

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

13 MARCH 2017

PROGRESS UPDATE ON OPTIMISING THE USE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRE BUILDINGS

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, and the Assistant Director for Families, Communities and Partnerships have been invited to the meeting to discuss the progress on Optimising the Use of Children's Centre Buildings.

Background

2. During 2016 a number of reports, scrutiny meetings and call-in procedures were considered by elected members as part of the decision making process on the future use and optimisation of Children's Centre Buildings in Worcestershire.
3. On 13 September 2016 the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families published his decision in respect of these matters. This decision notice is attached in background papers and the decision is summarised below.

The Cabinet Member:

- (a) noted the information in the report and accompanying background information and the detail contained in the accompanying Appendices 1 to 6, including statutory duties, detailed appraisal of consultation responses and district specific equalities impact assessments;
- (b) approved the proposal to allocate a one-off sum of £30,000 which is used to support the universal provision to become self-sufficient (as outlined in detail in paragraphs 29 and 33 of the report);
- (c) approved the recommendations to change the use of 18 children's centre buildings as outlined in paragraph 34 of the report and detailed in the accompanying Appendix 1 and authorised the Interim Director of Commercial and Change to make the necessary property and lease arrangements;
- (d) authorised the Director of Children, Families and Communities to take all necessary steps to put the above into effect including a dedicated 6-9 month transition period as described in paragraph 35 of the report;
- (e) authorised the Director of Children, Families and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, to find and implement an alternative proposal that is of similar nature (i.e. still meets the definition of a children's centre) in the unlikely event that any of the particular proposals outlined in paragraph 34 of the report are unable to be implemented; and

(f) agreed to receive a further report (following any further consultation which may be necessary) if it does not prove possible to find alternative proposals under (e) above, in order to make any further decisions around the use of specific children centre buildings.

4. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the decision was subsequently called-in and was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) on 21 October 2016. The Chairman proposed that the decision should be accepted but with qualification, that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel be requested to work with the Cabinet Members with Responsibility throughout the implementation of the decision to ensure continued Scrutiny and Quality Assurance and to report any concerns to OSPB. This was agreed by the Board.

Progress update

5. Following the acceptance of the decisions outlined in paragraph 3 above work has been undertaken to ensure the smooth transfer of Children's Centre buildings and to ensure the necessary support for this process and the sustainability of universal stay and play provision across the county. A summary of progress is detailed in paragraphs 7-9 below and a centre by centre summary of progress in implementing change and activities is provided in Appendix A.

6. In addition to ensuring the smooth transfer of Children's Centre buildings, work is also progressing on developing and embedding new early help services and pathways across the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service and Parenting and Targeted Family Support Services. This work forms an integral part of the Safeguarding Improvement Plan (Outcome 8) and also includes supporting and challenging the whole workforce in playing their full part in identifying risk and managing need at the earliest stage.

Renewal of leases of the 12 centres which continue to be occupied by Parenting and Family Support providers (previously known as Early Help providers).

7. Current providers are contracted to the end of March 2019 and leases are currently being aligned where appropriate to this new contract end date. This work is nearly at completion for South Worcestershire (Action for Children) and in Bromsgrove (Redditch Borough Council). It is expected that all other areas will be completed by the end of March 2017.

Transfer of centres to schools/other providers

8. In view of the lengthy lease negotiation process, officers have worked with colleagues in Place Partnership Ltd to put in place Tenancy at Will arrangements to ensure legal occupation of buildings by the agreed new occupiers. In a small number of cases this has not yet taken place due to the future use of the building still needing to be agreed. However, in all cases continued delivery has been possible by effective partnership working between teams within WCC, Place Partnership, providers and schools. To support new occupiers, one off start-up funding has been made available on a need-by-need basis to support initial running costs and minor alterations in buildings in order to make them fit for purpose for the new arrangements. More detail can be found in Appendix A.

Sustaining Stay and Play provision

9. The use of the allocated £30k to support the sustainability of universal stay and play sessions has started to be allocated following requests from providers and schools. To date a request for £8,127 from Redditch Borough Council (for provision in Redditch and Bromsgrove districts) and for £5,000 from the Provider 10:32 for provision in the Wyre Forest area have been approved. These requests include using funding to update equipment, ensure suitable access arrangements and for the training and guidance of staff and/or volunteers to run sessions. It is anticipated that the full £30k will be allocated across the county by the end of this term. A wide range of sessions continue to be delivered across the county, in a variety of settings, and are publicised via the council's website (<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/childrenscentres>)

10. After only a month of their new contract one of the Parenting and Family Support providers reported a significant uptake of volunteering opportunities and reported:

"Since the 1st of December we have had over 30 people register an interest in volunteering within the new service. This has been driven by the public's desire to see activity groups continue to run from the children's centres. So far 28 individuals are at various points along the application process, with the majority ready to be placed within new volunteer led groups."

