

22nd February 2021**Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES****PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH WORKSOP CHILDREN'S CENTRE
(RHODESIA SITE)****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report invites the Committee to consider and support the proposal to change the use of North Worksop Children's Centre (Rhodesia site) for use by Haggonfields Primary and Nursery School; and refers it to Policy Committee for consideration and a decision.

Information**Children's Centre Service Property Portfolio**

2. The Children's Centre Service is delivered through a network of premises and properties across Nottinghamshire, with increasing amounts of work being delivered through outreach work including home visits. Since 2018, the Children's Centre Service has been more targeted which has meant that the staff carry out a lot more outreach work and support families in their own home to engage hard to reach families. The service is not focused just on buildings and engaging only the parents that walk through the door.
3. A number of Children's Centre Service premises are underused and costly to maintain. In order to ensure the Council maximises the use of Children's Centre Service premises and ensures value for money, it was agreed at Children and Young People's Committee in March 2018 that the property portfolio would be reviewed to reduce overhead costs and to create additional childcare places in areas of poor childcare sufficiency.
4. Most properties have part-time timetables which reflect the targeted nature of the service and the need for Children's Centre Service workers to deliver outreach work to engage the most vulnerable families. Opening times are dependent on local needs and footfall figures. Each centre advertises its opening hours to local parents but are also open at other times to deliver specific 'closed' sessions, including parenting programmes. They are also utilised by key partners such as Midwifery Services and Healthy Families Teams.

North Worksop Children's Centre

5. North Worksop Children's Centre is made up of two dedicated buildings, one in Gateford and the other in Rhodesia on the site of Haggonfields Primary and Nursery School.
6. The Gateford property is a large site open Monday to Friday. The property is well used and includes a wide range of services including the Children's Centre Service, Puddleducks pre-school, Healthy Family Teams, the Integrated Children's Disability Early Support Service, and the Safeguarding and Independent Review Service; all of which contribute to the running costs of the site.
7. The Rhodesia property is a satellite site located near Haggonfields Primary and Nursery School in Rhodesia in Bassetlaw. The property is owned by the Council with a budget of £14,014 for its operating costs in 2020/21.
8. The building is under used and more so since a private nursery which operated on the site closed in 2019. The childcare provider was commissioned to offer funded childcare places for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds. They operated from this site from September 2015 until the end of Spring Term 2019, closing because their business became unsustainable as more 3 and 4 year olds started to attend the school early years provision instead.
9. Historically there has been low footfall at the Rhodesia site and it has been consistently hard to encourage parents to attend. Although the footfall exercise for 2020 was abandoned due to the start of Covid-19, data from the two previous years shows this site as being the least used in the district. The following table shows the findings of two footfall exercises carried out during 2017 and 2018.

Children's Centre Sites in Bassetlaw	Year	Footfall (one month)	Year	Footfall (one month)
North Worksop CC Rhodesia site	2017	35 parents 31 children 36 professionals Total: 102*	2018	44 parents 50 children 20 professionals Total: 114*
North Worksop CC Gateford site		440 parents 258 children 173 professionals Total: 871*		347 parents 403 children 321 professionals Total: 1,071*
Manton CC		Total: 728*		Total: 1,238*
Prospect Kilton CC		Total: 1,950*		Total: 714*
West Bassetlaw CC		Total: 430*		Total: 428*
(*) Individuals counted each time they came – so there will be double counting				

10. Prior to the pandemic, this property in Rhodesia only operated for one 2-hour session per week as the service struggled to encourage parents to attend so the timetable was reduced; it has become evident that a better solution is required to deliver services in this area and ensure that the Council maximises the use of this property.

Proposals for the Rhodesia Children's Centre property

11. Haggonfields Primary and Nursery School was approached several years ago to encourage greater use of the property by the school. Meetings were carried out following Committee instruction to maximise the use of the Children's Centre Service's property portfolio and reduce building expenditure. The School's Governing Body was unable to contribute towards the building costs at the time so there was no further action.
12. Following Academy transfer in August 2020, Haggonfields Primary School (part of the Nottingham and Southwell Diocese Multi Academy Trust), approached the Local Authority to explore the possibility of taking over the Children's Centre property. They expressed their wishes to expand provision at the school, to meet the needs of local children, through re-configuring their provision for early years foundation stage and nurture group activities. In order to progress this for the start of the new academic year they are keen to take over operation of the building. Subject to further discussions the proposal is that the Academy Trust would take on the management of the property under a lease arrangement. A report will be taken to Policy Committee regarding the use of the building in due course.
13. Local consultation took place on the Council's online Consultation Hub for six weeks, from 7th December 2020 to 18th January 2021. Four responses were received from local parents (one via the Council's Online Consultation Hub and three via a hard copy questionnaire, disseminated via the school). No completed questionnaires were received from community leaders or professionals. All four responses were in favour of the building being taken over by Haggonfields Primary and Nursery School for early years provision and nurture groups; and all stated that they would use the early years provision if it was available from the site. Consultation findings are included in the Consultation Newsletter attached in **Appendix 1**. This will be shared with local parents and partners through the school and the Children's Centre Service.
14. If the proposal is approved, the Children's Centre Service will continue to be provided but not from this dedicated Children's Centre Service building. Instead the service will be permitted to use the school for appointments and sessions with families, and the service will continue to support families in their own homes. Increasingly, as a response to Covid 19, many elements of the Children's Centre Service are delivered virtually, with positive feedback from many parents as to how accessible this makes them. Face to face services will continue to be available at the other Children's Centre Service buildings in Worksop, namely the main hub at Manton, Prospect Kilton and North Worksop – Gateford site. There is no planned reduction to service delivery.
15. If the building is used for alternative early years provision this will result in a cost saving of approximately £14,014 in a full year, to the Children's Centre property budget held by Place Department. This will alleviate some of the pressure on that budget which is currently forecast to overspend by approximately £32,000 in 2020/21.
16. The ongoing review of the Children's Centre Service Property portfolio will continue, as agreed at Children and Young People's Committee in March 2018. Reviews will ensure that properties evidence value for money and meet childcare sufficiency and school place planning requirements; any proposed changes to Children's Centre Service properties will be subject to local service user consultation.

