

Decision of:	CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING
Decision number:	PH41/2015
Relevant Officer:	Delyth Curtis, Director of People
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor John Jones, Cabinet Member for School Improvement and Children's Safeguarding
Date of Decision:	20 th July 2015

LOCAL AUTHORITY NURSERY REVIEW

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To agree the consultation on future commissioning of nursery provision in local authority Children's Centres (Talbot and Brunswick and Grange Park) due to a saving being required as part of the Priority led Budget exercise.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To agree to hold consultation with stakeholders that the local authority will no longer offer an in-house nursery or crèche provision for children.
- 2.2 To work with service users to determine an alternative method of support appropriate for them for the future, subject to the outcome of the consultation.
- 2.3 To authorise the Director of People, subject to a published officer decision, to take such action as is required following the consultation.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 The Council considers, having analysed relevant data that it appears there are sufficient other places across Blackpool as a whole to meet the Statutory Duty to ensure provision of sufficient childcare provision and wishes to explore widening the childcare offer and undertaking consultation. The consultation is proposed to take place in order that any potential changes can be implemented by September 2015 in order to minimise the impact on families, dependent on the outcome as the Autumn term is when nursery provision is at its lowest in terms of children accessing.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

"Tackle child poverty, raise aspirations and improve educational achievement"

5.0 Background Information

5.1 A review of childcare provision in line with the Statutory Duty has been undertaken. The review has shown that the Council meeting our Statutory Duty namely:

5.2 Statutory Guidance states that Children's centres should work closely with other providers offering funded early learning places to ensure that families who need it can access integrated support' (pg 12). The Council would continue to work with existing provision via the Childcare Partners Scheme to ensure families are able to access quality childcare in an integrated setting.

5.3 There is no statutory duty for Children's Centres to provide childcare provision onsite but it is proposed that the centres at TAB and Grange Park will continue to signpost and support families to access provision.

5.4 There is however a Statutory Duty on Local authorities under Childcare Act 2006 to ensure there is sufficient childcare available, this is outlined in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider data referred to in the Background Papers.

5.5 Local authorities are required by legislation to:

- Secure early education places (for 3 and 4 years olds) offering 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year for every child in their area.
- Secure early education places (for 2 year olds) offering 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year for every eligible child in their area.

Local authorities must ensure there is consultation before:

- making a significant change to the range and nature of services provided through a children’s centre and / or how they are delivered, including significant changes to services provided through linked sites.

The proposed consultation exercise is in line with the guidance.

5.6 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.7 **List of Appendices:**

None

6.0 **Legal considerations:**

6.1 Under the Childcare Act 2006 Statutory guidance, a local authority must ensure that such consultation as they think appropriate is carried out before any significant change is made in the service through a relevant Children's Centre. In discharging their duty, an authority must have regard to the guidance given by the Secretary of State.

7.0 **Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 If the consultation exercise leads to redundancies these will be subject to Enhanced Voluntary Redundancy take-up and redeployment opportunities for staff with a minimum of 12 months service.

8.0 **Equalities considerations:**

8.1 Local authorities must promote equality and inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged families, looked after children, children in need and children with disabilities or special educational needs by removing barriers of access to early education and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential. Local authorities must ensure they meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 when securing early education places. In order to support the above the Childcare Partners Scheme has been established. It is the formal partnership between Blackpool Children’s Centres and the Private and Voluntary Childcare providers. As part of the scheme Blackpool Children’s Centres routinely signpost parents and expectant parents looking for childcare to childcare providers in the area which are graded as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted (Level 2).

9.0 **Financial considerations:**

9.1 A savings target has been set as part of the Council’s Priority led Budget Exercise. The consultation exercise and ongoing work with parents can be provided from existing

resources. Savings would be in the region of £ 248, 642 (Full Year Equivalent)

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 A possible risk if the proposal is implemented would be that some families would need help to access their entitlement in terms of childcare provision. In order to mitigate this risk the following actions are proposed and would be undertaken subject to the outcome of the consultation.

- Work with PVI (Private , Voluntary and Independent) sector and cross border partners to develop provision in the local areas
- Blackpool Council's Early Years Team and Early Help Services would provide brokerage support to match families to alternative provision
- Explore additional support around transport.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Consultation will take place with parents who are currently using the nurseries and those who have made enquiries for September subject to the approval of the recommendation. The Council will also seek to consult with those who might consider using the service in the future. Appropriate staff consultation has commenced and is ongoing. Consultation will take place with the Private Voluntary and Independent childcare sector and the Unions.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Provider Survey data as of 12.06.2015.

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? No

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? N/A

14.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: N/A Date approved: N/A

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1 None

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1 The Cabinet Member agreed the recommendations as outlined above namely:

1. To agree to hold consultation with stakeholders that the local authority will no longer offer an in-house nursery or crèche provision for children.
2. To work with service users to determine an alternative method of support appropriate for them for the future, subject to the outcome of the consultation.
3. To authorise the Director of People, subject to a published officer decision, to take such action as is required following the consultation.

18.2 Date of Decision:

20th July 2015

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

The Council considers, having analysed relevant data that it appears there are sufficient other places across Blackpool as a whole to meet the Statutory Duty to ensure provision of sufficient childcare provision and wishes to explore widening the childcare offer and undertaking consultation. The consultation is proposed to take place in order that any potential changes can be implemented by September 2015 in order to minimise the impact on families, dependent on the outcome as the Autumn term is when nursery provision is at its lowest in terms of children accessing.

19.1 Date Decision published:

20th July 2015

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1