) has also ensured that this is in conjunction with the Troubled Families programme.

## FAMILY SUPPORT

In 2013 as part of the developments for Wirral's targeted service offer, there were considerable changes to the family support offer that sat as part of Children's Centre delivery. It was moved to become part of the newly developed Family Support Service, linked to the development of the Gateway (and the Troubled Families programme).

**This approach has ensured that there is a collaborative offer of access to early intervention and targeted support, for those young children and their families who are at risk of poor outcomes.**

It also ensures that those Troubled Families with young children have access to appropriate specialist support to meet their needs.

The overarching ambition will be realised as part of the wider demand management of services from critical and high cost interventions to the right support and as soon as a problem starts to emerge. The associated finance and staffing in respect of this area of business is in the region of £1.1m, currently part of the £6.0 million identified for Early Years resource.

## OUTREACH

Each of the four Children's Centre groups has an established outreach team that focuses on parenting capacity and group work. Outreach delivery is a valued service offer that works closely with the family support service and wider partners to ensure services are made more accessible to those families whose children are vulnerable to poor outcomes, but who are less likely to attend Children's Centres.

### Nationally

Outreach delivery was established early in Sure Start programmes and continues to be noted and renowned nationally for its effectiveness in its delivery.

The approach focuses on:

- Targeting Children's Centres services at young children and families within an area
- Targeting those who are at risk of poor outcomes
- Using data and analysis of local need to develop approach
- Using a broader range of buildings through which services are delivered. For instance this can be family homes, community buildings, church halls and schools.

This model of delivery has seen considerable success in improving contact, particularly with vulnerable children and families and those living in the most disadvantaged communities.

### Locally

Whilst work locally shows a slight increase in take up it demonstrates that not enough of those children and families who fit the target groups are taking up the Early Years service offer. Further developing of delivering Outreach services will better support this position and enable the offer to be directed to those least likely to engage by working in and through a range of community buildings.

Children's Centre activity should not be wholly dependent on buildings and well developed outreach delivery is renowned for its effectiveness in:

- Supporting families before, during and after specialist programmes and/or interventions
- Providing opportunities to help families develop resilience to risk factors
- Promoting child development and early learning on a child's journey to school readiness

## ADVISORY BOARDS AS GOVERNANCE

Changes that resulted in grouping Children's Centres together last year saw advisory boards move from 14 separate advisory boards to four. This inadvertently created disruption and the need to consider a different approach to meet the changing needs.

Advisory boards for Children's Centres are mandatory and changes to both Statutory Guidance (2013) and the Inspection Framework for Children's Centres (2013) further impacts the local position.

**In addition, the methods used through the review have assessed the functions and remit of the advisory boards and evaluated them as needing to take a more crucial role in decision making and as commissioners of local services.**

This initiated significant development requirements for the advisory boards to ensure that the Children's Centres can effectively and efficiently carry out their required statutory functions.

Both remedial action and longer term developments are now being put in place. This will ensure that arrangements are fit for purpose and flexible enough to respond to changing needs and priorities.

Outreach delivery was established early in the Sure Start programme and continues to be noted and renowned nationally for its effectiveness in its delivery.

## BUSINESS SUPPORT

Fundamental to the review has been the requirement to consider and achieve financial efficiencies of £2m, agreed for the period 2014-16. These are in addition to previous budget cuts for the service which focussed on a requirement to protect front line delivery and reduce levels and layers of management. These earlier reductions to the service have adversely affected the ability to respond to a number of Early Years functions.

There is a wrongly held assumption by many that the extent of Early Years is through the remit of Children's Centre delivery. Early Years has a far wider sphere of activity, much of which is legislative and is delivered as part of statutory duties levied at the Local Authority.

This includes:

- Supporting all private providers, including child-minders, out of school providers and school holiday care through information, advice and guidance.
- Ensuring that appropriate training is available to all childcare providers
- Supporting new business start up including appropriate introductory training for childminders to ensure Ofsted readiness
- The provision of information, advice and guidance to all families with children aged 0 – 19 years (25 years if child has additional needs)
- A brokerage service to support and empower parents and carers to access appropriate childcare for their child
- Ensuring that there is sufficient childcare to meet local needs
- Administer and provide support to ensure that all eligible 2 year olds are able to access their legal entitlement of 15 hours funded early education, according to government criteria
- Administer and support all parents to access 15 hours funded early education for 3 and 4 year olds

Recommendations from the review will consider a representative staffing resource to effectively carry out the required functions.

## FINANCE AND RESOURCE

Maintaining 16 full core purpose offer Children's Centres is already proving difficult to resource. The position will be impossible to sustain within the context of the Council's financial position and the need to make the additional savings required going forward.

Benchmarking data from 2013/14 from statistical neighbour comparators and Northwest region comparators, suggests that Wirral sits on the median line but the information shows a mixed picture and no clear correlation between levels of child poverty and spend on Children's Centres and is likely to be out of date.

Resources for the centres have reduced from £8.8 million to £6.0 million during the period 2012-14 and neither the original grant funding nor ring fenced arrangements have been sustained.

Previous savings in 2012-13 totalled £0.8m and in 2013-14 were £2.0m. These have been achieved through measures such as remodelling the Business Support and Quality assurance functions and transferring satellite centres to schools. In addition it is expected that £0.8m will be achieved through changes to Council operated day care.

The current budget of £6 million can be broken down as follows:

- Staffing: £3.8 million (including £1.1 million of family Support and Fixed Pension Costs of £0.5 million)
- Premises: £0.6 million
- Supplies & Services: £1 million
- Recharges: £0.6 million

Savings of approximately £2 million have been identified from 2014-16 which are part of the detailed review. The outcome will ensure savings from premises, supplies, services and Early Years Staffing. In addition there is an anticipated Council funding shortfall for the period 2015-17 of £45 million which indicates that further budget reductions may be required.

At this point in time there is a Children's Centre budget of £6 million this still needs to be reduced by part of the £2 million savings target in 2014-16 (£1.5 million). In addition the changes from a previous service review in 2013 to develop the Targeted Service offer by moving Family Support resources support the newly developed Family Intervention Service have still to be reflected.

Therefore at this stage the controllable budget for Early Years and Children's Centres going forward is likely to be £2.3 million as below:

2014-15 Budget	£6.0m
• Less: agreed savings to implement in 2015-16	£1.5m
• Transfer of Family Support	£1.1m
• Recharges and Fixed Pension costs	£1.1m
<hr/>	
Early Years and Children Centre available budget	£2.3m

The budget and resource identified for the review has not considered in detail the resource element that contributes to early help from wider partners.

It is important to note that spend on Early Years currently represents about 45% of Council spend on early intervention and prevention services. There are other services such as Family Support, Youth and Play and Restorative Practice which aim to support families early when additional needs emerge in order to prevent needs escalating.

**A TABLE TO INDICATE THE AVERAGE RANK, DEPRIVATION PERCENTILE AND POPULATION OF THE 16 WIRRAL CHILDREN CENTRES**

Children's Centre	Average IMD Rank	IMD %	Population 0-4 year olds	Population Total	
Brassey Gardens	800	2.46%	1060	3779	<b>10%</b>
Rock Ferry	1949	6.00%	1273		
Seacombe	2520	7.76%	1446		
Birkenhead & Tranmere	4665	14.36%	1441	1441	<b>20%</b>
Leasowe	7191	22.14%	1187	2384	<b>30%</b>
Liscard	7441	22.91%	1197		
Cloughton	10,727	33.02%	1157	3508	<b>40%</b>
Ganneys Meadow	11,210	34.51%	1175		
Bromborough	12,899	39.71%	1176		
Prenton	16,182	49.82%	1128	1128	<b>50%</b>
New Brighton	17,748	54.64%	1204	1204	<b>60%</b>
Eastham	19,902	61.27%	1164	3231	<b>70%</b>
Bebington	21,912	67.46%	1019		
West Kirby	22,336	68.77%	1048		
Greasby	23,111	71.15%	1096	2258	<b>80%</b>
Pensby	25,887	79.70%	1162		

## Methodology

This section of the report will summarise the range of methods used to progress the strategic review and examine performance. The review has considered current research and statutory partnership requirements. Key will be how we target the future offer as part of the early help approach, to manage demand, improve outcomes for those children and families in most need and reduce the strain on the public purse.

