

Cabinet

12 September 2013

Report of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Children's Centres Select Committee

Recommendation

That Cabinet considers and approves the nine recommendations of the Children's Centres Select Committee, as outlined at 4.0.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18th June 2013, members considered a report on the Early Year's Core Offer and the proposed change to the service delivery model for Children's Centres across the county. These were presented as three options, which were subject to a consultation exercise until 27th August 2013.
- 1.2 At that meeting, members agreed to undertake the 'Select Committee' method of scrutiny to undertake a focused review of the proposals outlined in the Early Years Children's Centres consultation and gather the views of key stakeholders. The Select Committee would also seek to achieve the following key outcomes:
 - To provide clarity around the expected outcomes for children and families using Children's Centres;
 - To consider the partners involved in Children's Centres and their respective roles in delivering those outcomes;
 - To achieve a clear understanding of the funding and sustainability implications that currently exist and will exist in going forward;
 - To review arrangements for monitoring quality through performance management and identify any improvements;
 - To scrutinise the processes in place to deal with unsatisfactory performance, including the role of Ofsted; and
 - To consider any implications in terms of safeguarding children and young people.
- 1.3 A copy of the Select Committee's scoping document, which outlines the agreed rationale, focus and arrangements for the review is attached at **Appendix A.**

2.0 Children's Centres Select Committee

- 2.1 The first meeting of the Select Committee was scheduled for 14th August 2013. As members considered it essential to gain a complete picture of the proposals, as well as gather evidence from key partners and Children's Centre representatives, the meeting was structured around four key areas:
- 1) General introduction from the Learning and Achievement team regarding the proposals and preferred option, as outlined in the Early Years Children's Centre consultation;
 - 2) Evidence from Children's Centre representatives – this included both staff and parents;
 - 3) Evidence from health partners; and
 - 4) Information on the funding formula and possible implications.
- 2.2 Due to the significant interest from Children's Centre representatives, the morning session was timed to allow each Centre three minutes to present its views to the Committee.
- 2.3 At that meeting, the Committee agreed to hold a further meeting on 23rd August 2013 in order to discuss its conclusions, a formal response to the consultation and any recommendations it wished to submit for Cabinet approval.
- 2.4 The minutes of the meeting held on 14th and 23rd August are attached via a web link at the end of the report.

3.0 Response to Early Years Children's Centre Consultation

- 3.1 The following is an extract from the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd August 2013, which refers to the Committee's response to the consultation:

"There was consensus among the Committee that it objected to the closure of any Children's Centre. The Conservative members of the Committee proposed that the Committee respond to the consultation in support of Option 1 on the basis that this was the most appropriate option in avoiding the closure of Centres and object to Options 2 and 3 as those would result in the closure of a number of Centres. This motion was put to the vote and lost. The opposing members did not want to demonstrate their support for Option 1, for the following reasons:

- 1) The impact of the funding reductions on the proposed groups, which would result in some being subject to a 38 per cent reduction;*
- 2) The budgetary impact of potential redundancies on providers, particularly on third party providers; and*
- 3) The base allocation for building and management costs, as oppose to staff and services, was potentially very high which may result in*

buildings being kept open, without sufficient resources to delivery services from them.”

4.0 Recommendations of the Children’s Centres Select Committee

4.1 The Committee has agreed to submit the following nine recommendations to Cabinet for consideration and approval:

Recommendation 1 – That Cabinet recognise the needs of deprived families across the county and how they will be affected by the reduction of the Family Support Funding.

The Committee is concerned with the significant reduction in the level of funding that will be available for front line service delivery under the proposed new service delivery model, particularly under Option 1 which will see an average 30 per cent reduction in funding (and in some cases, up to 38 per cent) across the allocated groups. Members also wish to stress that deprivation happens in all areas of the county and that even the most affluent areas have pockets of deprivation.

Officer comments

It will be necessary for children’s centres to provide differentiated support to children and their families according to their needs. The focus will be upon targeted support for those young children and their families who experience factors which place them at risk of poor outcomes. Each children’s centre will be required to demonstrate how they prioritise those families experiencing the greatest level of need within their locality; how they facilitate and secure access for such families and how they deliver on the required improved outcomes. As a result of extensive consultation, officers still support Option 1 in the consultation proposal subject to minor amendments which have arisen as a result of the consultation process

Recommendation 2 – That Cabinet includes in its 2014/15 budget proposal that funding for the Children’s Centres for 2015/16 and 2016/17 is ring-fenced so that there will not be a further reduction in funding.

Members of the Committee are concerned that there is a lack of future-proofing in each of the proposed options, in respect of the likely impact of further reductions in funding to Children’s Centres. The proposed options are considered to only provide a short-term budget solution for 2014/15 that may not be appropriate for 2015/16 and beyond.

Members also note that three-year contracts will be awarded to providers without a guarantee of funding for 2015/16 and beyond and, in light of this, the Committee believe that Recommendation 2 will provide reassurance and stability to the providers regarding future service delivery option, and therefore greater confidence and support to families.

