

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for People
to
Special People Scrutiny Committee
on
2nd September 2013

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Agenda
Item No.

3

Children's Centre Provision

People Scrutiny Committee – Executive Councillor: Cllr. James Courtenay

Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the outcome of the second public consultation on the proposed changes to Hamstel and Temple Sutton Children's Centres.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **The committee's views are sought.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The approved 2013/14 Council budget requires a saving of £224k over 2 years from the children's centre budget.
- 3.2 Changes to children's centre provision are subject to statutory public consultation as laid down in The Childcare Act 2006.
- 3.3 Discussions were held in February 2013 with current providers and schools linked to children's centres to seek their views on how the required savings could be achieved.
- 3.4 The proposals developed from these discussions with providers were discussed at an all member workshop on 26th March 2013.
- 3.5 The proposals then went out to public consultation. The consultation closed on 5th May 2013.
- 3.6 The Executive Councillor for Children and Learning, in consultation with the four group leaders, authorised a SO46 action to undertake a second consultation specifically in relation to the proposals for Hamstel and Temple Sutton Children's Centres seeking further views on which of the two buildings should be retained in any merger of the two centres.
- 3.7 The full findings from the first public consultation were presented to Cabinet on 18th June 2013. Cabinet resolved:-

“That the Leigh and Blenheim Children's Centres are merged into one children's centre based at the Blenheim site with services being provided from satellite locations, to be determined, in the Leigh area.

That the Friars and Shoebury Children's Centres are merged into one children's centre based at the Friars site with the Shoebury Centre providing services as a satellite centre.

That it be noted that further consultation will be undertaken on the possible merger of the Hamstel and Temple Sutton Children's Centres.

That it be noted that no changes are recommended to any other Children's Centre.”

3.8 The matter was called in to the People Scrutiny Committee and the committee resolved:-

“That the matter be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.”

3.9 This paper relates only to the original proposal for the merger of Temple Sutton and Hamstel children's centres and the second consultation in relation to this proposal.

3.10 The second consultation opened on 18th June 2013 and closed on the 23rd July 2013. The consultation asked respondents to select one of two options.

3.10.1 **Option A:** The Temple Sutton Children's Centre is retained and Children's Centre services would be co-ordinated by Temple Sutton School (as the lead body for the Children's Centre) and would be delivered from a range of venues in addition to the Temple Sutton Children's Centre building. These would include the St Luke's Centre, Hamstel Infant School and Whittingham Church Hall. The Hamstel Children's Centre building would be used to house the school's early year's provision which would allow the school to provide class room space within the school for the increasing numbers of local children going to Hamstel Infant school.

3.10.2 **Option B:** The Hamstel Children's Centres retained and Children's Centre services would be co-ordinated by South Essex Partnership Trust - SEPT (as the lead body for the Children's Centre) and would be delivered from a range of venues in addition to the Hamstel Children's Centre building. These would include the St Luke's Centre, St Edwards Church Hall and Whittingham Church Hall. The Temple Sutton Children's Centre building could be used to increase childcare places.

3.11 There was a slight change to the descriptions of the alternate usage of the Hamstel building in option A and the alternate delivery venues in option B in the first week of the consultation period. Legal advice confirmed this would not alter the validity of the consultation as the consultation was seeking views on what building should be retained and not on the supporting details.

4. Consultation responses

4.1 In total 592 people accessed the consultation, of which 466 made a selection from options A&B.

4.2 Just under half of the respondents stated they were parents or guardians currently using children's centres. 11% stated they were parents or guardians currently not using children's centres and 23% stated they were a Southend on Sea resident.

4.3 Of the respondents that stated they are current users of children's centres, 76% stated they use the centres weekly. The vast majority of respondents were users of Hamstel or Temple Sutton Children's Centres.

4.4 The responses to the consultation:

All respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
I prefer option A (retaining Temple Sutton)	285	61.16%
I prefer option B (retaining Hamstel)	181	38.84%

Parents or guardians currently using children's centres only Option A or B	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
I prefer option A (retaining Temple Sutton)	133	52.17%
I prefer option B (retaining Hamstel)	122	47.84%

Parents or guardians not currently using children's centres only Option A or B	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
I prefer option A (retaining Temple Sutton)	40	80%
I prefer option B (retaining Hamstel)	10	20%

Other Southend on Sea residents only Option A or B	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
I prefer option A (retaining Temple Sutton)	80	74.77%
I prefer option B (retaining Hamstel)	27	25.23%