The review of Early Years and Children's Centres has progressed through a strategic core group of cross organisational representatives.

### The group is made up of:

- Health
- Public Health
- School improvement partners
- Schools
- Social Care
- Audit (Wirral Council)
- JobCentre Plus
- Commissioning (Wirral Council)
- Voluntary, Community, Faith sector
- Private Sector
- Human Resources(Wirral Council)
- Finance
- Early Years Managers
- Locality Managers
- Family support
- Planning and Performance
- PR and Marketing

A range of data was collected and analysed including high level performance indicator data but also statistics on centre usage and information about the most vulnerable families.

A financial breakdown of the allocation of finance for each Children's Centre was produced and used to support the rationale and attempts were made to produce a financial analysis comparative with other Local Authorities.

A sample of case studies of families supported by the family support service were scrutinised to assess the effectiveness of the service in enabling families with young children to return to universal services.

Desktop research was also undertaken during the same period to enhance the understanding held in relation to how other Local Authorities, faced with similar circumstances, have managed to mitigate against or manage budget and resource reductions.

Visits by our early year's managers to other Local Authorities and reciprocal visits were undertaken to share learning, which contributed to the review and subsequent findings.

The current work around the transition of 0-5 (0-19 for Wirral) health services to the Local Authority as a public health domain will be respected and duly considered.

If we started again what would our Early Years offer look like?

The strategic core group participated in four key workshops which considered:

### 1. Why review

- Statutory responsibilities and the changing landscape for Early Years
- The significant role of key partners
- Targeting the offer
- Early help
- The current local offer, numbers, needs and buildings
- World Café
- Planning for consultation

### 2. What are key considerations

- Making sense of the funding envelope
- Recent and compelling research to guide a local approach
- Commissioning requirements
- Raising expectations for the targeted cohort of young children

### 3. Considering wider determinants

- What does HMCI tell us?
- Agreeing outcomes to support a local approach – points of engagement
- What are we currently achieving for the Wirral pound and what does duplication look like?
- The role of Audit and Quality Assurance going forward
- The role of governance going forward

### 4. Starting with a blank canvas

- If we started again what would our early years offer look like?
- Use of buildings – accessibility, clusters, shared usage, affordability
- A targeted offer – evidence, impact and outcomes
- Brave and radical decisions, shared responsibility and accountability

(An additional session was held with the nursery schools, Children's Centres, head teachers and Children's Centre managers – to extend and explore ideas and consider particular views regarding individual Children's Centres).

The World Café technique was used to consult. The methodology is renowned for involving people in group dialogue and also provides representation for the way knowledge is generated. 107 events were progressed through the Children's Centres and involved advisory boards, service users, local community representatives, partners and staff.

The world café events started with the strategic core group, who were asked to discuss a specific question. The same question was asked across all events, quickly transforming individual knowledge into collective learning and intelligence.

'If we are to continue to give children and their families the very best start we can, what will a reduced Early Years and Children's Centre offer look like?'

Additionally over 20 one to one or small group meetings, progressed to engage with and involve those unable to attend the workshops, to ensure engagement and the voice of individuals or groups were represented or to support engagement at a very specific service level. Representatives were made up of internal and external partners as well as regional colleagues.

This consultation process has been fundamental in supporting progress against the strategic review of early year's services. The analysis noted seven key issues to come from the consultation sessions and eight emergent themes as key findings.

# Findings

## SEVEN KEY ISSUES

Seven key issues emerged from the consultation and have developed as overarching concepts applied to progress the report and guided objectivity and to some degree offered a self-regulating role in the process. It was envisaged that each will require substantial consideration through the planning and implementation stage:

1.	There was a plea from many to apply <b>common sense</b> - the cuts are significant and require careful and pragmatic management. Relying only on strategic thinking to accomplish the required outcomes, could hinder local decision making.
2.	<b>Cross party political support</b> - was deemed crucial by the core group and a range of participants, who communicated that unenviable and difficult decisions and which will be adverse will need to be made to progress the level of funding cuts. The impact would be far reaching for all communities.
3.	<b>Workforce development</b> -and the requirement for this to be considered at a cross organisational level, stronger collaborations and shared skill sets was a main finding.
4.	Findings also emphasised the need for Chief Officers and strategic representation across other organisations to explicitly sign up to the <b>resultant change programme</b> to ensure the service continues to flourish as a valued resource.
5.	<b>Silo mentality</b> - anxiety was raised in respect of organisations (potentially) looking inwardly during further austerity impeding partnership and collaborative practice.
6.	<b>Regulatory and statutory practice</b> which will have to be protected may be in contrary to what people would want to see retained as opposed to what has to be retained (local decision making opposed to central and prescriptive directive).
7.	The findings highlighted that a <b>clear vision</b> and planning will require key and crucial consideration across partners as soon as possible following decision making.

## EIGHT THEMES

The following are the key themes to emerge through the review process, each will be given further consideration and advised recommendations:

1. Outcomes
2. Children's Centre Buildings
3. Service Delivery
4. Partnership and Collaboration
5. Resource, Commissioning, Outsourcing
6. Staffing and Workforce Considerations
7. Capitalising and Benefiting from Existing Success
8. Marketing and Rebranding

### 1. Outcomes

There was a strong suggestion (predominantly from the workshops) that induced the need to align delivery. The most effective way to do this is to agree outcomes and indicators that all services, agencies and organisations can align to – this in turn would enable clearer consensus against the impact services are having and allow change to be moderated based on impact. It will also support the delivery and direction of future commissioning arrangements and direction of the service.

Approval was reached (in line with the Children's Trust approach) that there should only be one outcome and four high level indicators to address needs across the early childhood portfolio. A draft Outcome Framework has been detailed (see page 7) for further consideration and sign off through the Children's Trust. It is anticipated that agreement for the Outcome Framework will be ratified as the recommendations from the review are endorsed.

### 2. Children's Centre Buildings

**Throughout the review it was repeatedly noted that sustaining all the buildings on a full core purpose offer (delivering a full service offer all year round across a ten hour day) as is currently the case, is already impeding delivery.**

A workshop 'starting with a blank canvas' used information available and local intelligence to detail ideas for further consideration.

- Whilst the Children's Centre buildings and the future use of the buildings generated significant interest, most respondents were pragmatic and wanted to establish and retain assets that would provide best result and best suit need, however there was also a level of sentiment (understandably) associated to buildings for some and for others a view that the centre/centres of personal interest should continue to be used above others.
- There was strong representation regarding each area sustaining one main or larger building
- There was also alternative suggestions of keeping more of the smaller buildings and releasing the assets of the larger buildings

- There was agreement that any future delivery model should be based on need and population
- Retention of staff featured strongly
- There was interest in looking to transfer buildings for use by local schools and a recommendation that schools should be approached during the consultation phase (required to agree a new model of delivery) to elicit interest in schools taking buildings on as part of the school offer
- Schools that have engaged in the consultation and those where communication has been progressed (to date) have not shown any commitment in delivering the full core offer - but this is not all schools and further work will be required to understand this position for the future
- There was also a radical view that no buildings should be retained and that instead a greater staffing resource should be preserved to deliver early childhood services from other buildings (community settings, church halls, school etc.) on an outreach basis. There is local evidence of a community building being used in place of a purpose built centre and deemed by parents to be more favourable to them
- Alternative to this was the view that all buildings should be preserved and used more widely in communities, fitting with neighbourhood models – the idea was that other community buildings would close to offset savings
- It was strongly felt that any buildings preserved should operate differentiated hours based on local need and to reduce overall cost
- Acknowledge that people, not buildings, deliver services.

