

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1	Meeting:	Cabinet
2	Date:	7 th December, 2011
3	Title:	The Commissioning of Children’s Centres – Extension to Existing Contracts
4	Directorate:	Chief Executive’s Office

5 Summary

There are 22 individual contracts with Children’s Centres across the Borough. Each of these contracts is due to expire on 1st April 2012. The vast majority of the centres are on school sites.

The commissioning of children’s centres is agreed as a priority, enabling the service to be opened up to competition in line with good practice and standing orders and financial regulations of the Council, through a formal tendering process.

In order to commission this significant and important service to children and families in Rotherham, there is substantial work to complete. It has been agreed by the Chief Executive that the timeline for the commissioning of Children’s Centres would be extended into 2013.

This report sets out the reasons why members are requested to suspend standing orders and commission Children’s Centres.

6. Recommendations

That the Cabinet approved the suspension of Standing Order 48 (1) to enable the commissioning of Children’s Centres in the financial year 2012/13.

7. Proposals

Rotherham's Children's Centres are currently provided by School Governing bodies on behalf of the Local Authority through 22 individual contracts.

Children's Centres are an integral part of the local authority's prevention and early intervention strategy and currently offer services to families with children under the age of five years. National reviews highlight that the focus must be on how we enable the Children's Centres, working with our partners and professionals, to better target those most in need of their services, to intervene earlier in order to narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged in our communities.

Previously a 7 month extension to the current contract was agreed by the Cabinet Member, Lifelong Learning and Culture on the 6th July, 2011. The contracts were due to expire on the 31st August, 2011 (an extension having previously been agreed from the 31st March 2011). The original extension enabled consultation on the preferred reshaping of Children's Centres to take place which was undertaken by the Early Years Service between the 10th March and the 5th May 2011

It has been agreed by the Chief Executive that the timeline for the commissioning of Children's Centres would be extended into 2013. The commissioning of Children's Centres is agreed as a priority, enabling the service to be opened up to competition in line with good practice, standing orders and financial regulations of the Council, through a formal tendering process and given the decision to extend the timeline, a further extension to the contract is required until 1st April, 2013.

To achieve the tight timeline for commissioning and to ensure the continuity of the Children's Centres service until the tendering process is complete, it is proposed that the Cabinet suspends Standing Order 48 (1) to enable the commissioning of Children's Centres in financial year 2012/13.

8. Finance

The baseline position for Children's Centres in 2010/11 was £6.23 million. The proposed budget for 2011/12 is £5.28 million. It is anticipated that further savings can be achieved through the commissioning of the service.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

That, if the Cabinet does not agree to suspend Standing Order 48 (1) to enable the commissioning of Children's Centres in financial year 2012/2013, then the children's centres will be operating without a contract which is contrary to standing orders.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Children's Centres support the delivery of the priorities in the Children and Young People Plan and Rotherham's Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Consultation undertaken is highlighted above.

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