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De-designated Children's Centres in Peterborough

1. Background

In order to achieve the required financial savings in Children's Services as identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan, Cabinet agreed to the de-designation of 8 children's centres (9 buildings as Thorney and Eye is designated as one children's centre but consists of two buildings) across Peterborough and for the delivery of children's centre services through children's centre hubs and outreach centres in each locality.

Cabinet also agreed that the de-designated centres would continue to provide the following universal core entitlement of activities and that funding would be set aside to resource these activities:

- Access to health visiting and midwifery services;
- One session per week of early childhood development activity facilitated by an early childhood development practitioner;
- Support for mothers with 'low mood' or who are at risk of post natal depression;
- Access to the facilities within the de-designated buildings for parent-led groups.

Based on a detailed needs analysis linked to the indices of deprivation as they impact on children's welfare and wellbeing, as well as the density and extent of need in certain areas of Peterborough, it was agreed by Cabinet to de-designate the following children's centres. Cabinet also agreed to find alternative tenants/providers to run the buildings (with the tenant/provider guaranteeing community access to the Cabinet-agreed universal core entitlement of services) and to focus remaining financial resources in the areas of greatest need.

Children's Centre	Current Provider	Locality
Wittering	Independent (School)	North West and Rural
Werrington	Independent (School)	North West and Rural
Caverstede	Independent (School)	North West and Rural
Thorney	Spurgeons	North West and Rural
Eye	Spurgeons	North West and Rural
Westwood and Ravensthorpe (Highlees)	Spurgeons	North West and Rural
Stanground	Spurgeons	South
Brewster Avenue	Spurgeons	South
Hampton	Spurgeons	South

2. De-designated Children's Centre Buildings

Of the nine children's centre buildings to be de-designated, five are within an existing school or attached to a school, three are located close to an existing primary school and one stands alone.

The resources of Caverstede children's centre are fully integrated with that of the nursery and could therefore not be de-coupled from that delivery.

Although Stanground children's centre is part of a school building, accessibility by the school is restricted. In addition, the building itself is very small and offers limited alternative usage.

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The Department for Education's conditions for the Sure Start capital grant emphasises that to ensure that there is no capital claw back any future use of the de-designated centres must be linked to early childhood provision.

Thus the buildings can only be used, predominately, for the delivery of early childhood activity during the period of normal opening hours. Outside of these hours, the facilities can be used by any appropriate group or organisation to run, or deliver, activities for the community. It is via this route that any future tenant will be able to generate a small amount of income in order to subsidise the running costs of the building.

The types of early childhood activity that would deem to be acceptable by the Department for Education would be as follows:

- Childcare and pre-school activities
- Early childhood development activities such as 'messy play' and singing
- Midwifery services
- Health visiting services
- Family support activity
- Support groups for new mothers
- Specialist support groups for parents/carers e.g. parents of twins

Running costs

In the situation where a school takes over the running of the de-designated children's centre buildings and the buildings form part of the fabric/envelope of the school site, the full maintenance costs of the running of the facilities will fall to the school. In identifying the future anchor/lead tenant for these facilities, the ability of the tenant to sustain the financial responsibility of running the building, as well as, keeping it open for the community, will be a major consideration.

Where a de-designated children's centre stands outside of the school site, elements of the financial responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the building will form part of the landlord's statutory responsibilities in respect of maintaining a building in line with health and safety regulations- such as the statutory testing of electrical equipment.

3. The future role of primary schools in the delivery of early years' services

Many primary school headteachers are developing a vision for their school which encompasses the delivery of family support services and activities – e.g healthy living programmes - for families with children from 0 to 11. This is predicated on developing effective partnerships with health services, the pre-school sector, deliverers of family learning activities and early childhood development practitioners.

It can therefore be concluded that securing primary schools as anchor tenants for the de-designated children's centre buildings secures:

- The continuation of the local community's access to midwifery and health visiting services;
- Provides enhanced resources for the delivery of parenting support programmes and similar activities for the most vulnerable of families;

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- Supports the opportunity for primary schools to work in closer partnership with pre-school and early years childcare providers in order to improve end of foundation stage outcomes for children and transition from pre-school to reception class;
- Ensures that the buildings remain open for the use of the community and for parent led activities;
- Shifts the financial responsibility for the delivery of these services and the maintenance of the buildings from the local authority to the schools;
- Offers a financially sustainable model for the future delivery of early years services in the community.