### 3. Service Delivery

Considerable attention and detail was given to service delivery and the most significant debate from those professionals involved in the review was about the need for stronger collaboration and a truly integrated approach, which should observe the need to target and use evidence-based interventions. The predominance of the offer should respond to those families in greatest need of support and at risk of poor outcomes.

There was emphasis on the need to plan service delivery more coherently based on the guidance for a Children's Centre offer (coordination of all early childhood services) and consideration about what constituted a target group. It was agreed that Ofsted's definition of target groups which refer to the groups and families the centres identify as having needs or circumstances that require particularly perceptive intervention and/or additional support. The following list is not exhaustive and does not imply that all young children or families in any of these categories require additional support.

The target groups will vary according to the centre's identification of its community and their needs but in any particular centre may include:

- Lone parents, teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers
- Children from low income backgrounds
- Children living with domestic abuse, adult mental health issues and substance abuse
- Children 'in need' or with a child protection plan
- Children of offenders and/or those in custody
- Fathers, particularly those with any other identified need, for example, teenage fathers and those in custody
- Those with protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010
- Children who are in the care of the Local Authority (looked after children)
- Children who are being cared for by members of their extended family such as a grandparent, aunt or older sibling
- Families identified by the local authority as 'Troubled Families' who have children under five
- Families who move into and out of the area relatively quickly (transient families), such as asylum seekers, armed forces personnel and those who move into the area seeking employment or taking up seasonal work
- Any other vulnerable groups or individual families including those young children and families identified as at risk of harm by other services – such as adult social care, schools, police, and health services
- Buildings are generally associated with the Children's Centre offer

Challenge was given to the widely held understanding that many Children's Centre services (locally) are still offered on a universal basis to all families, within their reach area and children and families can still access most services regardless of whether or not eligibility for the service was met (contrary are services such as the two year old offer, that prescribes eligibility against access to funding).

It was however noted that universal services will still be retained - midwifery, breast feeding support and much of the health offer is universal based on need as is the health visiting offer, the 3 and 4 year old offer as examples - will continue uninterrupted.

Many work clubs and adult learning are offered universally and many Voluntary Community and Faith organisations offer groups such as play and stay for all families and it is anticipated that these will still be available.

Groups will be supported to use buildings independently - through the developing advisory board arrangements.

Starting to truly define what early childhood services are regardless of who or where they are delivered from - in a context of collaboration and reducing duplication was key.

There will be a stronger emphasis on tracking the actions and strategies that leaders and managers employ to monitor the effectiveness and impact of a centre's work.

For example this may include using local data/compiling centre data that identifies the number of families living in the local area, using the centre, attendance at activities and follow up monitoring of children and adults to determine whether there has been any longer term impact.

### 3a. Service Delivery - a service user perspective

The review considered the service delivery offer from a family and community perspective, information was gathered from 107 sessions carried out through world café events in each of the local areas and noted that:

- There was a lot of responses for everything to stay the same and cutting services that affected children was viewed by some as outrageous
- Families demonstrated an attachment to services and cited groups as being important to them
- Families also demonstrated a strong attachment to staff and comments were often about individuals that had helped make a difference, or who their child was close to during groups and sessions
- There was strong affiliation to protecting jobs for those staff
- There was a close attachment to the centre/centres they used but stronger affiliation seemed to be to groups, or staff who were associated to them
- For many the centre was often seen as the only place to go to in the community or the only place they used to take up services
- Trust and loyalty also strongly featured to services on offer and to buildings although attachment to buildings seemed to be ordered lower than allegiance to staff and services
- Families were equally as attached to services offered from different buildings (as outreach) and again cited staff as important

### 3b. Outreach Delivery

Whilst seen as a component of the wider service offer, attention was given through the review, which endorsed outreach delivery as a valued service approach that could sustain without the need for an associated building. Concluding that Outreach Services are common for many services such as health visiting, much of the social work offer and family support.

The view by Ofsted was that it was a means of ensuring accessibility to those families

whose children are vulnerable to poor outcomes, but who are less likely to attend Children's Centre buildings was endorsed.

Outreach already focuses on a targeted approach and much of its group work is a valued service offer. The approach will focus on:

- Targeting Children's Centres services at young children and families in the area
- Targeting those who are at risk of poor outcomes through, effective outreach service
- Analysis of local need
- Using a broader range of buildings through which services are delivered

Each of the four Children's Centre groups has an established outreach team that focuses on parenting capacity and group work; the review suggested an increased use of outreach and a reduced dependency on buildings. There is a long standing appreciation that Children's Centre activity cannot be wholly dependent on buildings and well developed outreach delivery is renowned for its effectiveness in:

- Supporting families before, during and after specialist programmes and/or interventions
- Providing opportunities to help families develop resilience to risk factors, and
- Promoting child development

#### 4. Partnership and collaboration

The review explored and made explicit, that there has been a long term drive that early childhood and those services that impact on outcomes for children and families in the earliest years should be joined up. Government determined that the vehicle to do this should be through Children's Centres. It went on to endorse in statute the required relationship between the core purpose of Children's Centres and duties on Local Authorities and statutory partners (health and Jobcentre plus).

The all party parliamentary group (APPG) with an interest in Early Years published its report, Best Practice for a Sure Start: the way forward for Children's Centres (2013) endorsing this overarching ambition.

Published inspection reports show that alignment with Jobcentre Plus is an issue for many children's centres across the country, and decreasing funding for adult education adds to the challenge. Where possible, however, the review felt that this aspect of the service should be strengthened, as part of helping parents to enter employment and improve family economic wellbeing. More recently work to integrate lifelong and family learning and work to deliver key elements of the European Social Fund training package, managed through the Jobcentre Plus has started to take place as a partnership with Children's Centres.

Whilst it was acknowledged that there remains a national debate around some of the information sharing challenges, which are reflected locally the review period has started to look at ways in which key partners can collectively improve on outcomes, service delivery and collaboration. A high level information sharing agreement is progressing, a strategic steering group will be formed after the review - this will develop as a longer term approach to ensure momentum and lead on actions to come from the recommendations.

The review;

- Appraised Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance to clarify what Local Authorities and statutory partners must do, because it is required by legislation and what Local Authorities and partners should do when fulfilling their statutory responsibilities
- Determined a strong emphasis on outcomes for children
- Directed involvement across the health economy and jobcentre plus services which provided the opportunity to refresh and confirm responsibilities
- Invited challenge, a forum and open dialogue to confirm responsibilities going forward
- Initiated significant developmental of the advisory boards to ensure that the Children's Centres can effectively and efficiently carry out their required statutory functions, that relies on partnership and collaboration

## 5. Resource, Commissioning, Outsourcing

The key themes to come from the review were in addition to several areas of essential developments that have started to progress as areas for significant improvement across the service. This has been both to assure that the review period would not obstruct progressive development, but also to attempt to make required improvements to a service that has grappled with considerable change over recent years. Motivated primarily by funding, senior staff and managers have been reduced resulting in a loss of skill, experience and local knowledge. In addition the wider resource allocation has reduced and it will take some time to develop the level of skills and experience required.

