

CABINET
24 OCTOBER 2019**USE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRE BUILDINGS – TRANSFER OF
THE CENTRE AT ABBEY PARK FIRST AND MIDDLE
SCHOOLS, PERSHORE**

Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr A C Roberts

Relevant Officer

Director of Children's Services

Local Member

Mrs E B Tucker

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families recommends that Cabinet:**
 - (a) approves the proposals for the future use of the Children's Centre building Blossom Vale at Abbey Park First and Middle Schools as outlined in paragraphs 6 - 10 below; and**
 - (b) authorises the Director of Children's Services to take all necessary steps to give effect to the above.**

Background – Blossom Vale Children's Centre

2. In June 2016 Cabinet agreed a range of recommendations relating to the provision of effective prevention services for children and young people including optimising the use of children's centre buildings for delivery in localities.

3. Cabinet approved the proposals for the future use of a number of children's centre buildings where consultation was not required; this included the proposal that the Children's Centre building known as Blossom Vale located at Abbey Park First and Middle Schools in Pershore continued to be used by the Parenting and Family Support provider for the delivery of services.

4. This decision was implemented and a lease for Blossom Vale Children's Centre was granted to Action for Children when the contract for the provision of parenting and family support services in the Wychavon area was novated to them in September 2016.

5. The building is integral to the school site and comprises an office and one multi-purpose activity room which have continued to be used for the delivery of a number of services including monthly activity sessions, weekly family learning sessions, speech

and language drop-ins, school holiday activity sessions, stay and play sessions and various parenting courses. The office serves also as a base for family support workers in the Pershore area.

6. The lease with Action for Children expired on 31 March 2019 at which point Action for Children advised that they did not wish to take on a new lease due to the low level of direct service provision they were delivering at the site and the wish by the school to use the space for expanded early years' provision and continued delivery of existing activities and health provision. Abbey Park First and Middle School originally expressed an interest in running the centre during the children's centre consultation that took place in 2016. In April 2019 the Abbey Park Schools Federation (Pre-School, First and Nursery and Middle School) confirmed that they were still interested in taking on the lease of the centre in order to be able to extend their pre-school provision which was full and to support the ongoing delivery of health services, family learning and other activities. They have also recently been approached by the Community Midwives service who wish to have an administration base at the school with the view to developing more services in the future.

7. In June and July 2019 the Federation carried out a consultation with parents and carers of the children using the school (letter at Appendix 1) outlining their plans for the use of the centre should the transfer be agreed. The letter contains the following description of the Federation's proposals:

"Abbey Park Schools Federation would very much like to actively promote and run Blossom Vale Children's Centre, in order to enhance the services our Federation can offer to our pupils and parents, as well as other local families. Abbey Park First and Nursery School already has a very successful Nursery and Pre-School, both of which are full during certain sessions. We could use the Children's Centre to provide additional capacity for some sessions, allowing more children from Pershore and surrounding areas to be able to access Early Years Education.

We also have links with Worcestershire County Council's Family Learning Team, who can offer courses to our local parents and children, free of charge. As well as our Local Community Midwife team, who are based at Abbey Park Middle School and are offering courses and workshops to 'Parents to be'. The Speech and Language team who have been using the Centre for some time, have also agreed to stay, so the service they offer will remain unchanged. Action4Children will still be offering courses such as 'Birth and Beyond'. We have also pencilled in some messy play sessions for under 4 year olds.

Abbey Park has a passion to provide services to our local families from birth to age 12 and aspire to becoming a community hub offering a variety of services, whether their children are pupils or not. We intend to promote Blossom Vale Children's Centre as much as possible, making use of its wonderful resources on a regular basis.

As a Federation of schools, we have links with a large range of professional services and with our dedicated staff, we hope to be able to make the Children's Centre a wonderful asset to our community."

8. A total of 53 responses were received by the Federation, with 52 of the responses supporting the proposal to transfer the centre to the schools. The one response that did not agree with the proposals included the comment "I would like the children's centre to remain independent from the school." Comments in favour of the proposals did refer to

the need for the centre to be self-funding and not detract from the leadership of the schools. Full details of the comments received are in the summary document at Appendix 2.

9. Through a collaborative approach between the schools and Action 4 Children and other providers, a full range of services continue to be delivered at the centre pending a decision on the formal transfer to the school.

10. It is therefore proposed that the Children's Centre building known as Blossom Vale in Pershore be leased by the Council to Abbey Park Schools Federation for the continued provision of early childhood services.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

11. There are no direct negative implications relating to the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to the sufficiency of children's centre delivery arising from this report. The proposals for the centre will have a positive impact for families in the area through the provision of a range of activities and services and extended early childcare provision. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient early years and childcare places to meet the needs of families in the county. The core purpose of children's centres set out in statutory guidance is 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; and
- child and family health and life chances.

12. There are no direct financial or HR implications for the Council arising from this report. Lease arrangements with non-funded providers such as schools specify that rent is payable should the activities at the centre produce a surplus once running costs are taken into account.

Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments

13. A privacy and public health impact screening has indicated that a full assessment is not required.

Risk Implications

14. There are no identified risks arising from the proposals that cannot be managed through the proposed lease arrangements with the Federation.

Equality and Diversity Implications

15. An Equality Relevance Screening has been completed in respect of these recommendations. The screening did not identify any potential Equality considerations requiring further consideration during implementation.

Supporting Information (available electronically only)

- Appendix 1 - Consultation letter to parents/carers

- Appendix 2 - Consultation responses

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points
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Specific Contact Points for this report
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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 June 2016