

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING**

**DATE: 17 JULY 2014**

**LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

**SUBJECT: INVESTMENT IN ST PAUL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFANT SCHOOL AND SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRE SO THAT TWO YEAR OLD CHILDREN CAN ACCESS THE FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT**



**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

This paper is to seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning for the plans for capital investment in a building attached to the St Paul's Church of England Infant School and Sure Start Children's Centre so that two year old children can access their free early education entitlement.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that, subject to Investment Panel approval of the business case, the Cabinet Member approves a grant to Nurturing Childcare Limited of £140,000 to facilitate capital investment on the site of St Paul's Church of England Infant School and Sure Start Children's Centre so that two year old children can access the free early education entitlement.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Department of Education requires all local authorities in England to secure free early education places for two year old children who meet the eligibility criteria based on household income. This report will ensure that plans are in place to make provision for such places in the Tongham area of Surrey where there is a current shortfall in provision.

**DETAILS:**

**Business Case**

1. The Department of Education (DfE) has set out a policy that requires local authorities to ensure that there are sufficient early education places for two year old children to access 15 hours of free early education a week for 38 weeks. The policy has been put in place as a result of research that demonstrates that children from families with low incomes have lower educational attainment and are less ready for starting school than children from families with higher incomes. The aim of the policy is to offer free early education for two year olds from families with low household incomes so that the children will benefit from access to high quality early education for a year before such eligibility is available, for all children, following the term they turn three.

2. The first phase of the policy is well underway and there are currently around 1,300 two year olds accessing a place in an early years setting in Surrey. The second phase was put in place during the summer term 2014 and is targeted at families where the household income is below £16,190. For Surrey County Council this will lead to 2,800 children being eligible for a place from September 2014. Surrey County Council's Early Years and Childcare Service has undertaken an analysis of the need for places based on information on potential families provided by the DfE, population data held by the County Council and on data on available places in early education and childcare settings across the county. One of the areas in Surrey where there is a shortfall in places for two year olds is in the Ash Wharf and Ash Vale wards in the Borough of Guildford.
3. Most parents are offered a place, for their eligible child in existing provision, in Surrey but there are areas across the county where access to places is limited and providers have been encouraged to extend the number of children that they can take, or open additional sessions in the afternoon. However, in those areas where there is not the capacity to extend places in this way, there is a need for capital investment to provide access to the early education provision.
4. Tongham Daycare is run by Nurturing Childcare Limited and operates on the site of St Paul's Church of England Infant School. The setting provides early education and childcare for children aged two to five for 48 weeks of the year. This setting also offers breakfast and afterschool childcare for school aged children for 48 weeks of the year. Nurturing Childcare Ltd rents a purpose built set of rooms and outside space on the school site. Nurturing Childcare Ltd works very closely with St Paul's Infant School and Children's Centre and aims to offer high quality education and care for all children aged two to five and offers places to children from vulnerable backgrounds. The setting already offers free early education for two year olds (FEET) and has a number of children on a waiting list for which there is no space currently available. There are three other settings in the vicinity of the Ash Vale and Ash Wharf wards but all their places are fully booked for September and there is not an option to extend their provision. Ash Vale and Ash Wharf wards are adjacent and to the north of the children's centre reach area and within easy reach of the school and Tongham Daycare. St Paul's Infant School and Children's Centre has available space on which to extend the existing buildings leased by Tongham Daycare. The school and children's centre is, therefore, a prime location for extending the provision of FEET places. Parents and children, particularly from the most disadvantaged parts of the centres reach area, which includes families from Ash Wharf and Ash Vale, access the centre readily and feel supported and comfortable in this environment. Outreach workers provide additional support for many local families and regularly refer children for FEET funding.
5. Enabling two year old children to have access to highly qualified practitioners will impact positively on their readiness for school and provide them with a wealth of experiences that they will not necessarily receive at home. The centre provision can be extended in order to accommodate additional places for 16 children in the morning and 16 children in the afternoon.
6. St Paul's Church of England Infant School's registered charity, Tongham Early Years Partnership and Nurturing Childcare Ltd, will contribute £30k to the cost of the building which will be owned by the school and rented out to

