

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