

## Appendix 2 (b) – Draft Cabinet Minutes 16 June 2016

### 1734 Optimising the Use of Children Centre Buildings (Agenda item 5)

The Cabinet considered the future plans for delivering effective prevention services for Children and Young People including optimising the use of Children's Centre Buildings. The details were set out in the report.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Communities introduced the report and commented that it was recommended that the Council work with Early Help providers and public health nursing services to transform service provision and move towards a new integrated approach. The Council faced significant financial challenges in the future which would mean that the service would need to work with providers to deliver services in a more cost effective way with continued focus on improving outcomes for children, particularly those in greatest need. It was not intended to close any Children's Centres but rather identify different uses for the buildings and therefore it was proposed that consultation arrangements be commenced where changes occurred with due diligence on quality impact. There would not be any County Council redundancies but there might be an impact on provider organisations but every attempt would be made to minimise that impact. The Early Help contracts had reduced to £4.5m and were expected to reduce to £3m by 2017/18. The use of a reserve from the Early Intervention Grant had helped protect services but would be exhausted in this financial year. An amendment was proposed that further consideration be given to a change of use of the at the Brookside Children's Centre at Comberton Primary School – Wyre Forest and a formal decision be taken following consultation
- The Cabinet Member for Health emphasised that the proposals were only going out for consultation at this stage. It was encouraging that informal feedback from schools regarding the change of use of the buildings was positive as it would provide greater flexibility in the use of the buildings by schools. The service would change in the future and therefore it was important to target particular young people in need rather than across the board
- The Chairman of the Children, Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity for the Committee to meet the relevant Cabinet members at a future scrutiny meeting in July 2016

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- It was important to use the funding envelope and resources available to target the most needy and vulnerable children in society
- For the proposals to be a success, it was vital that head teachers and governing bodies were fully informed of the proposals in their school given their leading role
- A member from outside the Cabinet welcomed the proposed amendment to include Comberton Primary School in the consultation arrangements. There had been progress in tackling the number of NEET's and RONIs and it was important that these proposals did not impact on progress made to date. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Communities commented that it was important to continue to monitor the number of NEETS effectively and keep it as a priority
- A member from outside the Cabinet commented that the proposals represented a budget reduction to children's services and ignored the views of the majority of people who were satisfied with the current service provision. He was concerned that leasing facilities to Academies could lead to charging arrangements in the future. People required face-to face interaction not a virtual service. To be meaningful, the consultation process should be held after the consideration by the Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Communities emphasised that there were no proposals to close any Children's Centres as a result of these proposals. The proposed leases would guarantee usage to a category appropriate to children's centres. It was not appropriate to delay the consultation process because the Scrutiny Committee would not meet until July which would mean that the consultation exercise would take place during the school holiday period
- A member from outside the Cabinet expressed concern about the vague nature of the proposals and the potential staff redundancies. She also queried what provision would be made in the Bromsgrove area and in particular at Conkers at Hagley Primary School. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Communities responded that all councillors would be contacted about proposals in their division.

### **RESOLVED: that**

- a) **the outcome of the procurement process for the integrated 0-19 prevention service set out**

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in paragraph 3 of the report be noted;

- b) the future plans for delivering effective prevention services, within the financial parameters set out in the report (particularly paragraphs 4 to 8 and 35 to 38) and the medium term financial plan be approved, subject to any required consultation as set out in the report;
- c) consultation on change of use for those children's centre buildings where there is likely to be significant change as outlined in paragraph 26 (b) and Appendix 2 with the addition of Brookside at Comberton Primary School – Wyre Forest be authorised;
- d) the proposals for the future use of children centre buildings where consultation is not required as outlined in paragraph 26 (c) and Appendix 2 other than in relation to Brookside at Comberton Primary School – Wyre Forest be approved;
- e) the summary of impact of the proposals for the future use of buildings as outlined in paragraphs 27 to 31 and the need for further equality impact analyses to inform the final decisions in respect of the proposed changes outlined in paragraph 40 be noted;
- f) the final decisions for the use of children's centre buildings, where consultation is required, be delegated to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, having regard to the outcomes of those consultations and equality impact analyses; and
- g) the Director of Children, Families and Communities and the Interim Director of Public Health be authorised to take all necessary steps within their respective responsibilities to give effect to the above including varying and/or extending the existing contracts of the district-based early help providers and public health nursing functions, and the Director of Commercial and Change be authorised to agree appropriate terms for the future use of children's centre buildings.