Nurturing Childcare Ltd. Consequently there is a need for a capital investment of £140k to meet the balance of the cost of £170k for the construction of the building. The grant will fund the construction of an additional room of 60 square metres and the extension of an existing sheltered courtyard and outdoor play area. The children will be able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas in line with good quality guidelines for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The extension will create a dedicated area for the two year olds and will improve the facilities for the existing places as well as the newly created ones. The school is managing this project and has obtained three quotes with the selected company providing the lowest quote, thus assuring value for money. The selected company is one that has undertaken previous projects within the school very successfully.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

7. There is no requirement for any formal consultation on this decision.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

8. Nurturing Childcare Ltd is working closely with St Paul's Church of England Infant School and Sure Start Children's Centre to provide early education and childcare places for children aged two to five. The Children's Centre is also offering a range of family support services to families living in the local area. The extension of the offer of FEET places will enable more two year old children to have access to a high quality early education place, to move into a free early education place when they are three and will enable many to be eligible to apply for an Infant School place in the year in which they are five. The Children's Centre will be able to support the children's parents in their understanding of how they can assist their child's development and education. The combination of all this integrated working will make a significant impact on how well the children are prepared for their education. Consequently, there is a risk that if places are not made available, within the Nurturing Childcare Ltd setting, this integrated approach will not have the impact on eligible children from the local area. A funding agreement will be signed by the school which will ensure that the grant will only be used for the creation of places for two year olds.
9. There is a requirement on Surrey County Council to ensure that two year old places are made available to eligible children and there is a risk to the County Council's reputation if it is not able to fulfil this requirement.

#### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

10. A grant of £140,000 is proposed to create 32 places for two year olds that will help to meet the need for FEET places in the Ash and Tongham area. The overall cost of the scheme is £170,000 with the balance of £30,000 being met by contributions from third parties.
11. As part of financial governance the business for all capital schemes is reviewed by the Council's Investment Panel in order to provide assurance that proposals are robust. This scheme is due to be considered by the panel on 15 July 2014. The views of the panel will be reported at the Cabinet Member meeting on 17 July 2014 and approval is sought subject to Investment Panel approval of the business case.

### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

12. Within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) a capital budget of £3.5m has been approved to support the development of early education and childcare places in the areas of greatest need where a private provider will not create such provision or is unable to secure the full investment themselves. This capital budget is in part funded by £2.2m of capital grant made available by the Department for Education.
13. Of the £3.5m capital budget £815k has already been allocated to schemes leaving £2,685k available for further schemes.

### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

14. The only legal implication within this report is the duty on Surrey County Council to ensure that there are sufficient early education places for eligible two year olds and the Cabinet Member approval will support the programme of work to respond to this duty in the wards, identified in this report, in the Borough of Guildford.

### **Equalities and Diversity**

15. A full equalities impact assessment has not been undertaken on this proposal as it is unlikely that the proposal would have a negative impact on any groups with protected characteristics. The proposals within this report are targeted at sections of the community that are already at risk of not accessing services.

### **Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications**

16. The DfE has stipulated that Looked after Children are eligible for a FEET place. The Children's Service has been informed of this and places have been taken up by Looked After Children.

### **Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications**

17. There are no significant implications arising from this report. However, access to a FEET place is part of the county council's early intervention programme and with the support offered through the children's centre, any concerns will be addressed earlier.

### **Public Health implications**

18. There are no significant implications arising from this report.

### **Climate change/carbon emissions implications**

19. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change. The new buildings will comply with, or exceed, Building Regulations. The contractor will be required to provide a Site Waste Management Plan.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

20. The next steps that will follow any decisions taken by the Cabinet Member will be:

- For St Paul's Church of England Infant School and Nurturing Childcare Ltd to move forward with the construction of the proposed building together with any planning requirements that will need to be followed.
- Representatives of the Schools and Learning Service will inform the school and Nurturing Childcare Ltd of the decision taken by the Cabinet Member.

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**Contact Officer:**

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**Consulted:**

Finance service within Surrey County Council  
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