

13<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**Agenda Item: 6**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES**

### **PROPOSED CHANGES TO RETFORD CENTRAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE TO BECOME RETFORD FAMILY HUB**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The report asks Committee to approve the change of use of the Retford Central Children's Centre building to become a Family Hub following consultation with parents/carers, young people, and stakeholders.

#### **Information**

##### **Background**

2. The report follows a decision made by Children and Young People's Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to progress consultation to change the use of Retford Central Children's Centre building.
3. Since 2018, the Children's Centre Service has been more targeted which has meant that workers carry out a lot more outreach work and support families in their own home. This enabled the service to better engage harder to reach groups and allowed the increased provision of childcare in some Children's Centre properties.
4. Tall Trees Preschool operated from Retford Central Children's Centre from April 2018 but closed in December 2019 because of falling numbers. The building continued to be used by the Maternity Service for clinics, and the Children's Centre Service for family support sessions.
5. When the first national lockdown was in place, the Maternity Service at Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust were permitted to use the property daily under a temporary room hire agreement; this enabled them to continue to provide antenatal and postnatal care away from hospital sites. The Maternity Service continues to use the property and approached the Council asking to lease the property on a longer-term basis to create a Maternity Hub.
6. This provided a good opportunity to also explore the change of use of the Retford Central site to a Family Hub because of its location, excellent resident access and the Young

People's Centre next door. This would improve access for families with children aged 0-19/25 to early help services.

7. In September 2021, Committee approved a consultation exercise with families and stakeholders to seek their views on the use of the property. This report shares the findings of that consultation.

### **Retford Central Children's Centre**

8. A consultation exercise was undertaken in Retford between 4<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021 using the Council's Online Consultation Hub to ask local families and other interested stakeholders for their preferences on the use of the Retford Central Children's Centre Building.
9. The options proposed were:
  - a) **Option 1:** for Retford Central Children's Centre to become a Family Hub for families with children aged 0-19 and young people up to the age of 25 if they have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
  - b) **Option 2:** for Retford Central Children's Centre to become a Maternity Hub for expectant parents and new parents.
10. Two questionnaires were created, one to capture the views of parents and other stakeholders (75 responses were received), and one to capture the views of young people (11 responses were received).
11. 70% (53) of parents and stakeholders and 63.64% (7) of young people chose Option 1 Family Hub as their preferred option.
12. The consultation asked which services and interventions respondents would find useful, and we found that child development, play and early learning, parenting groups and managing children's behaviour and access to specialist services were the top four answers.
13. The Young People's questionnaire asked how the young people feel about their parents visiting the building next door to the Young People's Centre. 55% were happy as they retained a separate access to the Young People's Centre; and 36% were unsure. Only one young person stated that they would be unhappy with the proposal.
14. Comments were overwhelmingly positive, as illustrated by these examples:
  - *"The family hub is a very good idea as children centres were so important in communities and it will be well used, I am sure. It will complement the work in the young people's centre."*
  - *"The Retford Central Children's Centre is in the ideal location to be accessible to families from across the area with its close proximity to the bus station. This would enable access and improve outcomes."*
  - *I think Family Hub in Retford is great idea and will help children and families in the area. We need more places for them to turn to for socialising, groups and family support.*

- *A family hub is much needed in this area. Retford Central Children's Centre is perfect location for access for families who use public transport or who drive/walk to venues. It has already got the facilities for babies (changing) and children (toilets for children) and also rooms for small groups and a larger room for community groups.*
  - *"I would accept the Children's Centre to be a family place but wouldn't like them to be able to access the youth centre and start criticising what happens here. I would not like the buildings to collide."*
15. 24% (18 respondents) preferred the property to become a Maternity Hub. Despite this, when asked to note their preferences of services to be delivered from a Family Hub 64% of all respondents stated that maternity services should be provided. It is intended that maternity services will continue to be provided from the building under either option. The importance of access to appropriate local provision, both antenatally and perinatally, is illustrated by the comment below:
- *"I used the centre for all midwife appointments while expecting my 2 year old and 6 year old. It was amazing to have that space to see the midwife and know they were there if I needed support after birth. I attended a baby massage class there as well. It was a fabulous place to meet other parents and we still have a friendship as do our children now."*
16. Consultation findings are included in the Consultation Feedback Newsletter included as **Appendix 1**. This will be shared with local parents and partners through social media, the Children's Centre Service, Young People's Services, Retford Library and by email to all the organisations contacted, who promoted the consultation.
17. Due to the findings of the consultation and the increased focus from Government Departments on the implementation of Family Hubs, this report seeks approval to change the use of Retford Central Children's Centre into a Family Hub, and to progress the development of a Family Hub Network in Retford.

