

Committee: **Lead Member for Children and Families**  
Date: **25 April 2014**  
Title of Report: **Proposed lease of Willingdon Trees Children's Centre to Aurora Academy Trust**  
By: **Acting Director of Children's Services**  
Purpose of Report: **To seek the Lead Members approval in principle to lease the Willingdon Trees Children's Centre to Aurora Academy Trust, subject to negotiation, and if suitable alternative accommodation can be found for Children's Centre services and staff approval is sought for a final decision to be taken by the Director of Children's Services following negotiations.**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Lead Member is recommended to approve in principle the lease of Willingdon Trees to Aurora Academy Trust if alternative delivery space can be found.**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 Children's Services currently operates 2 separately designated Children's Centres in the Hampden Park / Willingdon Area of Eastbourne, one located in the Health Centre / GP surgery behind Hampden Park shopping parade and one in a purpose built facility on the site of Oakwood Primary Academy. The Council has been approached by Aurora Academy Trust with a proposal to lease the Children's Centre located on the site of Oakwood Primary to enable the academy to develop an integrated model of foundation stage provision whereby children are able to take up a place in the nursery when they are very young and continue their early education through to the end of Reception year in the same setting. The Academy intends to base the whole of their foundation provision in what is now the Children's Centre building.

1.2 The Centre that supports the adjacent community in Hampden Park is currently based within the GP surgery at Hampden Park at an annual cost of £23,500 and has limited service delivery space. Plans to de-designate a number of Children's Centres were included in savings plans agreed by Cabinet in January and Willingdon Trees and Hampden Park have been identified as an option for merging that will be consulted on in the summer. The annual running costs of the 2 Centres currently serving these communities is approximately £40k.

1.3 The service has identified the community centre in Hampden Park as an appropriate venue from which to operate services for both communities. The community centre is owned by Eastbourne Borough Council, is adjacent to local shops and services, and could accommodate a range of services with others being delivered across the area using an outreach model. Early conversations with Eastbourne Borough Council indicate that they would value Children's Centre involvement.

1.4 It is anticipated that the lease of the Willingdon Tress Centre to the Academy would attract an income of approximately £15k per annum and the costs of a lease of the Hampden Park Community Centre, although not yet agreed, are likely to be relatively low. Significant savings would therefore be achieved in respect of the current £40k premises costs associated with the two Centres. (see table below).

1.5 The Hampden Park Community Centre would require some investment to make it fit for purpose as a Children's Centre. An initial estimate obtained from a contractor suggests that the works would cost between £100k and £150k. A recommendation has been made to and agreed by the Senior Management Team within CSD, to convert some unspent revenue into capital to enable this.

## 1.6 Cost / Benefit analysis

| <b>Current revenue expenditure</b> |                | <b>Proposed revenue expenditure</b>  |                   |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Willingdon Tress premises cost -   | £19,000        | Hampden park community Centre rent   | £15,000(estimate) |
| Hampden Park current rent -        | £23,500        |                                      |                   |
|                                    |                |                                      |                   |
|                                    |                |                                      |                   |
|                                    |                | <b>Proposed income</b>               |                   |
|                                    |                | Rent of Children's Centre to Academy | £15,000           |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>£41,500</b> | <b>Total</b>                         | <b>nil</b>        |

The capital investment of up to £150k would be offset by revenue savings within 4 years.

## 2. Supporting information

2.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that all families with children under 5 have access to Children's Centre services. East Sussex currently has a network of 31 Centres that are all directly managed by the County Council. In response to the challenge of the current economic environment the service has recently re-structured and re-focused its service offer. Further savings are being profiled for 2015/16 and are likely to include the de-designation of some Centres in order to save premises and reception costs. The merging of the Willingdon Trees and Hampden Park Centres in Eastbourne are currently included in these plans, subject to public consultation next month.

