

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING****DATE: 12 MARCH 2015****LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES****SUBJECT: INVESTMENT IN THE SPINNEY CHILDREN'S CENTRE TO ENABLE TWO YEAR OLD CHILDREN TO ACCESS THE FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

This paper is to seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning for capital investment of £410,000 in a building attached to the Spinney Children's Centre so that two year old children can access the free early education entitlement (FEET).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that, the Cabinet Member approves the action to move forward with the plans for capital investment in the Spinney 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 Westborough area of Guildford in 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 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 policy is well underway and there are currently around 1,900 two year olds accessing a place in an early years setting, in Surrey. 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 and population data held by the County Council and this identifies a shortfall in places for two year olds in the Westborough area of Guildford.

3. In the Westborough area there is no capacity to extend current places through existing provision, creating a need for capital investment to provide access to the early education provision.
4. The Spinney Children's Centre currently has a nursery for 3 – 5 year olds on site which is fully integrated with the Foundation Stage of Guildford Grove Primary School. Parents and children, particularly from the most disadvantaged parts of the centre's reach area, access the centre readily and feel supported. Currently there are two other preschools within the area and one childminder that offer FEET places. Another preschool has opened in Westborough to offer FEET places primarily from the neighbouring Stoughton ward where there is also a shortfall. This will not be sufficient to meet the need for FEET places in Westborough and as an interim measure to meet demand for places the Spinney are offering two year old provision in a nearby church. The places offered will be delivered from the Children's Centre when the work is completed.
5. The centre provision can be extended in order to accommodate a two year old setting for 16 children in the morning and 16 children in the afternoon.
6. There is not sufficient space to provide these places within the existing building without using the rooms in the Children's Centre that are currently being used for family and community services.
7. The Guildford Grove Primary School and Spinney Children's Centre have commissioned an architect to design the building containing the family and community rooms before going out to tender for the construction. The initial estimated overall cost of the build was £350k, now the design of the building has been completed this has increased to £410k. This paper is therefore seeking the approval of the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning to proceed with these plans.

CONSULTATION:

8. The local Member and the Leader of the Council have both been consulted.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

9. Guildford Grove Primary School and the Spinney Children's Centre are already providing a range of education and family support services to this part of Guildford. By offering places for two year olds, the children will progress into an early education place when they are three and many will be eligible to apply for a Primary 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. Guildford Grove Primary School has already gathered some evidence of the difference that supporting children, and their families, through the children's centre can have when they start school compared with similar children that have not attended any sessions at the Children's Centre.
10. Consequently, there is a risk that if places are not made available within the Spinney Children's Centre, this integrated approach will not have the impact on eligible children from the local area. There is also the associated risk that, if places for two year olds are not made available at the Spinney and if parents can

find an alternative place, it could have an impact on the school's nursery class and children's centres early education provision and make it difficult to sustain places for three and four year olds.

11. 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

12. Approval is sought to a scheme to create 32 places for two year olds that will help to meet the need for FEET places in the Westborough area of Guildford. The overall cost of the scheme is £410,000.
13. As part of financial governance the business case for all capital schemes is reviewed by the Council's Investment Panel in order to provide assurance that proposals are robust. Although relatively high cost compared to other schemes in the FEET programme, it was accepted that there were sound strategic reasons to proceed with this project linked to the proven track record of the setting, the integration with a mainstream school and the future viability of the setting. On 17 July 2014 Cabinet Member approval was given in principal to progress the scheme to detailed design stage with an estimated cost of £350,000.

Detailed design work is now complete and the estimated cost has increased to £410,000. Cabinet Member approval is now sought to proceed with the build.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

14. 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.
15. Of the £3.5m capital budget, schemes totalling £1.684m have been approved, leaving £1.816m for the remaining programme for FEET places.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

16. 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 Westborough area of Guildford.

Equalities and Diversity

17. 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.

Other Implications:

18. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications

19. 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

20. 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.

Climate change/carbon emissions implications

21. 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:

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

- To advise the Spinney to proceed with the build.

Contact Officer:

Phil Osborne, Head of Early Years and Childcare Service, tel: 01372 833861

Consulted:

Finance service within Surrey County Council
 Peter-John Wilkinson, Assistant Director, Schools and Learning
 Fiona White, County Councillor for Guildford West
 David Hodge, Leader of the Council

Annexes:

There are no annexes attached to this report.

Sources/background papers:

The first paper was dated 17 July 2014 in relation to this report.