

**SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE**

**18<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

Scrutiny Co-ordination  
Committee Members

Present:

Councillor Blundell  
Councillor Foster  
Councillor Lakha  
Councillor Mrs Lucas (Chair)  
Councillor McNicholas (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor M. Mutton  
Councillor Ruane  
Councillor Sawdon  
Councillor Taylor  
Councillor Welsh  
Councillor Walsh (substitute for Councillor Lancaster)

Other Members Present:

Councillor Bailey  
Councillor Mrs Dixon  
Councillor Kelly (Cabinet Member (Education))

Employees Present:

H. Abraham (Customer & Workforce Services Directorate)  
J. Goodyer (Children, Learning & Young People Directorate)  
G. Holmes (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
J. Parry (Assistant Chief Executive)  
M. Salmon (Customer & Workforce Services Directorate)  
A. Simpson (Children, Learning & Young People Directorate)  
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
C. Wainwright (Children, Learning & Young People Directorate)  
A. West (Children, Learning & Young People Directorate)

Apology:

Councillor Lancaster (substitute Councillor Walsh)

**Public Business**

**94. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**95. Minutes**

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2011 were signed as a true record. The Chair thanked officers for the professional support they provided to the Committee and requested that this be placed on record.

(b) There were no matters arising.

## **96. Consideration of Call-in Stage 2 – Report on abc Review of Day Care in Sure Start Children’s Centres - Consultation Responses**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People on abc Review of Day Care in Sure Start Children’s Centres - Consultation Responses. The report had been considered by Cabinet (their minute 80/11 referred) and the decision had been Called-in by Councillors Bailey, Blundell and Mrs Dixon.

The report, that included a revised Equality Impact Assessment, presented the outcome of the consultation on the review of day care in Sure Start Children’s Centres and outlined options and proposals for implementation following a fundamental service review of day care in Sure Start Children’s Centres that had been commissioned in order to create a more operationally and financially efficient day care offer from Sure Start Children’s Centres, whilst maintaining high quality delivery and improved access for the most vulnerable children and families. The review had also been driven by local policy direction, reflecting the developing early intervention and prevention agenda.

A number of options were outlined in the Case for Change, these being to transform the service in house; commission out the service to a private provider or to close the provision completely. Cabinet approved the preferred option at their 19 July 2011 meeting (their minute 25/11 refers), to continue to deliver the service in house but reducing the offer from full day to part time sessional care for children aged 2 years and over, and to consult on this option.

Consultation had been carried out with parents and carers, staff, trade unions, the private, voluntary and independent sector and also the Children, Learning and Leisure Scrutiny Board (Scrutiny Board 2). The responses from the consultation with parents/carers, whilst relatively low, had been almost exclusively been from working parents, where concerns had been raised about their capacity to continue in work and/or training if the service was reduced to part time care. This was predominantly due to the service no longer meeting their needs together with the concern about higher costs of day care in the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector. The appendices to the report provided details of the responses to the consultation.

Having considered the responses, the proposed preferred model recommended for implementation, was for 7 centres to open for either a morning or an afternoon session, 5 sessions per week for 38 weeks of the year, whilst the remaining 2 centres would offer a morning session and an afternoon session and that parents would have the option to 'buy in' additional time at the beginning or the end of the session and in the middle of the day. This recommendation addressed some of the recommendations made during the consultation. The recommended model contained significant changes from the model consulted on and reflected both the response to the consultation and the comments from Scrutiny Board 2.

It was further proposed that the recommended model be implemented at the beginning of the autumn term (September 2012). It was further proposed to increase fees from April 2012, from the current £3.75 per hour to £5.00 per hour, as there had been no increase in parental fees since September 2009. The report indicated that this still represented a substantial subsidy as it was not sufficient to recover full costs. To recover full costs would be likely to make the fees unaffordable for most families.

The savings target for the review was to make an overall saving of £1m in the financial year 2012/2013. Detailed methodology and costings for the recommended option were included in Appendix 5 of the report. It was noted that local authority pay and conditions prohibited the service from ever being self-financing unless the fees were increased significantly. This would probably exclude most parents and make the centres more expensive than any other provider in the city. To introduce a day care model which was based on a cost recovery model would result in parental fees increasing from the current £150 per week to approximately £250 - £300 per week.