The report then listed the sessions running with the help of volunteers at 6 separate centres in south Worcestershire with sessions at a further 3 centres planned, and confirmed the possibility of running an additional needs support group run by volunteers to support young people affected by Autism and Asperger's and their families once a month in the Sunshine centre in Malvern. These are only examples of the community capacity building work being undertaken by providers.

Purpose of the Meeting

11. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider the information in the update
- Determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities.

Supporting Information

Appendix A – Centre by Centre Summary

Contact Points

Worcestershire County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Specific Contact Points for this report

Alyson Grice/Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Officers,
Commercial and Change Directorate (01905 844962/844963)

Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda Report and Minutes of Cabinet: dated 16 June 2016 available on the County Council Website [here](#)
- Agenda Report and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board dated 1 July 2016 available on the County Council Website [here](#)
- Agenda Report and Minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel dated 17 March 2016 and 15 July 2016 available on the County Council Website [here](#).
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility report and decision notice dates 13 September 2016 and available on the County Council Website [here](#)
- Agenda Report and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board dated 21s October 2016 available on the County Council Website [here](#).



Children Centre
Statutory Guidance.p

All council agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website [here](#)

AGENDA ITEM 5

APPENDIX A – CENTRE BY CENTRE SUMMARY

32 Children’s Centres buildings within scope of the project:

- 18 Centres were part of the consultation on the future use of buildings
- 2 Centres were not part of the consultation, but lease arrangements need to be updated
- A further 12 Centres were not part of the consultation, but require existing leases to be reviewed and updated (Deed of Variation)– via business as usual arrangements with PPL / Legal

Information, advice and guidance for families:

A range of signposting and information leaflets and posters have been developed and have been sent out to all centres. These include general information leaflets and posters outlining a range of support for families ranging from contact details for the Family Front Door and Health Visiting services as well as Parenting and Family Support providers, links to the council's website for information on activities and support groups and a wide range of useful websites. Additional leaflets have been provided on topics relevant to under – 5's and family issues generally including managing money, nursery funding for 2 year olds, 16+ and adult learning and domestic abuse. This will ensure that all centres across the county have a consistent quality of information available. Copies of the service leaflet were made available at member briefings on 6th and 9th March 2017

Activities and services being delivered at each centre and surrounding venues are detailed on the WCC website. Information available is regularly reviewed with Schools and Providers - <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/childrenscentres>

Timescales:

The majority of building transfers should be agreed or in place by Mid-April (ie the end of term). There are potentially challenging circumstances in a few of the centres where we are still in discussions that will extend these timescales. Progress continues to be monitored through project team meetings

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
1	Pear Tree at Sidemoor –	This is a standalone centre and continues to be used by the Parenting and Family Support provider, term time only childcare provider and health providers*	Parenting and Family Support provider

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
	Bromsgrove	This centre has a full range of activities including on Saturdays. Sessions include health visiting, Stay and Plays, breastfeeding support, Bounce and Rhyme, parents-to-be sessions and parenting courses. This is the main base for the provider in Bromsgrove.	
2	Sunnyfields at Charford – Bromsgrove	<p>Transfer to school is in progress to extend nursery provision and to release space for before and after school provision, parenting support and health provision.</p> <p>The centre is well used and sessions are running Monday-Thursday including health visiting, midwifery, family learning, speech and language, kinship carers support, mental health and a special needs group on Saturdays.</p> <p>Some minor works are required to fully utilise the space and these are being funded to support the school.</p> <p>Lease negotiations are underway.</p>	School
3	Tulip Tree at Catshill Bromsgrove	<p>Transfer to school for mixed use including support for children open to social care and health provision is in progress and lease negotiations are underway.</p> <p>Sessions being delivered or in the planning stage include increased speech and language drop-ins on Mondays and Tuesdays, holiday clubs, increased nursery provision and family meetings. Conversations are in place with external providers to deliver pregnancy groups. A detailed timetable is available of other groups and activities in the local area including parent and toddler groups, Stay and Play and breastfeeding support.</p> <p>Again minor works have been required to facilitate this transfer and to allow safe access to the building and from the school.</p>	School

