

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting3rd November 2011

1. Title of Item/Report

Officer Led Task and Finish EIT Review of the Impact of the Introduction of the Early Intervention Grant

2. Record of the Decision

Members considered a report relating to a Task and Finish review of the impact of the introduction of the Early Intervention Grant.

It was explained that this was the fourth and final report on this issue and set out recommendations for redesigning the Early Years Services in the Borough.

The report proposed a new approach to Early Years operations which would deliver a more targeted, partnership based service with a commitment to early intervention support. The new approach would deliver annual cost savings of approximately £2m.

The proposals would ensure that the service would continue to be available throughout the Borough but would be concentrated to support families with the greatest needs. Members were provided with details of the criteria that had been used to determine need and noted a plan detailing the areas that had been identified as targeted and non targeted:

Targeted - Central East, Central South, Central West, Eastern

Non Targeted - Northern, Southern, Western

Children Centre Operations would be targeted to reflect the areas of need. There would be 2 centres in each of the 4 target areas, 1 centre in the Northern and Western areas and 2 centres in the Southern area.

In the 4 target areas it was proposed that the Council would continue to operate:

- Footsteps Children's Centre – Eastern Area
- Sunrise Children's Centre – Central East Area
- Redhill (and Ragworth) Children's Centre – Central West Area

- High Flyers Children's Centre – Central South

The Council would also seek a partner to operate another local partnership centre in each of the 4 target areas, the centres at Riverbank, Star (and Newtown Resources Centre), New Life and Frederick Natrass would be made available through the procurement process as potential sites for these local partnership centres.

It was explained that proposals would see the transfer of Children's Centre operations at the Thornaby Family Centre (TFC) to the centres at High Flyers and Riverbank.

Members noted that it was proposed that a system be implemented that reflected the general and strong support for targeting but also addressed the many concerns raised, during consultation, about restriction on choice and the concerns that there were pockets of need across the Borough which did not fit within the identified target areas. The proposed system was that each Centre would be given an operating profile to support its targeting aims. For example the centres in the target areas would be required to retain a percentage of their operating time for families in the target area. These would be "closed" sessions and would be used for specific targeted activities with local or vulnerable groups. Beyond this, centres would be allowed to operate open sessions which would be available to anyone. It was proposed that a policy allowing charging for services be adopted but which differentiated between target and non target areas. Centres in non target areas would be allowed greater freedom to charge for services whilst restrictions would be placed on charging in target areas.

Cabinet noted that proposals looked to increase partnership working in this area as a means of generating cost savings and as the optimal delivery method.

A local partnership model was proposed where local voluntary organisations, charities, schools, parents' groups and private organisations were contracted to work with the Council to play a major role in running a Children's Centre in each of the target areas. Links with health partners would be maintained. Members noted the benefits to adopting the local partnership model. It was proposed that a partner be sought with a proven track record to operate 1 of the 2 centres in each of the 4 target areas.

With regard to the non target areas it was proposed that the Children's Centres be delivered by contracts. These centres would be delivered from anywhere in the 3 areas and could be delivered by a community group, a group of parents, a school or a private company.

The intention was to run a procurement process, beginning in early December 2011 which would seek bids to run the 4 local partnership centres in the target areas and the 4 centres in the non target areas. The process would be structured around a competitive tendering process with a short listing based on outline business cases prepared in response to a specification for each centre. The specification would detail operational requirements as well as details about available assets and potential TUPE considerations. The intention would be to short list bids early in 2012 and to make appointments by April 2012 with transition to new operations between April and June 2012.

It was agreed that the proposals outlined, to deliver an effective front line targeted service with strong partnerships had to be underpinned by streamlined and efficient central support service. To achieve this it was proposed to bring the management of Early Years services together in one place – in the Children’s Schools and Complex Needs Service. It was considered that there were real benefits to be gained from bringing all staff involved in Early Years services together in one service. Whilst it was recognised that the teams already worked closely it was hoped that the joint working would be further strengthened by bringing the teams together. Members noted some of those benefits.

It was also proposed that some of the work of the Home Visiting teams which currently operated within the Children’s Centre structure would be transferred out of the Early Years Service into the Children and Young People’s Operational Service. The home visiting service already worked closely with the Children’s Social Care Service and carried out vital early intervention, preventative work with families. It was the view of the review team that those aspects of the work could be better co ordinated and delivered as part of the targeted social care

The outline structural arrangements had been reviewed by and supported by the Children and Young People’s Select Committee.

The review had looked in detail at the work of 303 employees and had proposed a new structure based on general principles outlined previously. It was proposed that formal consultation would begin with employees and unions on 11 November 2011 and that new structures would be communicated to staff then. Consultation had been taking place with union representatives throughout the review on a fortnightly basis. This would be maintained throughout the formal phase of the discussions.

Members noted that the proposals would lead to a net reduction in posts. The approach to achieving the reduction would be to maximise voluntary redundancy requests and as far as possible to avoid compulsory

redundancies. An Equality Impact Assessment had also been carried out on the proposals and full details of the consultation exercise would be made available in the Members Library.

It was noted that the procurement process to run the 4 local partnership centres in the target areas and the 4 non target centres in the north, west and south, would commence in December and would contain conditions that would guarantee the accountability of the partnership organisation(s) involved. It was also requested that officers investigate the potential for the premises of partner organisations in Ingleby Barwick to be used as the possible host for future youth café provision, given that an appropriate location had as yet been identified.

RESOLVED that

1. A new targeted and partnership based approach to the delivery of Early Years Services in the Borough be supported.
2. The procurement process to seek a partner to deliver Children's Centre operations in the 4 target areas of the Borough and a provider to deliver Children's Centre services in the 3 non target areas of the Borough be approved and authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Social Care, in consultation with the lead Cabinet Member, to award contracts on completion of the procurement process.
3. The transfer of Early Years services from Thornaby Family Centre to Riverbank and High Flyers Children's Centres be approved.
4. The start of the formal consultation with Unions and employees to support the redesigned Early Years Service be approved on the basis set out above and in the report and authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Children, Education and Social Care, in consultation with the lead Cabinet Member, to implement the new staffing structures on completion of the consultation.
5. Officers investigate the potential for the premises of partner organisations in Ingleby Barwick to be used as the possible host for future youth café provision, given that an appropriate location had as yet been identified.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To produce efficiencies and improvements in the delivery of services to

children, young people and families in order to address the reduction in funding from the PCT and the introduction of the EIG.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Impact of the Introduction of the Early Intervention Grant as he was a school governor of the Frederick Natrass Primary School, Norton

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday 11 November 2011

Proper Officer
07 August 2011