Officer Comments

The recommendations do not address the financial challenges faced by the Council. On 5 February 2013 Council decided to make savings of £2.3m in the budget for Early Years provision. This required a fundamentally different delivery model for Children's Centres alongside an 'Early Years Offer' of services for children aged 0-5 and their families. One-off funding was allocated as part of that decision to allow time for the development of the new delivery model.

Recommendation 2 proposes that funding for the Children's Centres 2015–17 is not subject to any further reductions. Members need to consider this proposal against the much wider financial context within which the Council is developing its Organisational Plan 2014-18. Significant background investigation and work is already being undertaken to ensure that members have the necessary information to make informed choices and balance priorities. At this stage members do not know what other savings they may need to make to enable them to offer protection for specific parts of the services provided by the Council. If Children's Centre funding is determined in isolation the whole purpose of the planning process is undermined.

Members are also reminded that, as part of the wider Local Government Finance Settlement, funding for early intervention is set to reduce by a further 14% in the next two years.

The 2014/2015 and subsequent year budgets are yet to be fixed by the Council. Any future savings requirements and service consequences will need to be validated as part of that process and would, consequently, be built in to the base budget for tendering for the service. Children's Centres would have to form part of the overall consideration under savings options.

Recommendation 3 – That Cabinet recognise the issues regarding potential redundancies and TUPE arrangements and how these issues will impact on providers, particularly third party providers, in terms of funding frontline services.

Members acknowledge that the providers will be responsible for TUPE and redundancy arrangements and costs. There are concerns about the potential impact that this will have on providers who will need to meet those costs within a significantly reduced budget and a) whether those providers will have adequate provision; and b) how this will affect the funding for frontline services.

Officer comments

All bidders would be provided with full details of expected staff transfer numbers, including likely redundancy costs, in the pre-tender information pack. Bidders would also have the option to price their contract as though TUPE did, or did not, apply in order to achieve flexibility in their bids. Furthermore, their application would need to demonstrate sufficient resources to cover any associated costs or redundancies. Organisations may not be

awarded the contract if they could not demonstrate their proposals were financially robust.

We recognise the implications for TUPE and redundancy costs and these will be considered throughout the procurement process. The make-up of service profiles for prospective bidders and the consequent arrangements for staffing will not be apparent until the tendering process is advanced.

Recommendation 4 – That Cabinet gives due consideration to the governance arrangements to be determined for the Children’s Centres.

Members acknowledge that the providers would be responsible for determining governance arrangements for their group(s), which would be reviewed by the County Council as part of the procurement process. The Committee agree that in light of the importance of an appropriate and robust governance model, that Cabinet give due consideration to what arrangements and requirements should be determined in the service specification for the Children’s Centres.

Officer comments

Bidders will be required to outline their experience of governance and demonstrate a clear track record of leadership and management. This will be critically tested as part of the bid evaluation.

Recommendation 5 – That all Children’s Centres offer Birth Registration services.

The registration of births at Children’s Centres has been recommended by the All Party Parliamentary Sure Start Group and members acknowledge that a pilot exercise in Nuneaton, which had the highest number of birth registrations, was currently being discussed with local registrars. Members believe that this should be extended across the county.

Officer comments

Currently, all births within Warwickshire are registered through an appointment-only service delivered through the four registration service offices in Nuneaton, Rugby, Stratford and Warwick. The service previously delivered services at outreach offices in Atherstone, Shipston and Southam. The level of demand through these outreach offices was very low. The offices have been closed as running the business from these outlets was no longer financially viable.

Recommendation 6 – That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board monitors the key service delivery outcomes, as defined by the Learning and Achievement service, and the extent to which these are achieved by the Children’s Centre providers.

Officer comments on recommendations 6 and 7

It is anticipated that the monitoring of outcomes of children's centre services by the Health and Well Being Board will lead to greater involvement with the clinical commissioning groups which is a positive development.

Recommendation 7 – That the Health and Wellbeing Board clarifies the strategic view of the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) regarding Children's Centres and their commissioning intentions to explore service delivery opportunities with the Centres.

The Committee welcome the introduction of assessment for two-year-olds, which will determine their preparation for school at that stage, and acknowledge that this will be a measureable service delivery outcome for providers to achieve. Members believe that both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board should have a role in monitoring the achievement of those key outcomes. Furthermore, the Health and Wellbeing Board should have a specific role in clarifying the strategic view of the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) regarding Children's Centre and their commissioning intentions, which will help the Learning and Achievement service to explore service delivery opportunities with the Centres.

Recommendation 8 – That Elected Members support the Learning and Achievement service in the development of Service Level Agreements with the following partners and/or services: Job Centres Plus, Health Visiting, Midwifery, Children's Services, Public Health, CAHMS and Adult and Community Learning.

The development of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with partners, particularly the Job Centre Plus and social care, was an area supported by both members and officers. Through SLAs, the Centres would be able to achieve greater buy-in from partners to those services required by the Centres and also develop a 'win-win' solution for all partners involved.