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
4	Conkers at Hagley - Hagley	<p>Transfer to school for mixed use including increased childcare, before and after school provision and health provision is in progress with detailed lease negotiations underway.</p> <p>As final negotiations with the school are taking place, the timetable has yet to be expanded however health visitors continue to deliver from the centre on Wednesday afternoons as well as there being a Stay and Play session on a Friday. A detailed timetable is available of other groups and activities in the local area including parent and toddler groups, Stay and Play and breastfeeding support.</p>	School
5	Sunshine at Pool Brook - Malvern	<p>This space forms an integral part of a wider centre and continues to be the main base for the Parenting and Family Support provider in Malvern, alongside health providers*</p> <p>This venue is being used to deliver volunteer led universal sessions as well as provider led activities including parenting support and family support initial meetings. The provider will also support the transition of services and service users from Evergreen as the lease for that building expires in 2017.</p>	Parenting and Family Support provider
6	Sunshine at The Grove – Malvern	The use of this centre as an outreach centre and base for parenting and family support services will continue.	Parenting and Family Support provider
7	Riverboats at Upton - Upton	<p>Transfer to school is well underway with school quickly establishing a timetable of provision Monday-Thursday including health visiting, midwifery, breastfeeding support, messy play, introduction to solids and baby massage whilst working to increase nursery places.</p> <p>Lease negotiations are well advanced.</p>	School
8	Holly Trees at St Georges – Redditch	This is a small outreach site with few services being delivered. The transfer will allow the school to use the space for funded childcare places.	School

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
9	Holly Trees at St Stephens – Redditch	This centre continues to be run by the Parenting and Family Support provider and is delivering a full timetable of sessions and clinics as well as being used as a base for parenting and family support.	Parenting and Family Support provider
10	Oak Trees at St Lukes – Redditch	Childcare provider continues to operate the childcare provision on this site	Provider
11	Oak Trees at Oakhill – Redditch	Transfer to school for nurture and health provision and to support work with families (social care and family support) is underway and lease negotiations are progressing. The timetable of activities (parenting support, SEN and EAL drop ins and stay and play fun session) is developing and the afterschool club is running as usual.	School
12	Cherry Trees at Batchley Redditch	Transfer to school for mixed use including increased early years provision is underway with lease negotiations in progress. Full timetable of enhanced community provision is yet to be finalised.	School
13	Maple Trees at Tenacres - Redditch	Childcare provision continues to be delivered from the centre. Negotiations with the school have yet to reach the stage where a Tenancy at Will has been issued therefore the centre has yet to transfer to the school. Discussions continue between School, childcare provider and CFC colleagues with a view to moving towards a decision by the school in a reasonable timescale.	School (proposed)
14	Maple Trees at Roman Way - Redditch	Transfer to school for mixed use including childcare and health provision has not gone ahead and an alternative provider of childcare is being identified at the moment. Officers are working closely with the school to ensure a smooth transition. Before and afterschool provision continues to be provided with the full co-operation of the school.	To be confirmed
15	Woodlands at Woodrow - Redditch	Transfer to school for mixed use including parenting support, nurture and additional support for 3 - 9 year olds and health provision has not progressed fully whilst the school has considered the full costs and implications of the transfer. The school has helped to support the continued use of the centre for parenting courses as well as	School (proposed)

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
		<p>Story, Song and Rhyme and Stay and Play sessions on Monday and Friday run by Woodrow Library.</p> <p>Negotiations continue and a decision by the school is expected shortly.</p>	
16	Buttercup at Fairfield Primary – Worcester	<p>Continued use by parenting and family support providers alongside health providers* and childcare provision, for a wide range of activities including parenting support and family support.</p> <p>This is another centre where volunteer led universal sessions are being delivered, with support from the provider alongside provider led activity detailed above.</p>	Parenting and Family Support provider
17	Saffron at Stanley Rd Primary – Worcester	<p>Continued use by parenting and family support providers alongside health* provision for a wide range of activities including parenting support and family support.</p> <p>Sessions run Monday-Friday including antenatal clinics, child health clinic, health visiting, speech and language, parents-to-be sessions, twins group and volunteer-led Stay and Play and Bumps to Babies.</p>	Parenting and Family Support provider
18	Tudor Way at Dines Green Primary – Worcester	<p>Continued and expanded use by parenting and family support provider, alongside health* and a childcare provider.</p> <p>A wide range of activities are delivered at this site in partnership with health including antenatal clinics, baby health clinic, speech and language, citizens advice and parents-to-be sessions and volunteer led stay and play. The centre is also a base for parenting support sessions and delivery of family support.</p>	Parenting and Family Support provider
19	Lavender at Oasis – Worcester	Transfer to school for mixed use including 2 year old funded provision, before and after school activities and support for parents is underway with lease negotiations progressing well. Health provision is ongoing (midwife appointments) and a full timetable is being developed by the school.	School

