

CABINET

24 SEPTEMBER 2020

USE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRE BUILDINGS – TRANSFER OF THE CENTRE AT BEWDLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr A Roberts

Mr M Hart

Relevant Officer

Director of Children's Services

Local Member

Mr I Hardiman

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 Riverside Children Centre at Bewdley Primary School as outlined in the report;
 - (b) authorises the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Director of Commercial and Change to take all necessary steps within their respective responsibilities to give effect to the above; and
 - (c) authorises the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Education and Skills and Children and Families, to take all decisions in relation to the change of use of Children's Centre buildings so long as they will continue to provide services under the definition of a Sure Start Children's Centre, and the Director of Commercial and Change be authorised to agree appropriate terms for the future use of Children's Centre buildings.

Background

2. In June 2016 WCC 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. This included the proposal that the Children's Centre building known as Riverside Children's Centre located at Bewdley Primary School be leased to the Governing

Body of Bewdley Primary School for the delivery of Early Year's Education for 2-year-olds and other local support services. The location the Children's Centre in relation to Bewdley Primary School is attached as appendix 1.

4. This decision was implemented and a lease for Riverside Children's Centre was granted to The Governing Body of Bewdley Primary School in 2018.
5. The building comprises various rooms including 3 Multi-Purpose Rooms, Office space, Consulting room, Kitchen and Toilet facilities as outlined in appendix 2. The facility has primarily been used to offer early years education places for 2-year-olds, as well as the delivery of a number of other community services including monthly NHS speech and language support, wrap around care, and multi-agency use to support welfare and safeguarding of young children..
6. During November and December 2019 the school carried out a consultation with parents and carers of the children of the school and nursery outlining their plans to integrate this facility into their maintained provision, extending the age range of the school from 3-11 to 2-11 (appendix 3).
7. The school has proposed that they would continue to operate 2-year old provision from this building, with no alteration to staff, children, or number of places offered, but that the nursery, and the site, be absorbed into the maintained estate.
8. The integration of this facility into the maintained age range of the school would enable a consistent education programme from 2-11 and improve communication and administration across the school community, along with securing ongoing availability of early education and care provision for 2-year-olds in this area.
9. A total of 54 responses were received by the school, with 49 of the responses supporting the proposal for the school to take over this provision. 3 respondents had no opinion and 2 were undecided. There were no objections received to this proposal.
10. During the school consultation, many parents commented on the positive opportunities for improved communication, ability to book and pay for lunches using the ParentPay system for younger children, and the smooth transitions between different parts of the school facilitated by existing systems.
11. The Local Authority is the sole decision-making body for a school of this type and therefore the proposal was submitted to Worcestershire County Council for consideration in December 2019. The proposal to extend the age range of the school has been supported by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills and the Director of Children's Services and public notice was issued on 23 April 2020 of the intention of the Local Authority to approve this change. No objections were received and therefore the proposal was approved for implementation subject to the correct land transfer of the Children's Centre taking place (appendix 4).
12. The accommodation for maintained provision must be held and maintained by the Local Education Authority, and therefore to integrate the provision into the maintained school site the Children's Centre building must be transferred to become part of the school estate. This would effectively end the current lease

held between WCC and the Governing Body of the School which was approved by Cabinet in 2016.

13. Ordinarily, a school would not be required to provide community and health services within maintained provision, however in agreeing this change the school have confirmed that they will continue to use the building to provide early years provision, as well as allowing the use of the building for existing community services to continue as this is in the interests of the development and welfare of young children and families in the community. Therefore, this proposal continues to meet the statutory definition of a Sure Start Children's Centre, meeting the requirements of the Sure Start, Early Years, and Childcare Grant (SSEYCG) which was invested in the site.
14. This change is considered to be in the best interests of children and young people in this area and secures the provision of these services. It is therefore proposed that the Children's Centre building known as Riverside Children's Centre in Bewdley be incorporated by the Council into the Bewdley Primary School maintained estate for the continued provision of early childhood services.
15. Currently, there is no delegated authority to allow changes to the designated use of Children's Centre buildings. It is proposed that delegated authority be given to the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members and the Director of Commercial and Change where appropriate to approve the change of use of Children's Centre buildings where there is no significant change to the services being provided and where Children's Centre buildings continue to deliver services under the definition of a Sure Start Children's Centre.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

16. 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 security of early childcare provision along with a range of activities and services.
17. 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 change proposed secures this duty by integrating early year education places into maintained provision. 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.
18. The new use of the facility complies with the Central Government Sure Start grant provisions.
19. There are no direct financial or HR implications for the Council arising from this report. Lease arrangements currently in place with the Governing Body specify that rent is only payable should the activities at the centre produce a surplus once

running costs are taken into account. Monitoring of any financial or HR impacts will take place on a regular basis.

20. The transfer of the Children's Centre accommodation into the school estate will result in the transfer of planned maintenance responsibilities and costs from WCC Corporate Property to WCF Education. This means the Children's Centre building will become eligible for Condition funding, subject to terms and conditions, which is allocated to Local Authorities by the Department for Education to maintain the condition of the school estate. It should also be noted that the Worcestershire County Council Fair Funding Scheme for Financing Schools 2016 would also apply and any existing corporate property arrangements under the current lease would cease.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

21. The JIA screening and Equality and Public Health Full Impact Assessment did not identify any potential negative impacts during and following implementation. These have been attached as appendix 5 and 6.

Supporting Information

All available electronically

- Appendix 1 – Bewdley Primary School Site
- Appendix 2 – Riverside Children's Centre Floor Plan
- Appendix 3 – Consultation Document November 2019
- Appendix 4 – Decision report on Change of Age Range
- Appendix 5 – Joint Impact Assessment Screening
- Appendix 6 – Equalities and Public Health Full Impact Assessment

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 for Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Cabinet Decision on Children's Centres 2016:

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MId=1174&Ver=4>