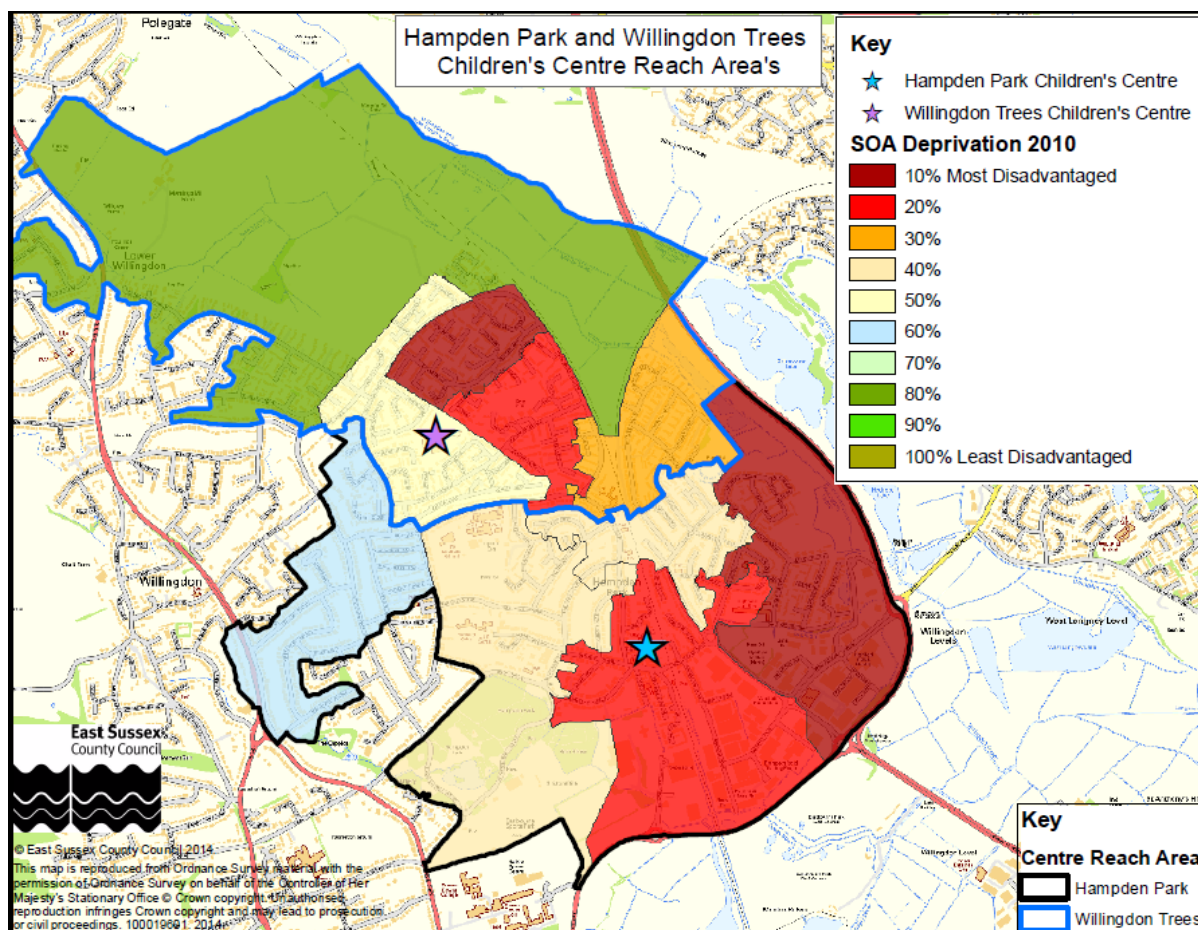
2.2 The approach from The Oakwood Academy to request the use of the existing Willingdon Trees Children's Centre on the site of the Academy as part of a new Foundation Village is welcome as the improved outcomes that can be achieved by integrated early years delivery are well documented. The Children's Centre team and the Academy are keen to work together to develop a full service offer for families using the Foundation Village that includes parenting classes, adult education and home visiting support. The Willingdon Trees Children's Centre is however, the "hub" site for the Eastbourne Cluster and, as such, accommodates the majority of the Eastbourne Children's Centre team and a number of services. Should the proposal be agreed alternative accommodation for staff and services would need to be found.

2.3 Where possible, Children's Centres should be located within areas of need. Hampden Park is the area within the proposed combined "reach" that has the highest deprivation and, with its parade of shops and supermarket, is the focus of community activity.

2.4 The map below shows the relative deprivation rates within the combined Children's Centre reach areas of Willingdon Trees and Hampden Park with the blue star indicating the approximate location of the proposed new Centre at the Hampden Park Community Centre.

2.5 The Academy has requested use of the Children's Centre from September 2014 in time for the new academic year. While this timescale is challenging it is recognized that continuity for children is important and, should approval be given, every effort will be made to enable a September start for the Foundation Village. In the unlikely event that the arrangements for the lease of the Community Centre as alternative space for Children's Centre services not be achieved within the timescales, or be precluded because of increased costs, the Academy have

offered to accommodate staff and services both on the Oakwood site and their other academy nearby, Heron's Park.



### 3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

3.1 The Lead Member is recommended to approve in principle plans to lease the Willingdon Trees Children's Centre to Aurora Academy Trust, subject to appropriate funding being identified to facilitate this development and subject to ongoing negotiations with Eastbourne Borough Council with a view to accommodating the merged Centres within the Hampden Park community centre,

LIZ RUGG  
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Background Documents: None