

Time started: 12.00pm

Time ended: 12.12pm

Childrens' Social Care, Learning & Skills Cabinet Member Meeting 10 April 2024

Present: Councillor Whitby

In Attendance: Gurmail Nizzer, Director of Commissioning and Delivery.

01/23 Apologies

There were no apologies.

02/23 Late Items

There were no late items.

03/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

04/23 Early Years FEEE Sufficiency Strategy – Extended
Childcare Offer (ECO): Proposals to change the age
ranges of three Council maintained nursery schools.

The Cabinet Member considered a report regarding a recently announced national investment in childcare by the Government, which included the expansion of funded childcare support for working parents with children from nine months old up to school age.

The officer explained that the changes would be rolled out from April 2024 and by September 2025 households where both parents work and have children over the age of nine months would be entitled to 30 hours of funded childcare per week/term times or 1140 hours over a year.

The officer detailed the national timeline for introducing the ECO: From April 2024 working parents of two-year olds would access 15 hours per week of funded childcare term time (570 per year); from September 2024, 15 hours per week of funded childcare term time will be extended to all children from the term after they turn 9 months; and from September 2025, working parents of children from 9 months up to school age will be entitled to 30 hours per week of funded term time (1140 hours per year).

The Cabinet Member was informed that the staggered approach would give childcare providers time to prepare for the changes and ensure enough places were available to meet demand. DCC had worked with the early years sector to plan for the Expanded Childcare Offer (ECO) and had developed proposals in partnership with three maintained nursery schools: Central

Community Nursery, Harrington Nursery and Whitecross Nursery. The proposed additional 9 places for children aged 0-2, and 48 two-year old places at three maintained nursery schools, would contribute to meeting the increased demand for funded early education entitlement (FEEE) places resulting from the Government's ECO.

The report sought approval from the Cabinet Member to carry out an initial consultation on the proposals to change the age ranges and sizes of the nursery schools outlined in the report ready for the ECO. The consultation document would be circulated widely to all interested parties, including parents, staff, governors, ward members and trade unions. It was reported that no cost was associated with the initial consultation as it would be carried out using existing Council resources.

The officer explained that the initial consultation period would run from 22 April 2024 to 20 May 2024, and the outcome would be reported to Council Cabinet in June 2024. After the initial consultation a statutory consultation over another 4-week period would be undertaken. The statutory consultation period was prescribed in legislation and the timescale cannot be altered. After the statutory consultation, it was anticipated that a final decision would be made in July or August 2024 on whether to change the age ranges and sizes of nursery schools. If the proposals were approved, then additional places would be available from September 2024.

The Cabinet Member was informed that the governing bodies and headteachers of the three maintained nursery schools, fully supported the proposed changes.

The Cabinet Member asked whether the funding for children of 9 months and upwards would be available for single parents to access. The officer confirmed it would, and a financial assessment process would be in place to ensure all working parents eligible would be able to access childcare and continue working.

The Cabinet Member checked if the 3 maintained nurseries were based in the city centre. It was confirmed that Central Community and Whitecross Nursery were, but Harrington Nursery served the Pear Tree and Normanton area.

The officer highlighted that as well as the LA maintained nurseries liaison with the private and voluntary sector and independent childcare facilities was ongoing.

Resolved:

1. **to approve going out to initial consultation on proposals to change the age ranges and sizes of three Council maintained nursery schools, as outlined in paragraph 1.2 of the report.**
2. **To note that:**
 - a. **Subject to approval of the above recommendation, the initial consultation period will run from Monday 22 April**

2024 to Monday 20 May 2024, with the outcome to be reported to Council Cabinet in June 2023.

- b. Following the initial consultation, the next stage, subject to approval, will be the required statutory consultation for a further four-week period. It is anticipated that a final decision will be taken on proposals in July/August 2024 with a proposed implementation date of September 2024**

MINUTES END