

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 10th November 2005
Subject: Children's Centres
Responsible Officer: Geoff Wingrove, Director, People First Strategy
Contact Officer: Wendy Beeton
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Bill Stephenson and Cllr Margaret Davine
Key Decision: Yes
Status: Public

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

Approval of the Harrow Children's Centre Strategy (appendix a) and Policy (appendix b) which sets out the plans for delivery of the Governments Target for Harrow of 9 Children's Centres to be developed between 2006 –2008 reaching 7480 families.

Reason for report

To provide information with informs Members and supports a decision.

The Children Act 2004, puts into effect the legislative changes to implement Every Child Matters to achieve the five outcomes:

- Being healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

Following notification from the Government in July 2005 of the Harrow target for Children's Centres a Policy for Harrow's Children's Centres has been developed for approval which sets out

- Guiding principles for Children's Centres
- Core Service Provision
- Management
- Principles for Accessibility, Education, Health and Equalities.

The Harrow Children and Young People Plan sets out the strategic aim of providing children and families with increased access to localised early intervention and prevention services. The Harrow Children's Centre Strategy supports this strategic aim.

Demographic and vitality profile data have informed the decision on the location of the centres together with other information including:

- School surplus place data
- Health Visitor caseload data

Benefits

The implementation of the Harrow Children's Centre Strategy will bring significant benefits to Children and families who live in Harrow. The strategy:

- Provides a framework for quality first contact to early intervention and prevention services which will see
 - Improved access to Ante-natal and post natal care including an increase in the numbers of babies being successfully breastfed
 - Primary Health support which will see a decrease in the numbers of mothers smoking during pregnancy and an overall reduction in the number of people smoking
 - Child health and development assessments available locally which will increase the early identification of children with additional needs and ensure the services they need to reach their potential are available at a local level
 - Locally accessible social care support and advice which will decrease the number of families who reach crisis and need the long term intervention from enhanced social care provision.

The strategy will improve the use of resources. Building space in schools will be remodeled to provide:

- quality environments for the delivery of a wide range of early intervention and prevention services
- locations for multi-agency staff teams
- space for delivery of training at a local area level

The Nursery and Reception age provision in each centre will also be developed to provide parents with increased access to quality early education and childcare provision.

This strategy will also:

- Support the Joint Area Review process ensuring positive outcomes which could contribute to an enhanced CPA rating
- Provide a tangible framework in which practitioners from across the sectors can realise the benefits of co-location and co-delivery of services for children and families therefore supporting the delivery of the Children's Trust Strategy.

Cost of Proposals

The Government have allocated to Harrow for the for the period 2006-2008

£1.0112,830 capital funding

£1.818,542 revenue funding

Capital costs

Wherever possible the capital funding will be used together with other funding available for the development and improvement of school sites.

All nine centres will have capital investment, however, the majority of the capital funding will be focused on developing the largest Children's Centres where staff from across different agencies will be co-located.

Revenue Funding

The strategy has implications for staffing across all nine centres. Long term sustainability of all developed activity will be a high priority and without the benefit of knowledge about the level of children's centre funding to be allocated to Harrow for 2008-2010 the following allocations for funding from

the Revenue funding have been developed. 820K to develop staffing structures across the nine centres, including staff management, premises management and administration. 480K to enhance and mainstream health and family support services and 500K on the development of quality care and education places for children birth to five.

There is an expectation that across agencies revenue funding is maximised by pooling resources to deliver Children's Centre services. This provides the foundation for future proposals to re-locate services and staff which is the ultimate aim of future Children's Services

Further details of costs of children's centres will be considered in more detail by the Children's Centre Steering group. This group will also consider the charging policy for wraparound childcare places across the nine centres in light of the government's ten-year strategy for childcare published in December 2004.

The on going revenue costs are estimated at £900K per annum. These costs will need to be met through refocused base budget allocations and /or increased allocations which will need to be identified in the Medium Term Budget Strategy.

Risks

A full operational delivery plan for each Children's Centre will be developed as the project evolves.

A risk management framework will be used minimize all risks and ensure the successful delivery of the strategy.

Implications if recommendations rejected

The Government target will not be met and Harrow will not be able to draw any of the funding allocated. More importantly the opportunity to deliver local early intervention and prevention services to children and families which improve outcomes will be missed.

Section 2: Report

Brief History

Harrow Council and its partners have already made significant progress in terms of joining up increasing localised access to services for local communities. We have:

- A high performing Early Years, Childcare and Parenting Service
- A strong Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- 1 Early Excellence Centre - Hillview
- 2 undesignated Children's Centres – Gange and Stanmore Park
- 1 full service Extended School
- Strong early years clusters

We are starting from a position where work has already taken place. There are three centres, which already exist and are almost ready to be submitted for designated Children's Centre Status.