4.5 The table below show the ward in which respondents live.

Ward	I prefer Option A	I prefer option B
Belfairs	1	3
Blenheim Park	1	2
Chalkwell	1	3
Eastwood Park	2	20
Kursaal	13	2
Milton	5	6
Prittlewell	5	2
Shoeburyness	8	3
Southchurch	29	28
St Laurence	5	2
St. Luke's	77	36
Thorpe	8	18
Victoria	18	15
West Leigh	1	1
West Shoebury	7	2
Westborough	5	1

- 4.6 In addition to selecting their preferred option, respondents were asked what services they would like to see maintained in a merged centre. This information will be used by Children's Centre managers to assist in their planning of services. Baby clinics/baby weighing and keeping all services was a theme from users of both centres. Users of Hamstel Children's Centre also expressed views to ensure breastfeeding and midwifery services are retained. Users of Temple Sutton Children's Centre also expressed views to ensure MOTO (support groups for single mothers) and other parenting support services are retained. The full consultation outturn report is attached as appendix 1.
- 4.7 In addition to the online consultation, a face to face meeting for families using the Children's Centres was held in both Hamstel and Temple Sutton Centres on 16th July 2013. Parents were given the opportunity to include any comments they had in their own words in addition to the online form. These are included as appendix 2.
- 4.8 Temple Sutton Centre collected 2440 signatures on the following petition:
- `The local authority is going out to further consultation with the provision of Children's Centres in Southend-on-Sea, which may result in the closure of our Children's Centre which is used by many families in the area.
Please sign below if you wish to register your support to keep our `outstanding` Children's Centre open.`*
- 4.9 The school also provided 295 letters written by children from years 1 through to 6 in support of the Temple Sutton Children's Centre.
- 4.10 Hamstel Children's Centre collected 350 signatures on the following petition:
- `We, the undersigned, petition Southend Borough Council to keep Hamstel Children and Families Centre open, maintaining its current level of funding.`*
- 4.11 We received as their consultation response a joint proposal from the Head Teachers of Hamstel Infant School and Nursery, Hamstel Junior School and Temple Sutton Primary School. This is attached as appendix 4. This proposes delivering children centre services from the Temple Sutton Primary School site and the St. Luke's Centre and using the facilities at the Hamstel Schools site to accommodate the future additional pupils but also accommodating some children's centre services.

5. Officers proposed recommendations to Cabinet

- 5.1 That the merger of Hamstel and Temple Sutton Children's Centres goes ahead retaining the Temple Sutton building as the main centre and co-ordinating delivery of services to meet the local need across other venues in the local area, in particular progressing discussions on the proposals from the Head teachers.
- 5.2 Early discussions have taken place with providers to look at a partnership delivery model (suggested by providers) across the areas currently covered by the 4 Children's Centres (Blenheim, Leigh, Hamstel & Temple Sutton). This would see three providers (Blenheim Primary School, Temple Sutton Primary School and South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT)) working together across two merged Children's Centre areas in a partnership model that would retain the expertise and added value brought by each provider and enable the delivery of an integrated children's centre service. Officers will be recommending to Cabinet that we continue to support these discussions with the

providers in continuing to develop this partnership in the same way that the Council has with the Partnership in the South Centre of the town (Centre Place, Summercourt and Cambridge Road).

6. Corporate Implications

Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Children's Centre provision will continue to be available across the Borough in line with the corporate priorities of continuing to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and delivering targeted services that meet the identified need of the community.

Financial Implications

The adoption of these recommendations would meet the full savings required from the children's centre budget in 2014/15. They will not deliver part of the saving in 2013/14.

Legal Implications

The Childcare Act 2006 and supporting Sure Start Children's Centre statutory guidance require Local Authorities to ensure there are sufficient children's centres to meet local need. The Act also requires Local Authorities to consult on any changes to Children's Centre provision

People Implications

There are no direct implications for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council staff as these services are commissioned. However there may be changes of role or possible redundancies in the provider services as they review staff levels affordable within the reduced budget.

Property Implications

The buildings identified in the proposals would continue to be used for early year's provision.

Consultation

See 4. above

Equalities and Diversity Implications

Children's Centres are required to target services for defined vulnerable groups including families from low income households. All Children's Centres collect data on families accessing the centre to ensure they are engaging with the diverse populations within their reach areas. An equality analysis has been undertaken on the proposed changes.

Risk Assessment

This merger will militate against the risk to poor Ofsted outcomes that would be the likely result of a straight reduction in each centres budget and avoids any risk of being required to return any past children centre capital allocation through continued use of the buildings for early year's services.

Value for Money

The recommendations achieve best value for the resources available by managing the reduction through infrastructure efficiencies and collaborative working.

Community Safety Implications

None

Environmental Impact
None

7. Background Papers

Cabinet Paper 16th June 2013 Children's Centre Provision

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Consultation response document
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Additional views of centre users
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Covering pages of petitions
- 8.4 Appendix 4 – Joint proposal from Headteachers