The recommended model contains a number of significant changes from the model consulted on. These changes reflect the response to the consultation and comments from Scrutiny Board 2 on the proposed service changes.

Two petitions had been considered by Cabinet Member (Education) (her minute 29/11 referred) in relation to the consultation and Cabinet took into account the issues raised through the petitions as part of the wider consultation responses.

Cabinet had agreed to:

- 1) Take into account all relevant materials, including the responses to the consultation received to date, the petitions and the Equality Impact Assessment.
- 2) Consider the recommendations made by Scrutiny Board 2 on October 13th 2011, those being:
  - a) that the results of the consultation so far be forwarded to the Cabinet, with the request that it takes them into account when making its decisions on this issue, along with any further findings arising during the remainder of the consultation period.
  - b) that the Scrutiny Board supports the view that starting the new child care arrangements in April would be more disruptive than necessary for those children due to begin primary school in September and therefore it asks the Cabinet to consider delaying the start until September 2012.
  - c) that the Cabinet be requested to consider allowing each of the City Council's Children's Centres to organise its own sessional day care provision, so that it best meets the needs of the parents/carers who wish to use it.
- 3) Consider the models of service delivery as set out in this report and approve the preferred option as set out in paragraph 2.7.
- 4) Agree that the Project Team progresses the implementation of the preferred option.
- 5) Approve the introduction of a new fee structure from April 2012 that is built on a more robust business model, moving from the current £3.75 per hour to £5.00 per hour.

The reason for the call-in was to further investigate the advantages and disadvantages of why sessional care should be the preferred option over a remodelling of the existing full service.

The Call-in had been deemed valid by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on advice from the Assistant Director (Democratic Services), in conjunction with the Council Solicitor/Assistant Director (Legal Services), the Call-in reason having met the requirements of the Council's Constitution Scrutiny Rules on the Call-in Procedure and the

criteria decided by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.

Councillors Bailey, Blundell and Mrs Dixon and were in attendance at the meeting and spoke in support of the call-in.

The Committee received a Briefing Note of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People that responded to the Call-in. The Note outlined a chronology of decisions and events relevant to the Call-in and confirmed that at their July 2011 meeting, Cabinet had considered that there was an urgent need to change the provision of day care services in Childrens' Centres and, having considered a number of options for a viable service in the future, approved the preferred option to continue to deliver the service in house reducing the offer from full day to part time sessional care for children aged 2 years and over.

The Committee considered the Call-in, the comments of the Elected Members supporting the Call-in and the Briefing Note of the Children, Learning and Young People and following a show of hands, decided to concur with the Cabinet Member (Education) decision.

**RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee concurs with the decision of Cabinet to:**

- 1) Take into account all relevant materials, including the responses to the consultation received to date, the petitions and the Equality Impact Assessment.**
- 2) Consider the recommendations made by Scrutiny Board 2 on October 13th 2011, those being:
  - a) that the results of the consultation so far be forwarded to the Cabinet, with the request that it takes them into account when making its decisions on this issue, along with any further findings arising during the remainder of the consultation period.**
  - b) that the Scrutiny Board supports the view that starting the new child care arrangements in April would be more disruptive than necessary for those children due to begin primary school in September and therefore it asks the Cabinet to consider delaying the start until September 2012.**
  - c) that the Cabinet be requested to consider allowing each of the City Council's Children's Centres to organise its own sessional day care provision, so that it best meets the needs of the parents/carers who wish to use it.****
- 3) Consider the models of service delivery as set out in this report and approve the preferred option as set out in paragraph 2.7.**
- 4) Agree that the Project Team progresses the implementation of the preferred option.**
- 5) Approve the introduction of a new fee structure from April 2012 that is built on a more robust business model, moving from the current £3.75 to £5.00 per hour.**

(Note: The Committee were informed that the Unions had raised a dispute on this matter.)

**97. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2011/2012**

The Committee noted the Work Programme for 2011/2012.

98. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

99. **Meeting Evaluation**

The Committee acknowledged the importance of receiving documentation in advance of meetings and the Chair encouraged Members to read all information available to them prior to their attendance at meetings of the Committee. The Committee also discussed the process for Call-in Stage 1 – Determination of Validity and agreed that the period from receipt of a Call-in to the determination of validity should allow adequate time for discussion between decision makers.

100. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

(Meeting closed at 10.35 a.m.)