

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **CABINET MEMBER – YOUNG PEOPLE** held on 1 August 2017 at County Hall, Matlock.

**PRESENT**

Councillor A Dale (in the Chair)

In attendance: Councillors J Patten and J Coyle.

**10/17** **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Cabinet Member.

**11/17** **CAPITAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE INCREASE IN PROVISION OF FREE ENTITLEMENT TO EARLY YEARS PLACES**  
Approval was sought to allocate funding to the conversion of children's centre properties to create additional early years places.

On 22 November 2016, Cabinet approved the sum of £250,000 for minor alterations to children's centre buildings to meet Ofsted requirements for the delivery of early years places. The Cabinet Member report of 14 March 2017 approved works at three of the centres, to the value of £54,699. The following schemes had now been identified at four more centres:

Stonebroom Children's Centre was created within Stonebroom Primary and Nursery School using accommodation released by the school. Following the closure of the Children's Centre, the school would take the facilities back into their use for the delivery of early years. This project was to install two new infant toilets within the former activity space. This would enable the school to create up to 36 new early years places, dependant on the age profile of the children. The budget the work was £10,484 including fees of £750. This included an allowance for redecoration, given that it was 10 years since the Children's Centre project was completed.

Ripley Nursery School had already taken over the activity room in the adjoining children's centre. This project was to provide minor improvements to that room to make it suitable for the care for 9 babies rather than the current 8. The project would also provide an additional toilet within the main body of the nursery. This would allow the number of 3-4 year olds in the provision at any one time to increase from 80 to 90. The budget for these works was £5,420 including fees of £750. As this scheme was under £10,000 it did not count as a capital scheme.

Arkwright Children's Centre was created in a stand-alone building on the site of Arkwright Primary School. This project was to install two additional

infant toilets in the children's centre accommodation. The building would then be suitable for use by the school nursery, creating up to 30 new places for 3 and 4 year olds. Given that it had been 7 years since the Children's Centre project was completed an allowance was also made for redecoration and minor repairs. The budget for the project was £13,872.

Harpur Hill Children's Centre was included in the previous report of 14 March 2107. Additional works had been identified, requiring funding of the project of £8,745 including fees of £750. The operation of this children's centre building was subject of a separate consultation. These works, however, were required for the children's centre building to operate as an early years setting and were not dependent on which organisation delivered the service.

- Provision of a path to ensure that adequate safeguarding measures are in place for users of the two separate operations in the building.
- Provision of Belfast play sink in the playroom.
- Provision of additional wash hand basin in the new toilet area.
- Redecoration.

On 22 November 2016, Cabinet approved a budget of £250,000 from the £2,563,134 of revenue funding approved by the Secretary of State to support Capital projects. As the Ripley Nursery scheme of £5,420 was not a Capital project but was still to be funded from the revenue contribution this reduced the amount total available for Capital projects to £244,580. A spend of £54,699 was agreed on 14 March 2017 and the three proposed Capital projects contained in this paper required a total commitment of £33,101. This would leave a balance of £156,780, which would be available for future reports.

**RESOLVED** to approve the following allocations for the projects at the former children's centres at Stonebroom (£10,484), Arkwright (£13,872), Harpur Hill (£8,745) and Ripley (£5,420).

**12/17      SWADLINCOTE ACCOMMODATION PROPOSALS** Approval was sought to commit [£30,000] for works to Rink House and the Learning Centre in Swadlincote, to improve the utilisation and quality of accommodation for Social Care, Early Help and the Derbyshire Adult Community Education Skills ("DACES") teams in South Derbyshire.

Currently, most Children's Services staff working in South Derbyshire/South Dales were based in Rink House and the Learning Centre in Swadlincote. These two buildings were leased from the same landlord and occupy the same site.

There had been a high turnover of social work staff over the past two years, resulting in a costly over-reliance on agency staff to fulfil the

Department's statutory services in this locality. Evidence from staff exit questionnaires suggested that the current office accommodation on the lower ground floor of the Learning Centre was a significant factor in their decision to leave the Authority. The standard of office accommodation was not the only reason social workers had chosen to leave the Authority; however, it presented a significant risk to the Council's recruitment and retention strategy for social workers in South Derbyshire/South Dales. High staff turnover in this locality had already had an impact on key service performance indicators and was contributing to a budget overspend due to the need for agency staff.