Many of the children's centre buildings in Peterborough are located within, or close to, existing primary school buildings.

It is the primary sector that in recent years has seen a growth in funding directly linked to the pupil premium. From September the pupil premium for eligible children in primary schools goes up to over £1,000 per student. The pupil premium is 'ring fenced' money that the school is expected to use to tackle the barriers to learning. These barriers could relate to low attainment on entry, specific learning difficulties, the impact of poor parenting or social and emotional/behavioural issues. In addition, the government has just announced that there will be a Pupil Premium targeted at the under 5s.

Many primary school headteachers are recognising that in order to tackle some of the barriers to children's progress mentioned above they have to work with the family rather than the child in isolation. In addition, they see that engaging with the family before the child enters primary school provides a more effective route to working with the family to address issues such as poor parenting and low aspirations.

Headteachers who have a high proportion of vulnerable families within their school catchment area are increasingly seeing the importance of engaging with the children of these families from birth onwards (see article The Independent 'Open All Hours' by Sarah Cassidy, Thursday 5 June 2014) and that working with midwifery and health visiting services offers a way of doing this.

In addition, primary school headteachers are seeing the importance of extending their influence and teaching and learning expertise to the pre-school sector. They are either embarking on delivering/commissioning their own pre-school services or developing more productive partnership arrangements with the sector. They see that engaging in this phase of learning will eventually secure better learning outcomes for children at every stage of their schooling.

4. Future tenancy arrangements

The agreements/tenancy arrangements with the future anchor tenants will depend on **a)** the de-designated building being maintained and **b)** the organisation offering to take on the management of the buildings.

Where a school is the proposed anchor tenant and takes over the complete running and responsibility for the de-designated children's centre facilities, a community use agreement will be signed by the school with the council. This community use

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agreement will ensure that the core offer of universal childhood support activities funded by the council will have priority in accessing the building.

Where the anchor tenant is not a school then the transfer arrangements will be through a landlord/tenant lease agreement.

Centre	Arrangement with the Council
Wittering	Community use Agreement
Werrington	Community use Agreement
Caverstede	Community use Agreement
Thorney	Community use Agreement
Eye	To be determined at a future date but likely, in the short term, to be individual arrangements with providers
Highlees	Lease agreement as Highlees school functions as an academy.
Stanground	Responsibility remains with the council
Brewster Avenue	Community use agreement
Hampton	Formal lease arrangements

It is in the council's interest, wherever possible, to support schools to become the anchor tenant as, a) the maintenance costs can be subsumed within the overall school budget and b) there is a guaranteed year on year revenue stream to cover costs.

5. Criteria for evaluation of options

Taking the above into account, the following criteria has been used to identify the most appropriate anchor tenant for the de-designated centres in the future:

- The future financial sustainability of the organisation
- The nature of the organisation – i.e. charitable status, or public sector facing
- A commitment to early years activity and family engagement

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6. Future Tenancy Arrangements

Centre: Thorney (designated as Thorney and Eye Children's Centre)

Tenancy:

Discussions are taking place with **The Duke of Bedford Primary School in Thorney** with the view to them assuming the financial responsibility for the children's centre building towards the end of this year. They will then become the anchor tenant.

The costs to the school of maintaining the building will be supported by the rental income from the pre-school which will move from the Social Centre in Thorney to the children's centre space.

Benefits:

The school will have a closer working relationship with the pre-school which will a) secure the sustainability of the pre-school and b) improve the transition arrangements from pre-school to reception.

No future costs to the council in respect of building maintenance.

Risks:

Space in the Thorney children's centre building is limited so with the pre-school operating out of the building it is likely that the core offer for the community will have to be delivered from another community building – possibly from the Tank Yard.

Discussions with Thorney Parish Council have been very positive and it is likely that access to alternative space for delivery will not prove a problem.

However, additional costs might be incurred in order to rent alternative space from the parish council.

Centre: Eye (designated as Thorney and Eye Children's Centre)

Tenancy:

Peterborough City Council to retain management of the building until an anchor tenant can be found.

The costs of running the building to be offset by the following rental income:

- Pre-school contribution= £3,066
- After School Club= £2,318
- Potential rental to identified external group = £6,500
- Potential rental of space to Eye Primary School – income as yet unknown.