- The review period has advised both remedial action and longer term developments. This will ensure that arrangements are fit for purpose and flexible enough to respond to changing needs and priorities (primarily Children's Centre governance arrangements and information sharing governance)
- Personnel across partner agencies have also changed, along with local partnership arrangements and protocols that have effectively enabled the service to deliver to its prescribed requirements in the past
- The review identified a clear priority for further integration and collaboration and to better understand the shared economy for the delivery of early childhood and associated services within the borough
- The 0-5 transition of health services and the current tender position that will drive delivery from January 2015 has not yet completed and generates a level of uncertainty
- The full extent of the future of the two year old offer nationally and the understanding of the delivery of the offer locally continues to demonstrate considerable ambiguity, until such time that the position for a number of the primary schools is established
- There is a wrongly held assumption by many that the extent of Early Years is through the remit of Children's Centre delivery. Early Years has a far wider sphere

of activity, much of which is legislative and is delivered as part of statutory duties levied at the Local Authority. A focus going forward will be required to address this current gap for the service to ensure it is able to meet its strategic and legal priorities

**The review has revealed all aspects of the service for others to comment and guide decisions, and for many this has created a further period of instability, however the openness of the approach and willingness by staff whose jobs and security are at risk has been commendable and they have entered the review open minded and report to have learned from the process.**

The review will advise on savings for the period 2014/16 to achieve the required financial efficiencies of £2 million, agreed for this period.

Part of this saving (£500k) has already been identified in 2014 through streamlining, commissioning and vacancy control. In 2015/16 the new service delivery model will deliver the remaining savings of £1.5 million.

These amounts are in addition to previous budget cuts for the service which progressed through a requirement to protect front line delivery and reduce levels and layers of management. These earlier adjustments to the service have affected the ability to respond to a number of mandatory functions for early years. This review will correct this position.

The review reflected that until the service stabilises and agrees a delivery model, that services are not progressed to become an outsourced provision. This will not affect the ambition to develop and commission some elements and continue to progress with public health the implementation plan for the 0-5 transition plan (following it securing a provider).

It is felt that the current position could become even more challenging if attempts were made during this time to diversify or outsource the management of Children's Centres overall. It is

however possible to strengthen the approach through planned development of a commissioning specification for the service which will provide a sound platform for a tender exercise in future if that is deemed appropriate. The next 12 months will put the service in a much better place to agree locally what the offer will look like and what it will hope to achieve.

**During this same period there has been a constant change to the national programme, Her Majesties Chief Inspector noted in his report (2014) that recent inspections of Children's Centres have found a sector that is characterised by turbulence and volatility. Children's Centres are changing rapidly, including reductions in numbers and changes in structures and organisation and there is ongoing debate nationally about the purpose of Children's Centres. While the government has defined the core purpose and published a refreshed policy document (2013) to this effect, the Education Select Committee recently concluded that the core purpose remains unclear.**

## 6. Staffing and Workforce Considerations

The review and a number of the emerging themes have advised a greater clarity and focus on improved collaboration through agreed outcomes, integrated working and effective protocols to support organisations to develop together. This is as opposed to continuing to work purely to organisational directives – that can be at odds and support a silo mentality.

This will require effective operational frameworks and commitment at every level to support services to join resources and share the responsibility to improve outcomes for those most at risk of poor outcomes.

This is in line with corporate approaches across our respective organisations and a clear mandate that supports and commits to the overall approach. The review underlined:

- There was shared ambition about better integration across teams and services and a strong desire to reduce duplication
- That organisational constraints, boundaries and professional backgrounds inhibited cooperation in some instances
- That stronger relationships enhanced effective practice and in some instances made people less concerned about constraints finding ways through or around them - however it also noted that local, low key arrangements as opposed to organisational frameworks can impede and make arrangements fragile
- That shared workforce development opportunities must be increased and organisations challenged to enable this to happen (policy, cost and organisational performance)

## 7. Building on Existing Success

There is significant success across organisations and different delivery models that could help Early Years and wider childhood services to improve.

One such model is the emergent school poverty hubs whose approach to engage with local communities has been unrestricted/un-mandated and has sparked excitement and creative flair. Both schools operate in close proximity or as a colocated offer with the two nursery schools and Children's Centres, all four setting work through school Governing Body arrangements. It was acknowledged that whilst this development has sat outside the remit of the review there may be untapped potential to develop a more aligned approach.

Four schools operate on the site of current day nursery provision as part of the Children Centre offer and consultation to explore the options to more closely amalgamate the early education offer (if decisions are taken to cease the delivery of the day nursery offer) through the schools and the governing body is running as a parallel process to this review.

In September 2014 discussions with other schools who may be interested in using Children's Centre buildings or extending their early education offer (to include the two year old offer) will progress. There are already 3 primary schools extending their offer to include two year olds as part of the school provision.

There are lessons to be learned from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors who are often less prescriptive in their approach to meeting local need, can reap excellent results and constantly consider ways to reinvent themselves to stay current in the marketplace.

The advisory boards as governance arrangements are currently undergoing a period of intense development; this is to ensure they have a confirmed and prominent role in driving and directing local delivery in the future. It is anticipated that a robust governance model will ensure the core offer and future commissioned arrangements will be decentralised and funding and resource opportunities capitalised on.

Discussions concluded that whilst there is no room to reduce quality and quality assurance models there is much to learn from considering the approach and success of others.

The review has initiated an outward facing approach and encouraged staff to observe and be prepared to learn from wider good practice models - it has afforded a permission to change.

There are lessons to be learned from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors who are often less prescriptive in their approach to meeting local need, can reap excellent results and constantly consider ways to reinvent themselves to stay current in the marketplace.

## 8. Marketing and Rebranding

It was agreed that a future requirement would be for a different approach to marketing, branding and publicity generally for the centres and the service should be considered. It was strongly noted that the public sector services in general do not positively market or brand services, nor benefit from the advantages to come from this approach.

The review underlined:

- That the title/name 'Children's Centre' could have a detrimental effect, seeing some potential service users opting not to use the services at all
- A familiar summary to the discussions commonly concluded that; there is likely to be little or nothing going on inside the buildings which is of any interest to those who are not or do not have young children
- Dialogue during the review recurrently agreed that not only is there a need to positively market the services but that current marketing is poor or non-existent and is generally reliant on very local and low key promotion of services available
- A predominant view to emerge from the review was that a number of the buildings, offer facilities that are available and accessed by groups other than Early Years and this should be extended
- It was deduced from the numerous discussion points that service users did not consider the title of 'Children's Centre' particularly helpful or descriptive
- Whilst it was noted that take up is good in the Children's Centre with families who have children between 0-4 years old (and pre-birth), it remains largely unsubstantiated across the wider age group (as data capture is not in place or not as robust)
- A number of service user's partners and staff endorsed that this period could afford a positive opportunity to benefit and mark a new era for Children's Centres.

## Risks

Throughout the period of the review risks have been identified, considered against the ongoing developments and will continue to be managed carefully to ensure that they can be moderated as work progresses, currently they are:

- Funding reductions not met in time frame
- Future cuts across Public Sector (unknown) could impede future delivery
- Claw back of Capital grants going forward from buildings if take up by partners is not secured
- Incompatibility of data and system issues
- Outcomes not achieved
- Not meeting regulatory frameworks associated to partners or the service
- Partners and key agencies not delivering to recommendations and impacting negatively on the ambition to integrate and drive outcomes up and associated costs down
- Adverse media coverage and damage to the reputation of the Council and partners
- Likely disruption to families as they adjust to a targeted delivery model on an outreach basis
- Not securing a resource to implement and communicate the new offer to service users to positively affect partnerships could present challenge

## Recommendations

The following are recommendations advised by the review; they will guide a delivery model for the service and have been developed in conjunction with the 8 key themes to come from the review.

The review recognises that the recommendations indicate a broad direction of travel and that the service will need to continue to develop in response to strategic programmes (Future Council, 0-5 health transition, Troubled Families etc.). It is acknowledged that future budget constraints and issues affecting the public services will continue to be a key consideration for the service.

