

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date: **15 November 2005**

Title of Report: **Second Phase Children's Centres 2006-2008**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To approve the proposed roll out for the second phase of the Children's Centre programme 2006-2008**

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**Recommendations:**

**The Cabinet is recommended to:**

- (i) note the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) targets for the roll out of Children's Centres across East Sussex;**
  - (ii) approve the addition of the capital and revenue allocation that will be made to East Sussex County Council (ESCC);**
  - (iii) approve the proposed programme areas for phase 2 of Children's Centres across the county, which will improve the quality of life of approximately 18,000 children under 5 by 2008; and**
  - (iv) delegate to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness, the authority to fine tune the draft version of the Children's Centre proposal and approve the final version for submission to the DfES by 30 November 2005.**
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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The Government announced in June 2005 the second phase roll out of Children's Centres. The DfES is making available for 2006-2008 additional revenue of £3,012,147 and capital funding of £3,725,715 to support the extension of this initiative. This money is ring fenced within the General Sure Start Grant (GSSG). This is in addition to the Sure Start Local Programme (SSLP) revenue funding.

1.2 It is expected that this revenue funding will be used for project development, project management costs and to pump prime additional services required to meet the DfES targets. Where the budget is used to pump prime services, agreements will be made with providers for a maximum of a two year period. This will be reviewed in the light of future funding cycles. There will be no direct cost to ESCC for this development in the short term and, therefore, no direct financial risk.

1.3 There have been indications from the Government that there will be funding to support Children's Centres in the next spending review (2008-2010) through the General Sure Start Grant. At present there is no information regarding the level of funding. Therefore, ESCC will make no long term commitment for the period 2008-2010 and beyond until the next round of funding has been agreed, in order to negate any financial risk to the County Council.

1.4 The DfES is making £3,725,715 capital funding available based on the creation of 18 new Children's Centre bases for the delivery of activities and services within the community. It is anticipated that the DfES will impose a similar clawback clause as imposed on the phase 1 capital developments. The current capital developments for Children's Centres are subject to a commitment clawback of capital funding if the facility were to cease to be used to support children aged 0-5 and their families. The length of the clawback period relates to the level of capital investment with a maximum of 25 years. Clawback would be at the market value of the time of clawback being evoked and not the original capital grant. For this reason all capital developments in buildings not owned by the County Council will be subject to a legal agreement with ESCC.

1.5 Given the modest amount of capital funding available, it is expected that the capital allocation will be used to enhance the infrastructure of existing facilities (for example, primary schools, health centres, family centres, community venues, etc) to enable core services to be provided in the new

programme areas. It is assumed in the revenue projections that these enhanced facilities will be cost neutral in revenue terms. SSLP and Children's Centre funding will meet any revenue shortfall. The DfES SSLP funding tapers, with 2010/2011 as the last year of revenue funding. A management risk plan will need to be reported annually to the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness to outline any problems and the management actions to be taken to live within available resources.

1.6 A joint capital strategy will be developed by December 2005 including the 0-5 aspect of the Extended Schools initiative and the County Council's Childcare Strategy and the wider Children's Centre agenda. One key strand will be to consider surplus places in schools and the opportunity to develop wider community facilities based around school sites. The capital resources will be added to the Council's Capital Programme and decisions will be made as part of the CAPS process. The capital strategy will be managed and monitored in such a way that the difficulties experienced with timescales with the phase one capital programmes will not be repeated.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 ESCC has been invited to submit a proposal to extend the Children's Centre initiative, thus providing an opportunity to benefit more children, families and carers across the county. The final version of the proposal has to be submitted to the DfES by 30 November 2005.

2.2 Children's Centres are a major element in the delivery of services for 0-5 year olds; the core offer, which must be provided to families within the 30% most deprived areas nationally, includes: information; advice and support; childcare integrated with early learning; health services; family support; parental outreach; and employment advice. Unlike the phase one programmes, the services provided will not be the same everywhere, because need and communities vary greatly (see Annex A). The greatest resources will go to those children in most need; however, the Government's intention is that Children's Centre services will become mainstream community services (See Annex A for further details on Children's Centre provision and layout).

2.3 The Government's target for East Sussex in phase one (2004-2006) is to reach 3,205 children with a childcare target of 214. The target for phase two (2006-2008) is to reach an additional 14,789 children; there are no specific childcare targets as these will be set locally as part of the Childcare Places Plan. In the third phase (2008-2010) we will be required to reach all of the remaining children aged 0-5 years living in East Sussex.

2.4 A number of options for the extension of Children's Centres programme areas have been considered as part of stakeholder consultation (Annex B); these consultations have included the Lead Members for Children's and Adults' Services and for Learning and School Effectiveness. The final recommendation to the Cabinet has been made on the basis of need (including the Government requirement to prioritise children living within the 30% most deprived Super Output Areas according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation), existing provision and the ability of key services to meet the required targets within the Government's timescale.

## **3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations**

3.1 The proposals in Annex B include:

- extending the existing Children's Centre programme boundaries to become coterminous with the Local Partnership for Children areas;
- extending the rural programme either through extending the current rural programme or by targeting particular rural communities based on relative need across the whole of the county.

3.2 The Council is committed to improving the quality of life for children aged 0-5 across the county as demonstrated through its contribution to developing and delivering phase one of Children's Centres; it welcomes the opportunity to extend the provision. The programme directly contributes towards the Council's strategic priorities of tackling deprivation and inequalities and promoting lifelong learning.

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Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

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Comment [LK1]: I think this should be Matt