

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Cabinet

Date of Committee 28 January 2010

Report Title Tendering of Children’s Centres

Summary Permission to commence a competitive tendering process for the provision of Children’s Centre Services from April 2011.

For further information please contact: Norma Smeaton
Head of Early Years & Childcare
Tel: 01926 742259
normasmeaton@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision] No

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:

Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s)
- Other Elected Members CYP&F O&S Chair and Vice-Chair for information:
Cllr John Ross
Cllr Carolyn Robbins

CYP&F O&S Spokespersons for information:
Cllr Jerry Roodhouse (on behalf of Cllr Balaam)
Cllr Tim Naylor
Cllr Carolyn Robbins
- Cabinet Member Cllr Izzi Seccombe “agreed for Cabinet”
- Other Cabinet Members consulted Cllr Martin Heatley
- Chief Executive

- Legal Victoria Gould *“comments incorporated into report”*
- Finance David Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources
- Other Strategic Directors David Carter, Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Current Providers of Service

FINAL DECISION **YES**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet A further report will be made to Cabinet when the level of funding is known
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Cabinet –28 January 2010

Tendering of Children's Centres

Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the commencement of a tender process for the provision of Children's Centre services from 1 April 2011 on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Directors of Resources and the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance.

(A further report will be made to Cabinet once the level of funding is known).

1. Background

- 1.1 Children's Centres are currently funded through the ring fenced Sure Start Early Years Grant. All current contracts are due to expire on 31 March 2011. The current providers delivering the services across the County are: Spurgeons, Action for Children, Pre-School Learning Alliance, The Parenting Project and several school governing bodies.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that 5 year block contract(s) with a 1 year option countywide are made available through the competitive tendering process. By offering this length of contracts potential providers know that the business is secure for the maximum length of time and can offer continuity for the families in receipt of services. The providers would be in a better position to offer high quality at a competitive price.
- 2.2 The funding is currently through Sure Start Early Years Grant which is ring fenced for the delivery of Children's Centres across the County.
- 2.3 Funding for the Comprehensive Spending Review Period 2008/11 has been allocated as follows:

2008/09	£2,372,724.00
2009/10	£2,751,605.00
2010/11	£3,207,816.00

At present we have no indication of the level of funding that will be allocated for April 2011 or if that funding will be ring fenced.

3. Potential savings for WCC

- 3.1 The tendering package released will cover the minimum core offer of service delivery for Children's Centres. Those Children's Centres that fall into the country's 30% most disadvantaged areas are required to provide a higher level of service than those in the remaining 70%. Contract specification will reflect this difference.
- 3.2 Warwickshire County Council has 15 Children's Centres currently managed by external providers whose contracts will end in March 2011. In order to ensure that delivery of service is not disrupted, the tendering process must begin now even though we have no indication of the amount of funding that will be available from April 2011. Once the level of funding is known, a further report will be made to Cabinet.
- 3.3 The assets funded by DCSF grant must continue to be used for young children for its estimated useful life (25 years for buildings). Any change of use, sale or disposal of assets not approved by DCSF could result in full claw back of grant plus any proportionate increase in value of the asset. However, Children's Centres became a legal entity under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Learning and Children Act and cannot, therefore, be closed without going through a formal process similar to that required for a school closure. This gives some security to the future of Children's Centres per se.
- 3.4 Warwickshire County Council needs to ensure arrangements are in place for service provision to continue beyond 1 April 2011. A competitive tendering process is required to ensure that the highest quality of provision is procured for the best financial investment.

4. Summary and Conclusion

- 4.1 Local Authorities have been given strategic responsibility for the delivery of Children's Centres and to meet Children's Centre targets. The Sure Start Children's Centre programme is based on the concept that providing integrated education, care, family support and health services are key factors in determining good outcomes for children and their parents.
- 4.2 A significant number of families with young children already benefit from good quality integrated services. Children's Centres enhance these services and extend the benefits to more families bringing an integrated approach to service delivery to areas where it is most needed.
- 4.3 Warwickshire County Council needs to ensure arrangements are in place for service provision to continue beyond 1 April 2011. A competitive tendering process is required to ensure that the highest quality of provision is procured for the best financial investment.

MARION DAVIS

Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families
Saltisford Office Park, Ansell Way, Warwick
14 January 2010