### RECOMMENDATION 1: TARGETING THE OFFER

The focus of Children's Centres should further align to become an integral part of the early help offer through effective identification and support of children and families who need targeted early help, with the aim of safely decreasing the number of children referred to social care. This is a key objective of the wider targeted service delivery that responds to the needs of families with children 0-19 (24) years.

To establish Targeted Services, Preventative Family Support was amalgamated into a service offer for children and families with children 0-19 (24). For Early Years this is an investment of £1.1 million of staffing resource.

This as an approach is in line with the Council's commitment to early help as a preventative strategy and should be protected.

### RECOMMENDATION 2: INTEGRATION & COLLABORATION

Integration and collaboration was a key and prominent feature of the review and was recognised and agreed as the most promising approach by partners for increasing support to collectively improving outcomes for the most vulnerable young children and their families.

This recommendation will work to establish strategic and operational policies and procedures to ensure that a joint service offer across early childhood services develop. This will be with specific responsibility for statutory partners.

Strategies and approach will be endorsed by the Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Board and ratified by the Health and Wellbeing Board and taken forward through Vision 2018.

**Early Years is one of the four key objectives of the Vision 2018 programme, Integrated Children's Work Stream. The transformational outcome is that children are ready for school.**

It is therefore recommended that;

- Formal partnership arrangements through a memorandum of understanding are developed between the Council and Health in relation to health visiting and Children's Centre services, to support effective services based on a graduated model of need. This should ensure that, strategies are detailed that will advise delivery frameworks for an integrated and collaborative approach, agreements for effective and robust information sharing with relevant partners will be detailed and it is anticipated that the pending implementation plans for the 0-5 transition programme will build on this approach.
- The work should extend wherever possible to include Local Authority, wider health and midwifery services and the developing targeted approach and tracking systems for children should be used to support children as they progress through school and relevant health activity.

- Formal partnership arrangements are drawn up through a memorandum of understanding between the Council and Jobcentre plus in relation to training and employment opportunities, based on the statutory guidance and building on the success of the troubled families programme. This will see wherever possible Jobcentre Plus services delivered through Children's Centres and built around integrating delivery plans with outreach teams. The work should wherever possible link to regeneration and lifelong learning activity, neighbourhood development and the 16 - 19 activity (particularly for young parents and prospective vulnerable young parents) and be part of the wider economic mobility plans for Wirral.

Published inspection reports show that alignment with Jobcentre Plus is an issue for many Children's Centres across the country, and decreasing funding for adult education adds to the challenge. Where possible, however, the review felt that this aspect of the service should be strengthened, as part of helping parents to enter employment and improve family economic wellbeing. More recently work to integrate lifelong and family learning and work to deliver key elements of the European Social Fund training package, (managed through the Jobcentre Plus) has started to take place through Children's Centres.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: STAFFING STRUCTURES**

It is recommended that Staffing Structures are developed as outreach teams to operate across each of the constituency areas. Staffing structures and resource will be developed to deliver early childhood services in each area and will be based on levels of need.

Staff will not be appointed to a building but instead will work and be responsible to deliver services across a constituency area and from the most appropriate location for the children and families accessing services.

It is also recommended that an early years Business Support team is developed to ensure

the delivery of the wider Early Years remit and ensure the local authority can respond more effectively to its statutory responsibilities.

Staffing structures will be designed to support the development and career progression of staff. They will also have an entry level for people moving in to work, creating not only a progressive structure, but ensuring a pathway through training and volunteer programmes. They will also support apprentice level entry to ensure we work closely with apprenticeship schemes and engage our young people.

Staffing for the service will focus delivery on a more targeted offer to respond to need and improve outcomes, they will work collaboratively with other service providers to ensure that not only the very best services are offered to children and families, but that we collectively make best use of the skill and resource available.

Staff will still operate from and base themselves in Children's Centres but will no longer be driven by the need to ensure availability of buildings regardless of service and community need. The offer and approach will ensure a much more flexible offer that can respond better to need and react to changes as they present.

The review has considered savings by allocating less to buildings to protect as far as possible front line staff to support service provision - acknowledging that people not buildings deliver services.

It is anticipated that some adjustment may be necessary longer term to support the implementation of the 0-5 health services following the securing of a provider and its implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:  
CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

Children Centres are designed to work with children and their families to offer coordinated services such as, health visiting, midwifery, employment services and adult learning. They work as a key part of Targeted Services to offer support to children and families at the earliest opportunity or when need becomes apparent (early help). But they also work with those children's and families who are subject to specialist and statutory services, particularly children with complex needs and those receiving child protection interventions (it is these children who are recognised as priority target groups).

Whilst it is a statutory responsibility to ensure there is enough early childhood provision to match need, it is not stipulated that it has to be delivered from children centre buildings and is often more likely to be accessed through a range of other locations, such as community buildings, health buildings, schools or even a families home, by some of our hardest to reach families. **The ambition is to move from harder to reach families to easier to access services.**

Whilst early years has been central to the review there was a recognition that the remit is often much wider. There was also a sense that buildings and delivery from them should be established to become community hubs for families. That will integrate services to deliver the support needed at a community level to tackle the underlying causes of crisis for vulnerable families. This as an ambition could engender further integration and see resourcing responsibilities and skill sets shared across a wider footprint.

The review process has made explicit a focus on protecting service delivery and has been keen therefore to ensure that the significantly reduced budget should ensure a delivery model that will enable children and families to continue to access a range of services delivered by experienced professionals.

Whilst there was a strong committed to preserving Children's Centres buildings, it recognised that to do this significant change to the way the buildings are used, managed and

delivered will be necessary. This approach will see a greater reliance on effective partnership working and a shared responsibility.

However it was also noted that buildings should not be protected at all costs and do not necessarily need to stay within the portfolio to continue to be used effectively by children and families. The recommendation is therefore to secure one main Children's Centre (which will be designated as full core purpose offer Centre) in each of the four Constituency Localities and one satellite building in each constituency area. This will afford a named children's centre for every child and support the local authority to carry out its statutory function to evidence sufficient Children's Centres.

It is expected that all other buildings will be preserved through partnership working with key stakeholders (see diagram on page 31) and will continue to offer an element of targeted support as an outreach provision. The apportioned budget allocated from the Council for the buildings will be Significantly reduced – with a reliance on a shared responsibility and responsibility.

**This will see the 16 Children's Centres deliver as:**

- 4 main hubs or designated Children's Centres
- 4 outreach/satellite of the main hubs
- 2 work as an extended nursery school to offer alongside the poverty hub schools
- 4 potentially transferred to be delivered by schools
- 4 to be further developed with partners

Children's Centres should align to become an integral part of the early help offer through effective identification and support of children and families who need targeted early help, with the aim of safely decreasing the number of children referred to social care.

## Conclusion

The work has been progressed as a strategic review and invited other organisations, services and agencies to advise its direction, it has also been dependent on other parts of the wider organisation (for example information governance, HR and finance) and challenged other organisations, such as health and Jobcentre Plus as its statutory partners in terms of influencing change and getting it right for the future.

It recognises that overall the review will form the first part of an exciting onward journey, allowing the service to take stock and reposition itself. That further work to corporately shift the outcomes from the service to more strongly support and influence demand management and have a wider remit and responsibility in the longer term regeneration of Wirral.

### **Breaking intergenerational issues and getting it right in the Early Years or before it goes wrong makes social and financial sense and that is everyone's business.**

The strategic core group, identified from an early stage in the review that a principle objective of the service in future should be to effectively identify and support those families in need of targeted early help to prevent the need for social care intervention and improve outcomes. The review focused therefore not just on the performance of the current service but how the service might need to respond and change to effectively deliver against the new "core purpose" and respond to vision 2018 as a vehicle to ensure that services are in the best shape they can be to respond to future need.

