

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Children's Centres		Avril Allenby - School Improvement Adviser / Early Years Service Manager		19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)	
Proposal:	<p>The four key strands are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-design how we deliver our services so that we can make the biggest difference to families. • Target support for parents and children who need additional help, including early childhood services • Continue to offer popular early childhood services for families. We may start to charge a fee. • Create a single governance group to oversee Early Childhood Services. 				
Total budget 15/16:	£1,226,000	Recommended officer saving 16/17:	£300,000 (24%)		
Initial proposed saving 16/17:	£300,000 (24%)	Final recommendation to Executive 16/17:	To proceed with this savings proposal, without any modifications.		
Nos of responses:	256 in total, 1 from Town / Parish Councils				
Key issues raised:	<p>There is a clear appreciation of the need to find savings and that although many users would like no change, that this is not possible. The range of services offered both targeted and universal are valued and there is a clear need to keep a balance of these types of service as they meet a range of needs for all families.</p> <p>The three areas proposed are generally understood although there are some suggestions that they could be refined further to ensure that there is a good balance of families within each area. The suggested new name of Family and Well Being Hub met with mixed reactions with there clearly being those who would like them to remain as children centres.</p> <p>The proposed change to the age range was also met with mixed reactions. There is clearly some support for this but with strong reservations regarding older children receiving services alongside babies and under 5s. It is clear that there is some misunderstanding of what is proposed. The intention is to extend the range of advice and support to families as there children grow and develop, making the best possible use of resources across the authority.</p> <p>The type and range of services and where they are to be delivered raised a range of responses. There is clearly a good understanding of the impact of both universal and targeted services and a wish to preserve as many of these as possible. There were also some strong views about the impact of closing centres and that this would limit access to these services. It is clear that closing a building was seen as there no longer being services in that area. However this is not the intention as outreach is also seen as an important part of future delivery. The proposals come from making the best use of expertise and resources while recognising the need to make efficiency savings.</p>				

NB: This overview and recommendation paper should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Responses and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal, circulated electronically to all members alongside the agenda pack and published online on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Children's Centres		Avril Allenby - School Improvement Adviser / Early Years Service Manager	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
	<p>The matter of charging for some sessions raised some strong objections and views. Clearly it is appreciated that these sessions have a cost and that some support in meeting that is one way of sustaining services. A voluntary contribution is viewed as being more acceptable than a charge and that £3.50 is too much where as £2.00/£1.50 would be more acceptable. There are clearly some concerns also about any introduction of an advance booking system and that this is not realistic as getting to sessions with small children can be challenging.</p> <p>The impact upon lower income families is raised in relation to charging for sessions, access to centres with particular focus upon the cost and lack of transport links. Some of this arises from the misunderstanding that closure of a building does not mean that services will no longer be delivered in a particular area.</p> <p>Offers of support and suggestions for running services differently show that there is willingness for organisations to work together and for users to volunteer and run sessions.</p> <p>Overall the consultation didn't reveal any issues which would prevent the council from proceeding with the proposal.</p>		
Equality issues:	None were drawn out from the responses.		
Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Concern regarding individual centre closures in the four areas identified. Each centre having those who would propose that there is no change or that their particular centre should not close. That there should be more funding and more centres.	Each Family & Wellbeing Delivery Area will have an urban Hub, a rural Hub and will also provide outreach services. An outreach service is a service which is delivered in a local community venue by an outreach worker. It is about taking the service to the community rather than the individual having to travel to the Hub. The services which would be delivered would be based on local need	
	Particular concern that charging for services will impact upon low income families. Therefore there should not be a charge but a	Our priority will be targeted services and we will also work with communities and families to identify strengths and assets which can be developed to provide local solutions for local people.	

NB: This overview and recommendation paper should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Responses and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal, circulated electronically to all members alongside the agenda pack and published online on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Children's Centres		Avril Allenby - School Improvement Adviser / Early Years Service Manager	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
	voluntary contribution as there is currently.	It has been identified that although voluntary contributions have worked well in some centre they don't cover the costs incur when running universal sessions, therefore we intend putting in place a more business based model.	
	Concern that closures will make centres less accessible and that transport and parking costs will be a barrier. Keep the centres where they are.	<p>The consultation document clearly outlines:</p> <p>Each Delivery Area would have a manager and a core team of staff, including Family Support Workers, who would deliver a balance of targeted and universal services in the Hubs and, importantly, out and about in local communities as well. The proposal will not compromise outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, as services will be linked to local community need. We will also work with communities and families to identify strengths and assets which can be developed to provide local solutions for local people.</p> <p>Some services can be delivered to families from local community venues. By transforming our model of delivery and reducing building related costs, we can retain more of the budget for services and reach out to families that need additional help. We will work together with partners and schools to ensure that the services offered meet the needs of children and families living in the area. Our priority will be to ensure that vulnerable children and families have easy access to early childhood services near to where they live.</p>	
Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Is there an option for a 'big society' type arrangement, where mums and dads can get involved to help deliver some sessions or services?	<p>In the proposal it stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We want to increase parent involvement. To do this, we are proposing to establish three Parent Engagement Forums – one for each Hub Delivery Area. This will allow local parents to have a voice in how services in their area are delivered, to contribute to their community through volunteering and parent to parent support and to participate in the delivery of local services. 	
	User alternative venues like village halls and make the sessions more creative to attract more people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will work together with partners and schools to ensure that the services offered meet the needs of children and families living in the area. Our priority will be to ensure that vulnerable children and families have easy access to early childhood 	
	Embrace the voluntary and community sector to keep valued		