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
20	Bluebell at Perry Wood - Worcester	<p>Transfer to school is underway and a full range of health provision and Mental Link support remains available.</p> <p>The transfer has been delayed due to legal queries and discussions with the EFA but is now progressing well.</p> <p>A full timetable of additional activities us under development by the school.</p>	School
21	Blossom Vale at Abbey Park First School – Pershore	This is a small room situated directly between two schools and continues to be used as a base by the Parenting and Family Support provider with sessions delivered Tuesdays-Fridays including health visiting, speech and language, introduction to solids, employability drop-in and Stay and Play	Parenting and Family Support provider
22	Applevale at Broadway - Broadway	The proposed transfer to the school to deliver provision for parental engagement, joint work with the existing childcare provider and a space for community use has not proceeded and discussions with the childcare provider are underway (with the support of the school) to explore the feasibility of their increasing provision throughout the centre.	To be confirmed
23	Orchard and Spring Vale – Evesham Nursery School	<p>The proposed transfer of the lease to the adjacent nursery school is underway for continued mixed use including parenting, family support, health and increased use for childcare provision.</p> <p>The main activity room will be used by the nursery (day and term time only) and will be available for the provision of activities and parenting support outside of these times.</p> <p>Changes to the building are underway to support increased nursery places and currently health providers are operating from other community buildings.</p>	Evesham Nursery school
24	Wands at Westlands First	Continues to be leased to the Parenting and Family Support and childcare providers with sessions running Monday-Friday including health visiting, midwifery, family	Parenting and Family Support provider

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
	Schools – Droitwich	support drop-in, speech and language, introduction to solids, Time4U, additional needs group, maths and English and volunteer-led Stay and Plays.	
25	Greenwood at Wychbold First School – Droitwich	This small centre was until recently used as an office and meeting space only and is being transferred to the school to meet basic need and for multi-agency use for meetings.	School
26	Half Crown Wood at St Bartholomews – Stourport	Continues to be run by Parenting and Family Support provider with sessions running Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday including speech and language, health visiting, midwifery, family learning, new parent groups and breastfeeding support.	Parenting and Family Support provider
27	Half Crown Wood at Stourport Primary - Stourport	Transfer to school to deliver increased early education provision is underway.	School
28	Brookside at Comberton-Kidderminster	Continues to be run by Parenting and Family Support provider with sessions running Monday-Wednesday and Friday including health visiting, midwifery, speech and language, new parent groups, introduction to solids and breastfeeding support as well as a base for parenting and family support provision. Discussions are continuing on the alterations required to enable the shared use of the centre by the school for before and after school childcare and nurture groups.	Parenting and Family Support provider
29	Rainbow at St Marys - Kidderminster	The transfer of the lease to the on-site childcare provider is underway and activities are up and running Monday-Friday including Stay and Play, parent and toddler music sessions, speech and language and healthy eating courses.	Provider
30	Chestnut at Franche -	The transfer of the lease to the school is underway and additional nursery places together with a timetable of provision including speech and language, parenting	School

	Centre	Current position	Proposed/current lease holder
	Kidderminster	programmes, music time, Stay and Play, baby sensory, story time and baby massage are already established.	
31	Riverside at Bewdley	Transfer to the school for services that will include increased early education, childcare and services specifically targeted to the local community is underway.	School
32	Treetops at Birchen Coppice - Kidderminster	<p>Transfer to the school is now underway following discussions with the school around the viability of their running this large centre for shared use by the school, the current childcare provider and other providers and a number of legal queries.</p> <p>Negotiations are now progressing and the centre continues to be used for a range of provision including nursery provision and adult learning.</p> <p>The school has provided practical help and supported to maintain the continued use of the centre during these discussions.</p>	School

* Health provision can include midwife clinics, health visitor drop in sessions or routine appointments, speech and language provision and in some cases paediatric or specialist clinics. These services are provided by other organisations who will from time to time review and change their provision in line with contracts, demand and other available community buildings (e.g. Health Centres). It cannot be guaranteed therefore that current health provision at these centres will remain unchanged.