The staff group currently occupying this room remained dissatisfied with the accommodation and it was determined by the Children's Services' Senior Management Team in January 2017 to begin the process of identifying possible suitable alternatives and carrying out a thorough options appraisal on all of these.

The most cost-effective option, which would also be the least disruptive for teams, would involve reconfiguring the use of space across Rink House and the Learning Centre, and also continuing to use the former Newhall Children's Centre building as mixed service delivery and office accommodation. Rink House and the Learning Centre were seen by the services as one campus/site, therefore South Derbyshire and South Dales staff would only be split across three sites i.e. Rink House/Learning Centre, Etwall and Newhall Children's Centre.

Some teams would move to the former Newhall Children's Centre in order to create additional space in the Learning Centre. Additional space would then also be created in Rink House by creating a secure reception area which would enable more of the ground floor to be used as office accommodation. This would enable the social work team to move out of the lower ground floor room in the Learning Centre which was deemed as unsatisfactory for permanent office accommodation.

In the Children's Centre review that was carried out in 2016, it was recommended that Newhall Children's Centre should be closed. This would have resulted in a clawback of capital by the Department for Education ("DfE"), which would have been partly offset by the sale of the building. However, on further investigation the level of capital receipts from the sale of Newhall Children's Centre would be significantly lower than previously estimated. These new proposals would help to avoid the payment of clawback alongside other initiatives that would take place at the Children's Centre involving services for pre-school age children.

Details of the financial considerations were given in the Strategic Director's report

**RESOLVED** (1) to note the report and approve the proposals to reconfigure and improve the use of office accommodation in South Derbyshire/South Dales; and

(2) that the Strategic Director be asked to provide the Cabinet Member with further information on the breakdown of the £20,000 capital cost in relation to the proposal for a secure reception area and clarification on the future use of the basement area at Rink House.

**13/17      FOSTERING ALLOWANCES** Approval was sought to increase fostering allowances and the contract care fee in line with the projected inflation rate for 2017/18 from 1 July 2017.

Derbyshire's Sufficiency Strategy was reliant on recruiting and retaining enough foster carers, both mainstream and contract. The intention was to place as many children as possible within the authority, with Derbyshire carers and staff, and to lessen the reliance placed on external providers, both within fostering and residential placements for both cost and quality reasons.

Consultation with foster carers had identified that their primary motivation is to make a difference to Derbyshire children in care, and that good practice by both children's and fostering social workers is the key factor influencing retention. Feeling valued was essential to this, and one element of this is allowances. Fostering families like any others are facing increased bills etc. and broader economic factors also impact on whether carers need to seek alternative paid employment.

The projected inflation rate for 17/18 was over 2%.

Last year child allowances were increased by 1% and there were no changes to any other allowances. There was no national comparative data but local analysis showed a complex picture - Derbyshire paid a similar amount, in additional fees, as its peers. Additional fees were being reviewed under Phase Two of the payments review and would be the subject of a separate report.

In recent years Derbyshire had paid virtually the same basic Allowance as all other Local Authorities – the only difference was when peers raised theirs before Derbyshire. At present, Derbyshire was slightly behind as most other East Midlands Local Authorities had already agreed increased allowances for 17/18.

Contract carers played a key role in caring for the most complex young people who would otherwise be in residential care and also in providing emergency and short-term placements. The scheme aimed to pay carers the same level of weekly fee as a Residential Children's Worker (RCW). Residential care workers weekly pay at midpoint of the relevant scale was £480.16. The Contract Care fee was currently £474 per week and had remained static for some years.

Both allowances and fee were only paid when there was a child in placement. A 2% increase would bring the fee broadly back in line to within mid-point RCW pay scale.

**RESOLVED** to approve an increase in fostering allowances and the contract care fee in line with the projected inflation rate for 2017/18 from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017.

**14/17**      **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC RESOLVED** that the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items on the agenda to avoid the disclosure of the kind of exempt information detailed in the following summary of proceedings:-

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS CONDUCTED AFTER THE PUBLIC WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING**

- (1) To consider the report of the Strategic Director for Children's Services on Childrens Services Capital Programme 2017-18 - Schools Access Initiative (contains information which is likely to reveal the identity of any individual)