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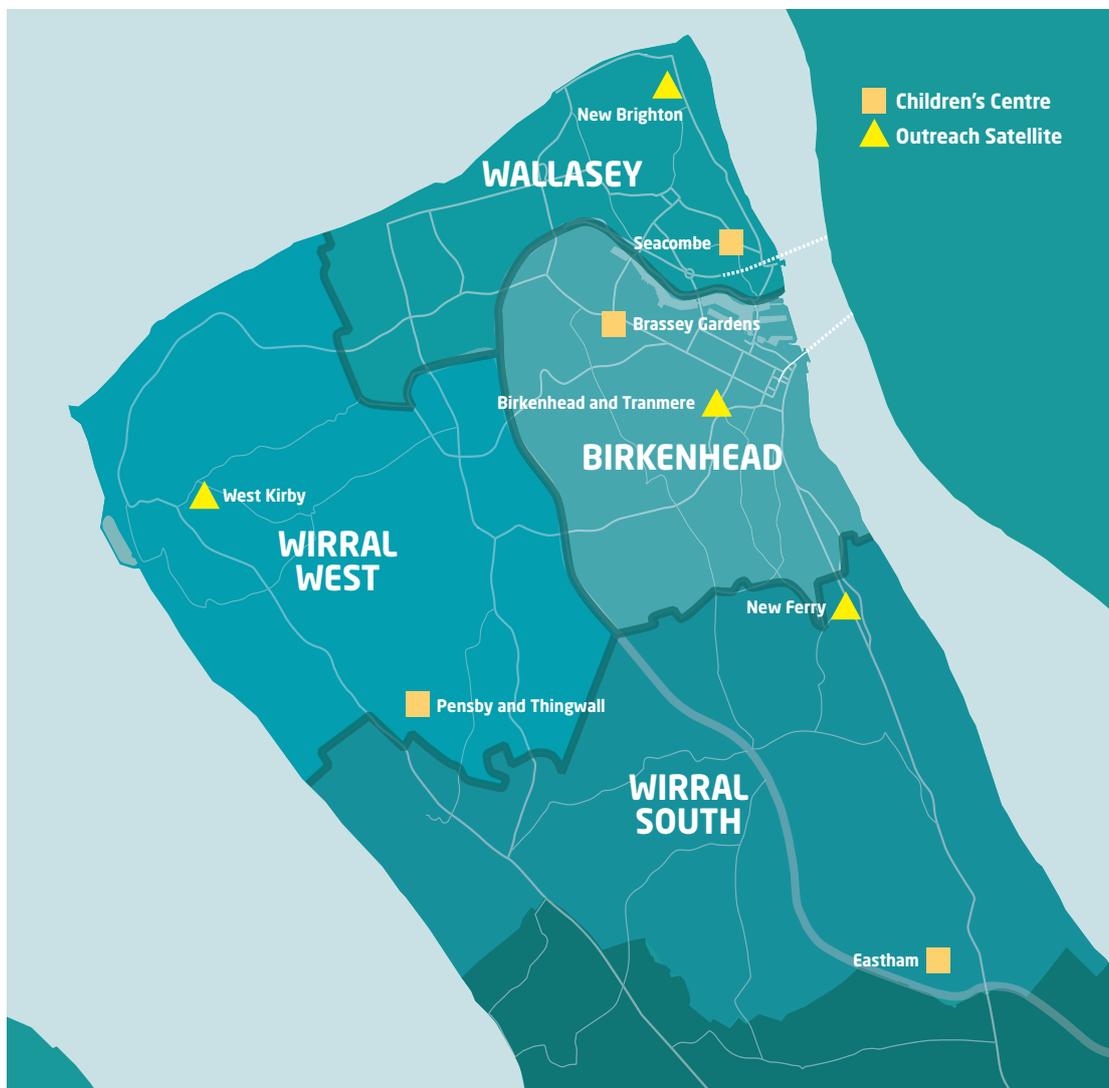
## Moving forward - a confidence in the service

It is important to acknowledge that the service has continued to progress and develop during the period of the review and in fact the review process itself has exposed a number of developmental requirements. An improvement plan has run alongside the review, and will continue to oversee developments:

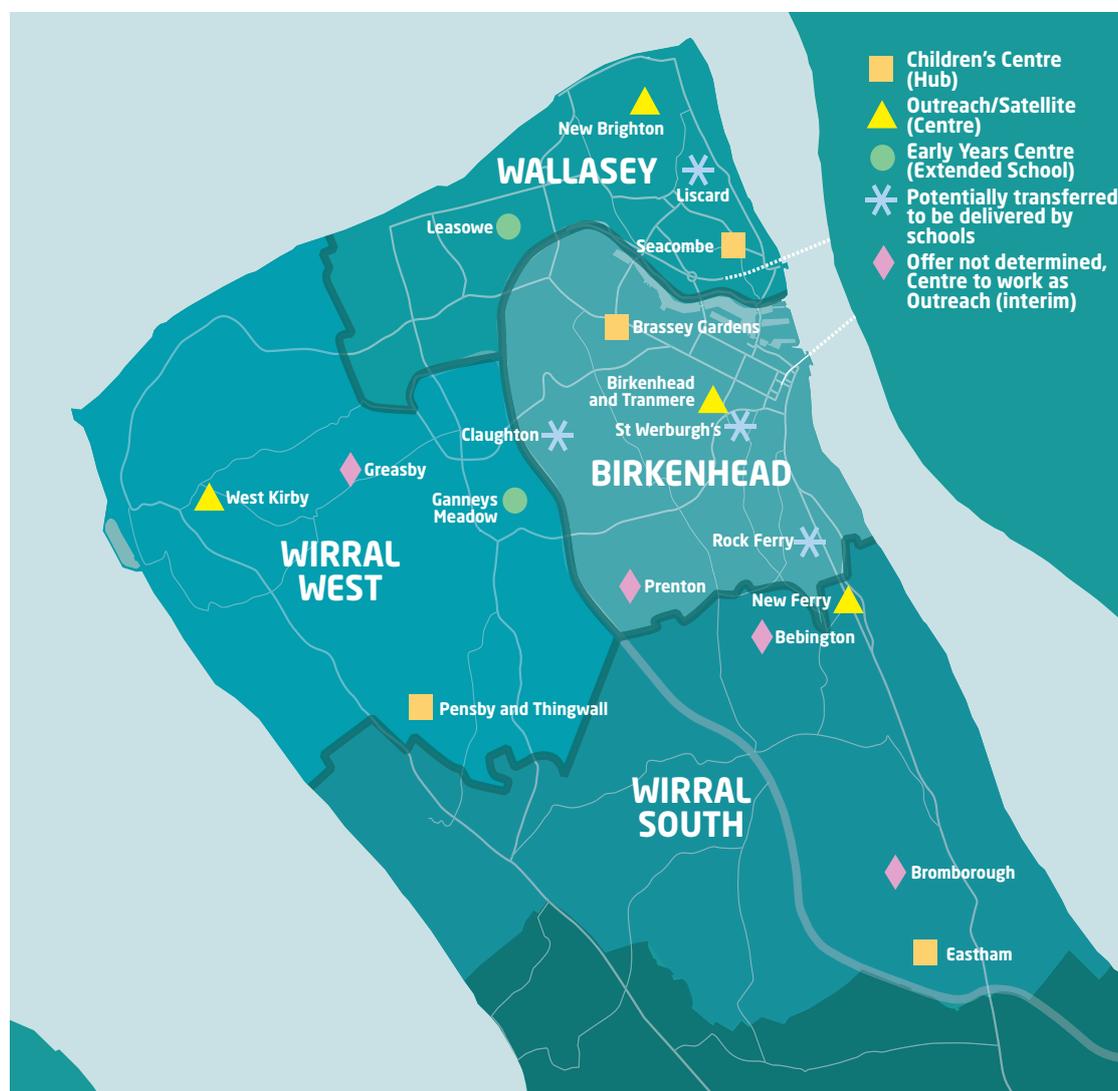
- Workforce development is crucial and plans are underway to focus on designing a leadership programme - which will consider leadership at every level. The programme will respond to both imminent and future need, grow a confidence in local staff as leaders of the future and guarantee the staff are positioned to respond to change and take the service forward
- HR consultation and statutory requirements to ensure the needs of the staff and council are considered remains a central focus
- Consultation regarding the day nursery service continues to progress and it is recognised that the final position could be contradictory to any agreed delivery models and will require careful consideration and management
- An interim multi agency Early Years steering group has been established and will progress and oversee developments for the service, it will report to the board for 'Vision 2018', the early help steering group and the children's trust.
- Work to deliver an Information Sharing Protocol Agreement between Health and Early Years is progressing, to ensure the service can appropriately target and track those most in need
- Advisory Boards As Governance arrangements have undertaken work to refresh current arrangements in place - following changes imposed last year and will progress through a programme of intense development to ensure leadership and governance is robust and fit for purpose.
- Jobcentre Plus and Lifelong learning are working with children's centres across four constituency areas to confirm joint working arrangements and ensure work ready targets are enhanced
- The Early Years Foundation Stage scores (2014) against a new baseline set in 2013 have started to demonstrate marked improvement
- Data Analysis has been highlighted as an area for further workforce development and will be used more proactively to demonstrate impact and to understand service and service user requirements