The above would give a potential revenue stream of in excess £11,884

Benefits:

The buildings will remain open and in use with the exiting providers confident that the building will be maintained.

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In addition, there is potential for a new organisation to be based there delivering a range of targeted support activities to vulnerable families with children with additional needs and thus being able to extend the provision currently being offered through portage and by Caverstede.

With the council running the centre in the short term, there will time for a) the potential operators using the centre to develop the confidence to become an anchor tenant, or b) a new anchor tenant to be found.

Risks:

The council will have to bear the financial risks of potentially not securing an anchor tenant for the long term.

The current running costs for the Eye buildings total £26,234.35. Income is estimated to be slightly over £11,884.00 that consequently leaves a shortfall of £14,350.35.

A new organisation has expressed strong interest in renting space and is prepared to pay a rent of £6,500.00 for the facilities they require. However, they have yet to confirm these arrangements and have limited experience of running services with an unproven track record. If this organisation ceased trading then the additional costs would fall to the council.

Centre: Wittering

Tenancy:

Wittering Primary School to continue to run the building as a centre for early years support and activity.

The focus on supporting young families based at RAF Wittering will mean that the funding they have received from the Military Covenant Fund can legitimately be used to sustain the early years activity

Benefits:

The school will continue to provide support activities for families that need access to early years professionals.

No future costs to the council.

Risks:

Not a long-term solution. The school will have to apply now for financial support from the Military Covenant Fund if they want to continue operating in the financial year 2015/2016.

The school will have to seek out alternative sources of income – i.e. rental arrangements and charging policies if services are to continue in the future.

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Centre: Werrington

Tenancy:

Welbourne Primary School to have control over the building and become the anchor tenant. In doing so they will use some of the children's centre space to extend the school, locating the reception class in the building.

The full cost of maintaining the building will be the responsibility of the school and these costs will be supported by rental income from:

- The pre-school provider that operates from the building;
- Peterborough Learning Partnership having Werrington as their administration and, potentially, their delivery base;
- Ad hoc rental income from organisations that want to use the space.

Benefits:

The costs of running the building will become the responsibility of the school.

The co-location of the reception class next to the pre-school will improve transition arrangements and will have a positive impact on outcomes.

Peterborough Learning Partnership (PLP) will be based in the building which will mean that there will be a constant presence in the centre and will militate against issues with health services around 'lone working' arrangements.

PLP has also suggested that they will want to deliver some training programmes from the building.

No future costs to the council.

Risks:

It is unlikely that the school will embrace additional early years activity to that already offered via the pre-school. This will mean that the community will only have access to the core offer of:

1. Health visitor led groups
2. Midwifery support
3. The funded one session per week of early childhood development activity
4. The extension to the Peterborough Fenland Mind Connecting Mums programme that offers support to mothers who are at risk of post natal depression

Centre: Caverstede

Tenancy:

Caverstede Nursery School to assume for responsibility for the full costs associated with the continued running of the children's centre resource.

The school will receive additional funding from the Direct Schools' Grant. This will help their overall budget situation which will, in turn, give them the financial resources to continue the delivery of early years support and early childhood developmental activities to the community.

Benefits:

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In Caverstede the nursery and children's centre activities are fully integrated.

Additional funding to the school has allowed them to retain some early years professionals who will continue to offer programmes to the community.

The expertise located in the school will also be used to a) support the growing population of very young children with additional needs and b) to support other early years settings in developing their skills and capacity to work with vulnerable children.

No future costs to the council.

Risks:

Due to the previous success of the children's centre, there is a high expectation within Caverstede's immediate community and across the city, that the centre will continue to offer the same level of support as before. Although the school will offer a wide range of activities in the future, this, in comparison, will be a reduction in what was previously provided as a children's centre. Parents will gain access to support based on need, which will inevitably reduce significantly the universal/open access offer. It is likely that parents will have to be placed on a waiting list for the most popular sessions.

Centre: Westwood and Ravensthorpe (Highlees)

Tenancy:

Highlees Academy to take financial responsibility for the running of the building and to be the anchor tenant.

The academy will work in partnership with the head of **Ravensthorpe Primary School** to develop a range of joint family support activities to be delivered from the building.

Benefits:

In addition to the entitlement, high quality family support work will be delivered from the centre.