### **Other Options Considered**

18. The option to use the building as the Bassetlaw Maternity Hub was proposed but was found to be the preferred option by only 24% of respondents. This would have required a lease to be put in place with Doncaster Bassetlaw Hospital Foundation Trust, who would have had to take on building costs and responsibilities. Whilst initially this proposal was attractive, it would limit the use of the building to a smaller cohort of people, focusing in on pregnancy and the perinatal period. The Family Hub model will continue to include maternity services but will also include a much wider range of services across the extended age range.
19. The option to go to market to secure a replacement private, voluntary or independent early years childcare provider was considered, however due to the findings of the recent Childcare Sufficiency Audit, a need for additional places was not identified and future additional development could impact on the sustainability of existing local provision.

## **Reason for Recommendations**

20. The Children's Centre Service property portfolio provides a ready built platform from which to launch the Family Hub way of working. Since the move to a more targeted approach several years ago, more interventions are provided in family homes, community venues or virtually, resulting in some Children's Centres not being used for several sessions each week, thereby making them less cost effective to run. To respond to this new early help initiative across the age range, engaging locally with a wider age range of children, young people and families requiring support, it is recommended that this property is no longer designated as a Children's Centre, but begins the development towards becoming Nottinghamshire's first integrated Family Hub.

## **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 no savings targets are associated with the proposals included within the report.
23. The change of use of this property will increase its use and ultimately its running costs. Once quantified, a decision will need to be made as to how Family Hubs running costs will be budgeted for. Further discussions will be progressed with colleagues in Property and Estates to explore all options.
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. As this is a mandatory element of the Family Hubs core offer, this risk is negated.

## **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, across an extended age range changing from pre-birth to 5, to pre-birth to 19 (25 for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability or Care Leavers).

## **Implications for Service Users**

26. The views of local families will continue to shape service developments to enable services to benefit the local community and local families by identifying and addressing their needs.

27. The successful delivery of Family Hubs will be beneficial for children, young people, and families by being accessible, better connected and relationship centred so that needs can be identified and addressed early.
28. Families in Retford will still be able to access Children's Centre Service interventions, midwifery clinics, and their Health Visitor, and the Young People's Centre from the site; but will also be able to access services for families with children and young people up to 19 (up to 25 for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability) once the site becomes a Family Hub, as detailed in the report on Family Hubs which is also on the agenda of today's meeting of the Committee.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty implications**

29. The consultation was carried out online and hard copy versions were also provided for those without internet access through local services. It was promoted widely.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) That Committee notes of the findings of the consultation and agrees to progress the development of an alternative use for Retford Children's Centre to become Nottinghamshire's first Family Hub.

**Laurence Jones**  
**Service Director, Commissioning and Resources**

### **For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (AK 17/11/21)**

30. The report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (CDS 16/11/21)**

31. The Children's Centre property budget is managed by the Place Department at £1.1 million per annum and no savings targets are associated with the proposals included within the report.
32. The change of use of this property will increase its use and ultimately its running costs. Once quantified, a decision will need to be made as to how Family Hubs running costs will be budgeted for. Further discussions will be progressed with colleagues in Property and Estates to explore all options.

33. 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. As this is a mandatory element of the Family Hubs core offer, this risk is negated.

### **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.

[Proposed Consultation on the use of Retford Central Children's Centre - report to Children & Young People's Committee on 13th September 2021](#)

[Equality Impact Assessment 2021: Consultation regarding the change of use of Retford Central Children’s Centre Service building](#)

### **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

Retford East  
Retford West

Councillor Mike Introna  
Councillor Mike Quigley

C1525