

- Other Cabinet Members consulted
- Chief Executive
- Legal Victoria Gould – “fine”
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals All stakeholders
In addition a copy of the county overview (Childcare Audit and Sufficiency Assessment 2006/07) was placed in all main libraries and on the WCC consultation database and website

FINAL DECISION **YES**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

**Stratford Joint Committee – East
15th July 2008**

Sufficiency of Childcare and Gap Analysis

**Report of the Strategic Director for Children,
Young People and Families**

Recommendation:

That the Joint Committee note the content of the Sufficiency Assessment as a requirement of the Childcare Act 2006 and consider if, in their opinion, the Gap analysis addresses the areas of need in Stratford District.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 is the first piece of legislation solely dedicated to the provision of sufficient childcare. It seeks to implement the proposals of the Government's ten-year strategy for childcare "*Choice for Parents, the best start for Children*" (December 2004).
- 1.2 The Act places the responsibility upon Local Authorities to strategically lead the creation and development of childcare, working in partnership with the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.
- 1.3 As part of the anti-poverty strategy, childcare is identified as being a key area for consideration to allow parents the opportunity to return to work or to access training which may result in their finding work.

2. The duties imposed upon Local Authorities

- The Outcomes Duty
- The Sufficiency Duty

2.1 The Outcomes Duty

The Outcomes Duty focuses upon the improved services provided to meet the Every Child Matters Outcomes for children under five years of age. It examines improvements in their well-being and aims to reduce the inequalities in

achievements by helping them to access integrated, high quality early childhood experiences. In doing so Local Authorities are required to work within a multi-agency arena and demonstrate integrated working with partners in a range of agencies, including the private and voluntary sector.

2.2 The Sufficiency Duty

2.2.1 The Local Authority duty to assess the sufficiency of childcare came into effect in April 2007 and required all local authorities to complete a sufficiency assessment by April 2008.

2.2.2 Section 11 of the 2006 Act places a duty on the Local Authority to undertake a childcare sufficiency assessment. This assessment is deemed to be a necessary first step towards securing sufficient provision, enabling local authorities to identify gaps and establish plans and develop the childcare market to meet the needs of parents and secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to access work or training which would lead to employment opportunities.

2.2.3 Sufficient childcare, in Section 6 of the 2006 Act, is defined as “sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in the (Local Authority’s) area who require childcare in order to enable them to:

- To take up, or remain in work, or
- To undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.”

2.2.4 In determining whether provision of childcare is sufficient a Local Authority must have regards to the needs of parents in the provision of childcare in respect of which the childcare element of the working tax credit is payable and also have regards to whether the provision of childcare is suitable for children with disabilities.

2.2.5 Local Authorities take the strategic lead in the development of childcare services but are not expected to provide them directly.

2.2.6 Section 11 of the Act requires the Local Authority to prepare a sufficiency assessment at intervals at least every three years but also expects that it will be kept under review until the assessment is superseded by a new one.

3. Summary

The two documents submitted for consideration – the Early Years Gap Survey 2007/08 (**Appendix A**) and the Stratford District Sufficiency Assessment 2007/08 (**Appendix B**) – outline the sufficiency of childcare within Stratford District and identify the recognised gaps in provision.

4. Recommendation

That the Joint Committee note the content of the Sufficiency Assessment as a requirement of the Childcare Act 2006 and consider if, in their opinion, the Gap analysis addresses the areas of need in Stratford District.

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1st July 2008