There will be a focus on those families where there might be child protection issues and where the children are having difficulty in making the transition to statutory education.

There will be a focus on the whole family rather than on children under the age of 5.

No financial cost to the council.

Risks:

The academy will use the space to deliver on their priorities. In doing so they will have less of a commitment to support parent-led groups and other associated organisations to deliver from the buildings.

Parents in the community will receive the offer of:

1. Health visitor led groups

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2. Midwifery support
3. The funded one session per week of early childhood development activity
4. The extension to the Peterborough Fenland Mind Connecting Mums programme.

Centre: Stanground

Tenancy:

Peterborough City Council to retain responsibility for the maintenance and overall management of the building.

The centre will house the portage service (portage is a service that works with families of children from 0-5 who have additional needs). The costs associated with this will come from the early years budget.

The portage staff will be based in the centre and will also deliver some support sessions to parents and groups from the centre building.

The core entitlement will also be delivered from the centre.

Benefits:

Services will continue to operate from the building.

Parents will have access to the core entitlement sessions from the building.

Issues regarding lone working in connection with health visitors and midwives will be mitigated by Portage being permanently located in the building.

Risks:

Stanground children's centre is one of the smallest children's centre buildings in the city and is therefore the least flexible.

The delivery of portage services as well as the core offer will have to be carefully scheduled in order to ensure that there is no disadvantage to either the portage team or to the regular delivery of the core services, particularly where it involves health visiting and midwifery staff.

The council will still be responsible for the costs of the building in the future.

Centre: Brewster Avenue

Tenancy:

Brewster Avenue Primary School to take over the control of the building and become the anchor tenant responsible for the maintenance and running costs in the future.

The centre will continue to support the after school club – Planet X - to operate from the building.

Benefits:

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The headteacher and governors of the school support a future vision for the school that is centred on the delivery of services from birth to 7 for the community. They see the acquisition of the children's centre space as a vehicle for achieving this vision. Through delivering such services they are convinced that attainment and outcomes will improve.

The school is very keen to work with the community to ensure that what is offered from the centre meets the needs of the families currently using the facilities. They will support both the core offer and any parent-led groups that might wish to use the facilities.

Risks:

Expectations from the community are high

There is a risk that the menu of activities delivered by the school might not meet parental expectations or demand.

Centre: Hampton

Tenancy:

For the charity **Family Action** to become lead tenant and take over the running and maintenance of the facilities.

Family Action was the organisation that originally ran the children's centre prior to the commissioning of Spurgeons.

Family Action currently offers childcare in Hampton and across Peterborough.

Benefits:

The charity will use the facilities to extend its childcare places through opening a suite for two-year-olds. This resource will go some way to meeting the increasing demand for childcare in the area of Hampton.

It will ensure that the core offer is delivered from the building but, in addition, will a) provide support for parents to set up their own activities for children aged 0 to 5, b) provide a level of support or signposting for local families and c) provide affordable space/rooms for hire during weekdays and evenings to appropriate groups.

No future costs to the council with the exception being in relation to landlord's statutory responsibilities.

Risks:

The buildings will have to be financially self-sustaining. Consequently, Family Action may make decisions on the use of the facilities based on the potential rental income. This could have an impact on the ability of parent-led groups to access the facilities.

The council will still retain the financial responsibilities of a landlord.

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7. The financial business case

De-designated centre name	Current cost to the council for running centre/building	Proposed cost to the council for running the centre/building	Benefit to the council following transfer
Wittering	£60,000	£0	£60,000
Werrington	£87,362	£0	£87,362
Caverstede	£145,600	£0	£145,600
Westwood	£175,590	£0	£175,590
Hampton	£126,000	£0	£126,000
Thorney	£95,468 operated as a single children's centre	£0	£70,968
Eye		£24,500	
Brewster Avenue	£114,000	£0	£114,000
Stanground	£114,000	£10,000	£104,000
		Total: £34,500	£883,520

The above table shows the financial impact to the council following the transfer of the 9 de-designated children's centres to the external providers. The remaining savings, as identified from the re-organisation of children's centres will be achieved through redesigning the delivery of the remaining children's centres.

8. Finally

Finally, with the range of tenants identified above and in order to retain a sense of coordinated delivery across the city in respect of the core offer provided, it is proposed that the facilities be re-named children and family centres.

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