## Appendixes

**MAP A:**  
**DESIGNATED CHILDREN'S CENTRES (HUBS) AND OUTREACH/SATELLITE BUILDINGS**



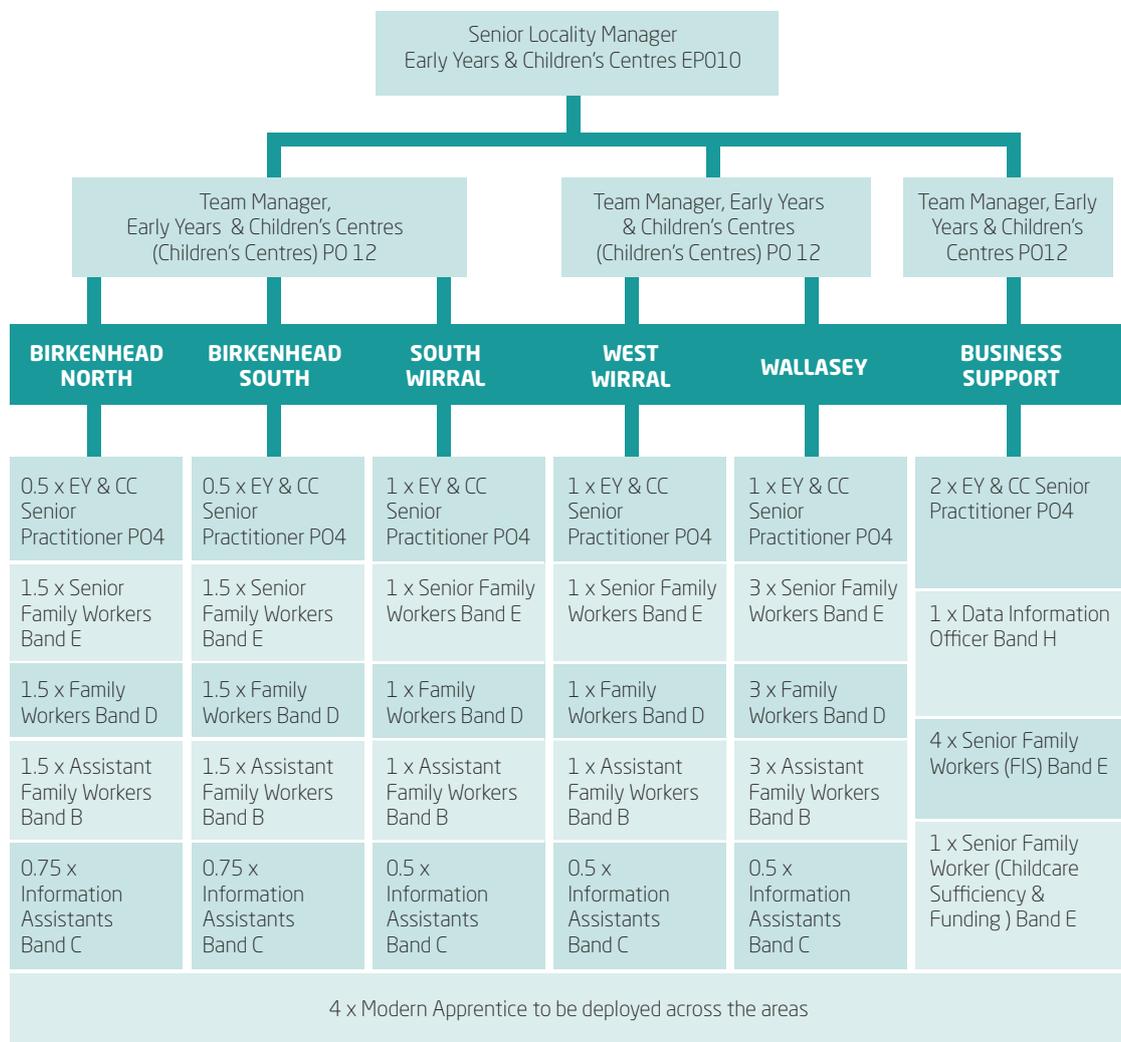
**MAP B:  
PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY, RETAINING 18 BUILDINGS**



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- **Bebington:** Outreach Satellite or Partnership with school
- **Birkenhead and Tranmere: Cathcart Street** - Outreach building. **St Werburgh's** - Partnership with school.
- **Brasseley Gardens:** Main Children's Centre
- **Bromborough:** Partnership delivery
- **Cloughton:** Partnership delivery
- **Eastham:** Main Children's Centre
- **Ganneys Meadow Early Years Centre:** Maintained Nursery School with extended services
- **Greasby:** Outreach Satellite or Partnership delivery
- **Leasowe Early Years Centre:** Maintained Nursery School with extended services
- **Liscard:** Partnership delivery
- **New Brighton:** Satellite Centre
- **New Ferry:** Satellite Centre
- **Pensby and Thingwall:** Main Children's Centre
- **Prenton:** Partnership delivery
- **Rock Ferry:** Partnership delivery
- **Seacombe:** Main Children's Centre
- **West Kirby:** Outreach Satellite

### WIRRAL CHILDREN'S CENTRES PROPOSED STAFFING STRUCTURE SEPTEMBER 2014



Please note that at this stage post titles and grades are indicative and are subject to job evaluation.

**APROX COSTS:**

PROPOSED ROLE	PROPOSED GRADE	APROX COSTS per FTE with on-Costs
2 x Team Manager Early Years & Children's Centres (Children's Centres)	PO12	£90,000 (2 x 45,000)
4 x EY & CC Senior Practitioner PO4	PO4	£140,000 (35,000 x 4)
8 x Senior Family Workers	Band E	£185,752 (23,219 x 8)
8 x Family Workers	Band D	£167,088 (20,886 x 8)
8 x CC Assistant Family Workers	Band B	£143,080 (17,885 x 8)
Family Information Assistants	Band C	£76,076 (19,019 x 4)

**TOTAL NO. OF STAFF = 34****TOTAL COST £801,996**

1 x Team Manager Early Years & Children's Centres (Business Support)	PO12	£45,000
2 x Senior Practitioner (EYP/EY Teacher)	PO4	£70,000 (35,000 x 2)
Early Years Information Support Officer	Band H	£30,000
4 x Senior Family Workers (FIS)	Band E	£92,876 (23,219 x 4)
1 x Senior Family Worker (Childcare Sufficiency & Early Education Funding)	Band E	£23,219 (currently this post is funded through DSG - recommend that continues)

**TOTAL NO. OF STAFF = 9****TOTAL COST £261,095****TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF IN SERVICE = 43****TOTAL STAFFING COSTS = 1,063,091**

## RATIONALE & ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

### Children's Centres:

Wirral's Children's Centres have been through a period of instability and uncertainty and this review and new staffing structure will bring some much needed focus and clarity to staff working within it.