Hillview Centre

Hillview is situated in South Harrow and was designated as an Early Excellence Centre in 2001 and has, in the last 18 months undergone a complete building and service modernization programme. The centre provides care and early education and other services to children and families in need from all Harrow wards.

Gange Nursery Centre

Gange Nursery Centre is situated in Wealdstone Ward, which is one of Harrow's areas of disadvantage. The centre provides care and early education to children aged 2 to 5. All the children attending are in need and many have additional special educational needs.

Gange Nursery Centre is developing its services and over the last 2 years the building has some interior development work to improve the children's toilets the kitchen and the front entrance.

Stanmore Park Children's Centre

In September 2004 Tyneholme Workplace Nursery relocated from its site at the rear of the Caryl Thomas Clinic to a new building on Stanmore Park. The workplace nursery will continue to be at the heart of the Centre whilst other Children's Centre services are developed to meet the needs of the local community.

The Harrow Children's Centre Strategy provides an opportunity to join together other key strategies and maximizing the benefits, these include:

Health Visiting Strategy

The Health Visiting Strategy will be informed by the Children's Centre Strategy. Health Visitors will be linked to Children's Centres and in some cases co-located in those centres where the need is the greatest.

Shaping Schools for the Future Strategy,

This strategy includes

- Framework for Managing the Over Provision of School Places
- Amalgamation Policy

Both these aspects of the Shaping Schools for the Future Strategy are informing the rationale for location of Children's Centres in Harrow

Extended school developments

The Government expects to see strong links between extended schools and Children's Centres. The Harrow Children's Centre Strategy will maximize the Harrow Extended School and School Cluster development by bringing together a wider range of professionals to support the needs of children and families.

Special Needs Transport Policy

This policy will look at future planning arrangements to encompass Children's Centre user needs

Council Catering Review

This policy will consider Children's Centre needs alongside schools and other service developments and requirements

Business Transformation Project – First Contact

The Children's Centre Strategy will link with the Business Transformation Project – First Contact to develop co-ordinated approaches to First contact and link processes together to provide enhanced first contact services to children and families.

Strategy for People

The Strategy for People and in particular the Community into Work Project will link with the Children's Centre Strategy in relation to staffing the centres.

Ensuring that all centres have a staff team which reflects the local community is essential and will be a priority

Options considered

Consideration was given to the location of the centres to be developed. Existing sites, demographic and vitality data together with the lack of suitable premises other than schools and the requirement of the Government to locate Children's

centres to cover the areas of most disadvantage supported the decision on where to locate the nine centres as detailed in the strategy (appendix a).

Consultation

The requirements for consultation are set out in the SureStart Phase 2 Planning Guidance (Appendix c).

Harrow has engaged with Open House – a national organization to support and guide the consultation process.

A consultation event was held with all major stakeholders on May 10th 2005 to ascertain their views for sites of possible Children's Centres and the nature of the services that should be provided.

Consultation has also taken place with parents over the summer and in the early Autumn 05 to gain information about the services that they would like to see provided through the Children's Centres.

Consultation with young children has also taken place through the existing Centres to discover the things that are important to them in a quality care and learning environment.

Consultation with the Unions has taken place in accord with the Protocol for managing Change.

Financial Implications

The Government has allocated capital and revenue funding which will support the Children's Centres until March 2008. Revenue funding available beyond this period is unclear and the on-going revenue costs estimated at £900K per annum will need to be built into the three year Medium Term Budget Strategy as part of the budget process for 2006/2007.

Legal Implications

None

Equalities Impact

The purpose of the children's centre initiative is to address the inequalities in health, educational attainment and general well being evident in children growing up in less advantaged areas by the time they are five. The aim is to address the disadvantages associated with poverty and offer effective early intervention and prevention services which maximize each individual child's life opportunities and reduce the risks of educational failure, ill health, crime and antisocial behaviour.

The Children's Centre strategy will enable communities to have services tailored to their needs which will health, education and life-long learning outcomes.

All centres will be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. The diversity of each local community will be celebrated and through partnership working with schools and other providers the Children's Centres will increase community capacity and enhance the workforce profile.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Appendices (circulated in the Cabinet Supporting Documents Pack)

Appendix a Harrow Children's Centre Strategy

Appendix b Harrow Children's Centre Policy

Background papers

DfES Guidance – A Sure Start Children's Centre for Every Community – Phase 2 Planning Guidance 2006-2008

10 Year Strategy for Childcare

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 020 8861 2583