NB: This overview and recommendation paper should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Responses and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal, circulated electronically to all members alongside the agenda pack and published online on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Children's Centres		Avril Allenby - School Improvement Adviser / Early Years Service Manager	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
	services running	<p>services near to where they live.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are proposing to make the best use of the facilities at the Hubs, by working with partner organisations and extending usage into the evenings, weekends and school holidays with other relevant and appropriate services. We will also explore opportunities to co-locate services within the Hubs. We will also work with communities and families to identify strengths and assets which can be developed to provide local solutions for local people. 	
	Keep more centres open	<p>To meet the savings identified, this is not possible as the consultation states:</p> <p>Some services can be delivered to families from local community venues. By transforming our model of delivery and reducing building related costs, we can retain more of the budget for services and reach out to families that need additional help.</p>	
	Buildings earmarked for closure should be available for groups and course on some days	<p>We are proposing to make the best use of the facilities at the Hubs, by working with partner organisations and extending usage into the evenings, weekends and school holidays with other relevant and appropriate services. We will also explore opportunities to co-locate services within the Hubs</p> <p>We are proposing to change the use of four existing Children's Centre buildings. Three of the four buildings would be returned to the schools whose site they are on, and will be used to either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create more capacity for school children in areas where there is high demand or Increase the early years' provision on the school site. We may continue to have access to some rooms at these sites for the delivery of some services. We will be working closely with host schools to look at viable options. 	
	Ring-fence the money for centres and allow each centre to make its	We will create 3 geographical areas for the planning and delivery of services. These will be called Family & Wellbeing Delivery Areas. The Children's Centres in each Delivery	

NB: This overview and recommendation paper should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Responses and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal, circulated electronically to all members alongside the agenda pack and published online on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Children's Centres		Avril Allenby - School Improvement Adviser / Early Years Service Manager	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
	own decisions about how to spend it.	<p>Area will be called Family & Wellbeing Hubs.</p> <p>We will reduce management, staffing and administration costs by removing duplication and integrating service delivery.</p> <p>We will use local community venues and work alongside partner organisations and community groups.</p> <p>The needs of local areas will still be important but in order to use the available resources effectively it is necessary to ensure that funds are viewed as a West Berkshire wide commitment.</p>	
	Delivery of some services could be outsourced	<p>We currently have service level agreement with both of our nursery schools and will be actively seeking other viable arrangements which make best use of the funding available.</p>	
	On-line booking service and improved calendar format removing the need for a reception	<p>We are changing the way we manage our sessions and using a business-based approach. We cannot fund sessions which are not financially viable, and so we need to be clear about how we will operate the universal sessions on our timetable.</p> <p>We will be implementing a booking and payment system. Families will be encouraged to pre-book places using an online system or at the Hub Reception desk. You would need to pay in advance when you book. Families can also arrive and pay on the day, but this would be subject to places being available</p>	
	Charge small fees where appropriate, hire out rooms to other groups/organisations. Charge the health service for their use of the facility.	<p>The centres already operate in this way having introduced fees and charges for all groups and individuals using the centre buildings. There is every intention to continue and develop this approach further.</p>	
	Early years hubs /outreach programmes which are attached to nursery classes or preschool settings.	<p>This is similar to the model we currently run through our service level agreements with the nursery schools. Opportunities of this type would always be considered.</p>	

NB: This overview and recommendation paper should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Responses and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal, circulated electronically to all members alongside the agenda pack and published online on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Children's Centres		Avril Allenby - School Improvement Adviser / Early Years Service Manager	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
	Focus more on early intervention and supporting targeted groups to attend the universal service. This is an educational resource, and should be provided like education, universally.	<p>The consultation document states:</p> <p>The challenge is to provide joined-up, effective and responsive help for children and families with more complex needs. Our strategy is to deliver a family centred approach, led by an assessment of need. We will try to identify issues early and we will coordinate services and support for those who need additional help.</p>	
	Ask existing successful groups to run satellite groups in these new area e.g. Reading Family Church run two good stay and play style groups in the town centre, give them a space and I am sure they would run a group.	<p>The consultation document states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will use local community venues and work alongside partner organisations and community groups. • We will be actively seeking ways of working with partners and other established groups. 	
Suggestions for how others may help contribute:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent run sessions, volunteering and supporting existing services and groups. • Health professionals to continue to work in close partnership with children centres. • Continue to work closely with families, professionals and the local community to keep them up to date with information regarding any changes and supporting them to continue to access and promote services. 		
Officer conclusion as a result of the responses:	The exercise has not highlighted any impacts that are not already anticipated.		
Officer recommendation as a result of responses:	Feedback has not uncovered any further issues which would prevent the council from proceeding with this proposal. It's therefore recommended to implement this proposal with no changes.		

NB: This overview and recommendation paper should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Responses and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal, circulated electronically to all members alongside the agenda pack and published online on our [Consultation Portal](#).