



## **Special Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**31 July 2014**

### **EXTRACT FROM EXECUTIVE DECISIONS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 16 JULY 2014.**

#### **Review of Children's Centres in County Durham**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which detailed a review of the current service delivery model in view of the new Early Years Strategy and the role/requirement of Children's Centre buildings to deliver improved outcomes.

The outcome of the review proposes a new model of service delivery for children and families in the early years and gives consideration to the implications for the existing stock of Children's Centre buildings in the implementation of the new model.

The proposals put forward for consultation as a result of this review are intended to improve service delivery while at the same time reducing the cost base of the service. This will be achieved by retaining as many front-line staffing posts as possible, reducing the number and cost of fixed buildings and making more use of community venues to improve access and use of these services.

Proposals outlined within this report sets out an approach that will:-

- Shift emphasis from the provision of buildings to the provision of services;
- Deliver services closer to where families live;
- Concentrate resources where deprivation levels and needs are highest;
- Deliver services that are directly linked to local needs and outcomes;
- Retain the flexibility to move points of delivery as community needs change;

- Make better use of existing buildings in the heart of communities such as libraries, leisure centres, youth centres, community centres and schools, and
- Reduce the financial, managerial, administrative and regulatory burdens faced by the council linked to the current children's centres.

This report sought Cabinet agreement to consult on the proposals contained in the report, namely:

- The proposed Community Delivery Model
- A proposed change to the number of children's centres from 43 to 15

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan requires savings of £224 million over the period 2011 to 2017. The Council must review all services to ensure they are cost effective and fit for purpose.

The report proposes a reduction in the number of Children's Centre buildings from 43 to 15. The centres proposed for retention and transfer have been identified following detailed analysis of a range of data.

A new service model is proposed that will reduce the cost base of the service and at the same time increase access to services and protect service delivery. This will be done by shifting the emphasis from the provision of buildings to the provision of services and by making better use of existing buildings in the heart of communities to deliver services close to where children and families live.

In undertaking this review, the following were considered:-

- The evolution of Children's Centres;
- An analysis of need relating to deprivation;
- The impact of Children's Centres in relation to social, economic and learning outcomes;
- OfSTED inspection outcomes;
- Views of service users;
- Required efficiency savings.

The report requested Cabinet to agree to a full 12 week public consultation exercise, during which it is proposed to consult on the following:-

- The community delivery model
- The 43 Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain

Following the consultation period, a further report will be provided to Cabinet, in Spring 2015, which will make final recommendations with regard to retention and transfer of Children's Centre buildings.

### **Decision**

The Cabinet agreed to:

- A public consultation commencing 31 July 2014 for 12 weeks until 23 October 2014 which will present the proposals to all key stakeholders, paying particular attention to current and potential service users.
- That the consultation will seek the views and opinions of all key stakeholders on:-
  - The community delivery model
  - The 43 Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain
- The presentation of a final report to Cabinet in Spring 2015, making recommendations following consultation and including a full Equality Impact Assessment.