Other Options Considered

17. The option to retain the property has been considered, however the property does not evidence value for money and does not maximise the use by the local community. Savings will be used to offset some of the property budget overspend.

Reason for Recommendations

18. The Children's Centre Service is currently provided in dedicated Children's Centre premises, community venues and people's homes. Some Children's Centres do not evidence value for money. In order to deliver the targeted approach introduced several years ago, engaging with the most vulnerable families and increasing opportunities for enhancing home learning, it is recommended that this property is no longer required as the service is already being delivered in alternative ways.
19. An increased targeted approach is in place, as nearly 50% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds have not secured the essential skills and understanding expected for their age by the time they finish Reception Year. Many have reduced opportunities for home learning and parental engagement (Ofsted 2016). It is important therefore to carry out additional outreach work to engage these families and not assume that they will access a Children's Centre building. Evidence from this site confirms this view.
20. Haggonfields Primary School (part of the Nottingham and Southwell Diocese Multi Academy Trust) is keen to expand provision at the school from September 2021, to meet the needs of local children, through re-configuring their provision for early years foundation stage and nurture group activities.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

22. The Children's Centre property budget is managed by the Place Department at £1.1 million per annum and this will remain unchanged.
23. The vacation of this property will result in a cost saving of up to £14,014, in a full year, to the Children's Centre property budget held by Place Department. The full saving of £14,014 will only be achieved if another user can be found which will pick up all of the running costs of the building. This will alleviate some of the pressure on that budget which is currently forecasting an overspend of approximately £32,000. Renting rooms in community venues to deliver sessions will be funded through the core Children's Centre Service budget and will only be booked when rooms are needed by the service. This transfer will enhance the development of relationships with Haggonfields Primary School, which have been limited to

date and it is anticipated that any use of space on an ad-hoc basis to response to requests from the school for Family Support appointments will be facilitated free of charge.

24. Changing the use of a Children's Centre property funded from the Department for Education Sure Start Children's Centre Capital Grant may carry a clawback risk, however the risk is mitigated if the property is used for early years provision which the school will provide. As part of the proposed transfer, an indemnity from the Academy Trust will be obtained with a requirement to provide early years provision from the site to prevent clawback.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

25. There is an expectation that children and families will experience an improved package of support from the Council by engaging families most in need.

Implications for Service Users

26. The Children's Centre Service in Nottinghamshire will continue to engage children and families who require early support and are considered to be at risk of poor outcomes. The following target groups will continue to be supported:
 - a) low income families with identified needs
 - b) children of teenage parents / teenage parents
 - c) families identified as having mild / moderate mental health issues
 - d) children with English as an additional language
 - e) 2, 3 and 4 year olds not accessing their minimum childcare entitlement
 - f) unemployed single parents
 - g) unemployed parents living in rural areas
 - h) children under 5 years with speech, language and communication needs
 - i) Black and Minority Ethnic groups where there is a need
 - j) parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not meet thresholds for specialist services
 - k) families with children on child protection plans, Children in Need and Looked After Children.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

27. The consultation was carried out online and hard copy versions were also provided for those without internet access. The questionnaire was also made available in a variety of languages on request. The exercise was promoted through the School's website, the Children's Centre Service team and through face to face conversations with parents. Both the School and Children's Centre Service tried to reach as many local parents as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That Committee supports an alternative use for the North Worksop Children's Centre (Rhodesia site) building, with a report being taken to Policy Committee as the appropriate Committee for a decision.

Laurence Jones
Service Director, Commissioning and Resources

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (CEH 11.02.2021)

28. Children and Young People's Committee can consider the information in the report and consider whether to support the proposal. A subsequent report will need to be taken to Policy Committee regarding the formal change of occupier and use of the building going forward as the responsibility for property related functions sits within the remit of Policy Committee.

Financial Comments (SAS 11/02/21)

29. The Children's Centre property budget is managed by the Place Department at £1.1 million per annum and this will remain unchanged.
30. The vacation of this property will result in a cost saving of up to £14,014, in a full year, to the Children's Centre property budget held by Place Department. The full saving of £14,014 will only be achieved if another user can be found which will pick up all of the running costs of the building. This will alleviate some of the pressure on that budget which is currently forecasting an overspend of approximately £32,000. Renting rooms in community venues to deliver sessions will be funded through the core Children's Centre Service budget and will only be booked when rooms are needed by the service.
31. Changing the use of a Children's Centre property funded from the Department for Education Sure Start Children's Centre Capital Grant may carry a clawback risk, however the risk is mitigated if the property is used for early years provision which the school will provide. As part of the proposed transfer, an indemnity from the Academy Trust will be obtained with a requirement to provide early years provision from the site to prevent clawback.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Maximising the value of Nottinghamshire's Children's Centre Services – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 19th March 2018](#)

[Early Years provision in Nottinghamshire County Council owned properties – occupational costs – report to Policy Committee on 16th May 2018](#)

Children's Centre Property Proposals Equality Impact Assessment 2020
<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/jobs-and-working/equality/completed-equality-impact-assessments-eqias>

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

Workop West

Councillor Sybil Fielding

C1446