

**EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE**

**15th November 2011**

**COMMISSIONING OF CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICES**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Derek Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism
Portfolio Holder Consulted	yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis, Acting Head of Community Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

To seek Members approval to submit a tender to deliver Sure Start Children's Centre services in Redditch and secondly to seek approval to enter in to a Contract with Worcestershire County Council if the tender is successful.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- 1) **option 2 as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report be approved in relation to the submission of a tender to deliver Children's Centre services in Redditch subject to the Council being the 'lead' organisation if this is required in respect of a partnership bid; and.**
- 2) **subject to any tender being successful, a Contract be entered into with Worcestershire County Council.**

**3. KEY ISSUES**

**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The Sure Start Children's Centre Programme is funded by a separate Government Grant which is paid to Worcestershire County Council. Since 2006 funding for the four Centres managed by the Borough Council has been provided through a Contract with the County. The annual contract is to the value of approximately £800,000. There are no financial implications for Redditch Borough Council in delivering the service.

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- 3.2 If the council was not to secure the tender in future years it is understood that staff would be subject to TUPE arrangements. If a tender was unsuccessful a current 25 year lease with Worcestershire County Council in respect of the Holly Trees Children's Centre at St Stephen's First School would have to be reviewed by Officers and potentially surrendered.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.3 If a contract is awarded to the Borough Council, there are legal implications in terms of entering into a formal Contract. Legal Services have been involved in the drafting of the previous Contracts and would be involved in any future Contracts.
- 3.4 Children's Centres are monitored on an annual basis by Worcestershire County Council Commissioning Officers. In addition, with effect from April 2011, Children's Centres are subject to OFSTED inspections and like schools, are graded from Outstanding to Unsatisfactory. To date two Redditch Centres have been inspected by OFSTED and both were graded 'good'.
- 3.5 The Legal Services Manager has been consulted with regard to the legal implications.

**Service/Operational Implications**

- 3.6 Children's Centres are part of a national scheme to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. Redditch applied for Sure Start funding in 2001 as a Local Programme and obtained approval of its Delivery Plan in February 2002. In 2006 Local Programmes migrated to Children's Centres and these now cover the whole geographical area of the Borough.
- 3.7 Following approval by Executive Committee on 20th February 2008, tenders were submitted and successfully awarded for the Council to manage the following four Centres, comprising of 8 sites, in Redditch for the period 1st October 2008 to 30th October 2011 (consequently extended until 31st March 2012).
- 1) Holly Trees Children's Centre at St. Stephen's First School with a satellite site at St. George's First School.
  - 2) Cherry Trees Children's Centre at Batchley First School with a satellite site at Holyoakesfield First School.

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- 3) Oak Trees Children's Centre at Oak Hill First School with a satellite site at St. Luke's First School.
  - 4) Woodlands Children's Centre at Woodrow First School with satellite sites at St. Thomas More Catholic First School.
- 3.8 The following two Centres, comprising of 5 sites, are managed by Redditch YMCA through a contract with the County which is also due to expire in March 2012.
- a) Willow Trees Children's Centre at Church Hill Community Centre with satellite site at Moons Moat First School.
  - b) Maple Trees Children's Centre at Matchborough First School with satellite sites at Tenacres and Roman Way First Schools.
- 3.9 A Borough-wide Advisory Board exists comprising of voluntary organisations and key statutory agencies to act in an advisory capacity on the development and implementation of services. Councillor Chalk is the Council's representative on the Board.
- 3.10 The thirteen Redditch Children's Centre sites are currently run by two organisations – the Council and Redditch YMCA. Redditch district has adopted a unique approach in the County whereby the two organisations work in partnership with the aim of providing consistent and seamless children's centres services across all Centres. This is achieved by holding joint team meetings and sharing resources, including a number of joint posts e.g. Family Support Team Leader, Family Learning Co-ordinator. In addition all promotional work is undertaken jointly. This is seen as a model of good practice by the County and provides both organisations with economies of scale which enable added value to be brought to the Centres.
- 3.11 Whilst the Children's Centres provide a universal service open to all families, the service does target support at those families most in need. The table below shows the achievement of each Centre in seeing the children who live in the 30% most disadvantaged Super Output Areas (SOA's), which are cluster of postcodes, for the period 1st April to 1st October 2011.

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Children's Centre	Percentage of children living in 30% super output area seen (Half year 2011/12)
Cherry Trees	61%
Holly Trees	73%
Oak Trees	N/A – catchment area contains no 30% SOA's
Woodlands	71%
Maple Trees	52%
Willow Trees	41%

3.12 In the past Worcestershire County Council has contracted Children's Centre Services on a Centre by Centre basis. However, as part of the County's new 'Early Help Strategy for Children and Young People and their Families', services will in the future be commissioned on a district basis, with one contract for each of the six district areas. In addition the County are proposing that Centres which are currently focused on 0-5 year olds will become 'Family Centres' with greater range of services provided giving consideration to an integrated 0-19 local early help service 'offer'. The County propose to commence the commissioning process in January 2012. Roll out will be phased with all areas commissioned by 2014. Early indications are that Redditch District will be in the early phase and possibly the first District. In giving consideration to whether Members submit a tender for the District, there are two available options:

**Option 1** – submit a Redditch Borough Council tender

**Option 2** – approach Redditch YMCA to discuss submission of a joint Council and YMCA tender (indications from the YMCA are that this is their favoured approach, subject to their Board's approval). Agreement would have to be reached on the lead organisation for such a bid and a partnership agreement drawn up. It is proposed that the Council would seek to be the lead organisation.

The advantages and disadvantages of each option are outlined in Appendix 1.

- a) The grant allocation for the 13 centre sites across the district would be approximately £1.1m. The exact budget for future years is currently unknown and is subject to the County's Cabinet approval year on year.

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**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.13 The children's centre services provide a local one stop shop service for families and children across the Borough through the six centres. The early intervention family support work undertaken by the service promotes the safeguarding and welfare of children, in particular vulnerable children.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

If a tender is not submitted or is unsuccessful, the Programme will be led by another commissioned organisation rather than at a local level through the Borough Council. In respect of staff and building resources please refer to paragraph 3.2.

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Options

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Worcestershire County Council's Early Help Strategy for Children and Young People and their Families

**7. AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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