The proposed Children's Centre staffing structure is designed to provide children and families with the best possible service while ensuring that safe practice and staff welfare are considered. Two Area Managers will lead four nominal teams across the Borough, with each taking responsibility for a Locality with a high level of economic deprivation and for one with less deprivation but still with identified needs. This will enable staff to share skills and knowledge and will provide flexibility within the service for the Team Managers to deploy staff where they are needed most.

It is proposed that a Senior Practitioner is in place for each Constituency Locality, providing support for the Team Manager and the teams, this role will need a skilled and experienced practitioner who can identify needs, plan and direct work, whilst supporting teams through hands on involvement when necessary and appropriate

The staff teams will consist of a mixture of experienced, qualified, unqualified and entry level roles, supporting a healthy skills mix which can be directed according to the needs of the service and empowering local parents to join the workforce.

The levels of staffing within the structure are strongly recommended at this stage of development and re-design in order to meet regulatory requirements and to give sufficient flexibility across the service for future change.

### Childcare Business Support Team:

As has been suggested already within this review, it has been identified that previous budget reductions within the service have severely impacted on the central Business Support team which provides much of the Early Years statutory requirements for the Local Authority. The proposal is to build this team into a stronger, fit for purpose structure which is able to adequately support front line service delivery, private, independent and voluntary partners and key stakeholders. The proposed structure mirrors that of the Children's Centres teams to enable flexibility within the service should it be needed in the future.

A Team Manager will lead and manage the team and ensure that all statutory duties are fully met and work with colleagues to support Children's' Centres service delivery. She/he will be supported by two Senior Practitioners who will provide training and quality support to all early years and childcare practitioners across the Borough.

The rest of the team will support the key statutory duties through provision of the Family Information Service 0 – 19, Childcare Sufficiency and the administration and leadership for all early education funding.

The service recognises that modern apprenticeships will ensure that we consider wider economic mobility for Wirral communities and invest in our young people today as our workforce and leaders of tomorrow.

**CHILDREN'S CENTRES & EARLY YEARS STAFFING  
CURRENT SITUATION - JULY 2014 CHILDRENS CENTRES:  
1 BAND EPO 10 SENIOR MANAGER (LOCALITIES)**

**Current Staffing 31/7/14**

3 X PO12 EY & CC Team Managers

14 x Band H Outreach Coordinators

16 Link/Parenting Workers

50 Early Years Workers

14 Band D Admin

8 Band C Admin Assistants

**EARLY YEARS CENTRAL/BUSINESS SUPPORT TEAM**

**Current Staffing 31/7/14**

1 x Band H Two Year old funding and Childcare Sufficiency Officer

1 x Band H Data & Information Officer

3 x Band G Childcare Development Workers

Vacancy

## BUDGET

### Total Controllable Budget: £2.3 million

#### **A staffing resource of £1.15m will be allocated**

Staffing structures will be developed as outreach teams in each of the constituency locality areas. They will secure early childhood services in each area and services will be based on levels of need. A Central Business Support Team will be developed to support the wider early years services and meet the Local Authority's statutory duties

#### **A building and premises resource of £600k will be allocated to support 16 buildings**

This will be focused on supporting the 4 main Centres and the correlating satellite/outreach buildings. It will also be used to provide an element of support for buildings being used as a partnership offer.

#### **A commission of £150k will be allocated for each of the two extended nursery school (£300k)**

This will be in addition to the Delegated Schools Grant (DSG) under Single Formula funding arrangements. It will enable both schools to continue to provide an extended early years service offer and compliment the Poverty Schools Hub work and the wider early years outreach offer.

#### **A commission of £200k for use by the 4 advisory boards to secure supplies and services**

This will be used to resource and facilitate early childhood activity including outreach work, resources for parents attending targeted parenting groups, to meet costs of focussed family groups and associated targeted work with families

#### **A commission of £50k for use by the business team to secure supplies and services**

This will support the delivery of statutory requirements including the Family Information Service publicity and awareness raising, training resources for new and existing providers, room hire for training events etc

## EXTRACT FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

### 54 EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES

The Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services presented the report of the Director of Children's Services, which sought approval to endorse the detailed Wirral Early Years and Children's Centre Review, which had been undertaken between April – July 2014 and detailed in August 2014. The report set out the background to the Review and highlighted its key issues and findings. The Chair thanked the Head of Targeted Services and her team for the significant work they had undertaken during the Review process. He endorsed the recommendations in the Review being progressed through to public consultation and expressed his pride that no Children's Centre buildings would be closed and that the offer would be targeted to those with greatest need.

#### Resolved –

- (1) That the Wirral Early Years and Children's Centre Review undertaken between April – July 2014 and detailed in August 2014, be endorsed.
- (2) That Cabinet notes that a key consideration of the review has been to ensure that efficiencies of £2m (agreed in December 2013), can be achieved for the 2014 – 2015 period. The review has noted and acknowledged that there will be continued financial pressures on public sector services.
- (3) That the recommendations detailed in the Review be progressed through to a public consultation.
- (4) That a six week consultation period be undertaken to progress the recommendations detailed in the Review, which will advise a future delivery approach for the Early Years and Children's Centre Service, namely that –
  - (i) The Children's Centre offer becomes an integral part of the Early Help offer through effective identification and support of children and families who need targeted early help. An overarching aim is to safely reduce the number of children referred to social care or accessing specialist/statutory services. *Noting*, as key to this, that in 2013 the former Children's Centre Family Support Resource shifted to become an integrated part of the Borough's wider Family Support offer, aligned and co-ordinated based on need and demand to the Gateway and as part of targeted services.
  - (ii) Work to establish strategic and operational policies and procedures to ensure that a joint service offer across the Borough's early childhood services develop – reducing duplication, and cost and improving outcomes. This will see

formal commissioning partnership arrangements drawn up between the Council and health visiting and the Council and Jobcentre Plus (as statutory partners). These will include agreements for effective and robust information sharing. This will see wherever possible a health visiting and Jobcentre Plus service delivered through Children's Centres and built around integrating delivery plans aligned through the outcomes framework (see page 7 of the Review).

- (iii) Staffing Structures are developed for four Constituency Areas, designed around need and population. A Central Business Support Team will also be developed to secure the wider Early Years and Childcare remit and offer essential support to the operation of Children's Centre activity.
- (iv) The review has considered savings through a reduced estate and associated cost, to allow the Council to protect, as far as possible front line staff and service provision – acknowledging that people not buildings deliver services. The recommendation is therefore to secure one main Children's Centre (which will be designated with DfE as full core purpose offer centres) in each of the four Constituency Localities. This will give a named Children's Centre for every child and support the local authority to carry out its statutory function to evidence sufficient Children's Centre activity. It is anticipated that all other current buildings will be preserved through partnership working with key stakeholders such as schools, health, and the voluntary, private and independent sector to offer an element of targeted support in those areas where there is a high local need identified. This will see the 18 Children's Centre buildings deliver as:
- 4 Main Hubs or Designated Children's Centres
  - 4 Outreach or Satellite of the Main Hubs
  - 2 work as an extended nursery school to offer service delivery alongside the poverty hub schools
  - 4 potentially transferred to be delivered by schools
  - 4 to be further developed with schools and partners