Officer comments

In July 2010, the Council entered a partnership with Jobcentre Plus to pilot two Jobcentre Plus outreach services to be delivered through the Warwick and Kenilworth One Stop Shops. As neither town had a Jobcentre Plus office, it was agreed that the service would be present in each location for one afternoon per week. The service was widely publicised in both areas. In April 2011, after 10 months of piloting the services, the services were closed as there were low levels of take-up and were not seen as being viable both in terms of the numbers of people the staff were seeing and the cost of delivery.

This recommendation suggests the presence of Jobcentre Plus in 39 new locations; however, the evidence through WCC's One Stop Shop pilot with Jobcentre Plus suggests this may not be viable both in terms of levels of demand for the service and cost. For further information, the Customer Service and Access Strategy can be viewed by clicking this link:

<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Customer-Service-Access-Strategy-Jan-2013-1.pdf>

However the support from elected members in the compilation of agreements with key service delivery partners is welcomed.

Recommendation 9 – That parents and other appropriate representatives are invited to contribute and submit their views at the appropriate stage of the procurement process.

Officer comments

The request for the involvement of families in to the procurement process is noted.

- 4.2 After the meeting of the Select Committee, an additional recommendation was suggested, as follows:

That the County Council encourage the use of Children's Centre buildings for private use in order to generate additional revenue for the service.

Members of the Committee were evenly divided on agreement of this recommendation being submitted to the Cabinet for approval; therefore, the suggested recommendation is included in this report for reference.

Appendices

Appendix A – Children's Centres Select Committee Scoping Document

Web link to other documents:

Minutes of the Children's Centres Select Committee, 14th August 2013:

<https://democratic.warwickshire.gov.uk/cm55/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/645/Meeting/2932/Committee/487/Default.aspx>

Minutes of the Children's Centres Select Committee, 23rd August 2013:

<https://democratic.warwickshire.gov.uk/cm55/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/645/Meeting/2938/Committee/487/Default.aspx>

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Scoping Document for Select Committee on Children’s Centres

Review Topic (Name of review)	To consider Warwickshire Early Years and Children’s Centres as part of the general Consultation
Task and Finish Group Members	TBC
Co-option of District and Borough members (where relevant)	
Key Officers / Departments	Mike Taylor, Sarah Callaghan, Sally Lightfoot, Barbara Wallace
Lead Scrutiny Officer	Ann Mawdsley
Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Heather Timms
Relevant Corporate Ambitions	Ambition 6 – Schools and Education - Higher levels of attainment for all Children in Warwickshire - Improved well-being of children and young people in Warwickshire. This work also ties in to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Type of Review	Select Committee
Timescales	The consultation runs from Tuesday 25 June 2013 to Tuesday 27 August 2013 at 5pm . The select committee will take place at a date to be decided before the close of the consultation in order to feed in to the final recommendations.
Rationale (Key issues and/or reason for doing the review)	Warwickshire County Council is carrying out a consultation that will propose a new delivery model for Warwickshire’s Children’s Centres that makes savings of £2.3 million and provides a joined up ‘Early Years Offer’ of services for children aged 0-5 and their families. The C&YP O&S agreed at their meeting on 18 June 2013 to review the proposals for a revised Early Years offer and a revised delivery model for Children’s Centres by holding a select committee to consider the proposals in greater detail and gather the views of key stakeholders.
Objectives of Review (Specify exactly what the review should achieve)	To achieve the following outcomes: 1. Provide clarity around the expected outcomes for children and families using Children’s Centres 2. To consider the partners involved in Children’s Centres and their respective roles in delivering those outcomes 3. To achieve a clear understanding of the funding and sustainability implications that currently exist and will exist in going forward 4. To review arrangements for monitoring quality through performance management and identify any improvements 5. To scrutinise the processes in place to deal with unsatisfactory performance, including the role of Ofsted 6. To consider any implications in terms of safeguarding children and young people.

<p>Scope of the Topic (What is specifically to be included/excluded)</p>	<p>To consider the proposed new delivery model for Warwickshire's Children's Centres that makes savings of £2.3 million and provides a joined up 'Early Years Offer' of services for children aged 0-5 and their families.</p>
<p>How will the public be involved? (Community Forums, consultation, community groups / clubs, etc)</p>	<p>Children's Centre parents</p>
<p>What site visits will be undertaken?</p>	<p>Members of the Committee will be encouraged to make contact with their local Children's Centres and arrange their own site visits</p>
<p>How will our partners be involved? (consultation with relevant stakeholders, District / Borough reps)</p>	<p>The following partners will be invited to give evidence: Children's Centres' Advisory Board representatives Health representatives (particularly midwifery) Parent representatives Reception teachers</p>
<p>Indicators of Success – (What factors would tell you what a good review should look like? What are the potential outcomes of the review e.g. service improvements, policy change, etc?)</p>	<p>Positive outcomes will include recommendations to be made to the Cabinet relating to the Consultation which will include the voice of parents and different partners and will look to finding solutions for the proposals made by Warwickshire County Council that continue to support both children and parents in a meaningful way in Warwickshire.</p>
<p>Other Work Being Undertaken (What other work is currently being undertaken in relation to this topic, and any appropriate timescales and deadlines for that work)</p>	<p>Consultation by the People Group</p>