

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 16 July 2013

Decision No: (CAB 13/14 10794)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
PORTFOLIO AREA:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SUBJECT:	EARLY YEARS EXPANSION PROGRAMME
AUTHOR:	Graham Talbot

THE DECISION

- (i) To approve, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, capital expenditure of £1,361,000; phased £67,000 in 2013/14 and £1,294,000 in 2014/15, from the Children's Services Capital Programme; and
- (ii) Subject to compliance with Contract and Finance Procedure Rules, to delegate authority to the Director of People to do anything necessary to procure and deliver the capital projects set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. The Childcare Act 2006 and subsequent statutory guidance have made it a requirement for local authorities to ensure that there are sufficient free Early Years places to meet the requirements of working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds in their area. The Government has also recently amended this legal requirement, with the effect of extending it to cover places for disadvantaged 2-year-olds, from September 2013 onwards.
2. The annual Early Years sufficiency analysis indicates that there are currently enough places to provide for 3 and 4-year-olds within the City. However, the capacity within the system is currently being placed under pressure by the increase in birth rate over the last four years. As such, it is anticipated that, in order to meet its statutory duties, the Council will have to expand provision in line with the increased numbers expected as a consequence of the extension of the free places offer to disadvantaged 2-year-olds.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

1. At present, 85.5% of places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds in Southampton are provided within the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sectors. The proposals contained within this report focus largely on the expansion of

existing provision, which (of necessity) equates to the investment of capital grant in expanding places in the PVI sector. Discussions with providers in this sector have indicated that, whilst some have small amounts of capital available to contribute to expansions, the level of expansion required for the Council to meet its statutory duties will necessitate significant input from the local authority, both in the form of financial assistance and also in terms of project management.

2. Assuming that the Council is to meet its duty to provide places, it does have an alternative option to market facilitation, in the form of directly providing the Early Years places itself. However, the cost of creating the infrastructure and recruiting the staff to manage this number of places would be substantially greater than supporting existing providers to expand/develop new provision. As such, this option has been rejected.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD

We certify that the decision this document records was made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 and is a true and accurate record of that decision.

Date: 16 July 2013

Decision Maker:
The Cabinet

Proper Officer:
Judy Cordell

SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come in to force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council's Scrutiny "Call-In" provisions.

Call-In Period expires on

Date of Call-in <i>(if applicable) (this suspends implementation)</i>
Call-in Procedure completed <i>(if applicable)</i>
Call-in heard by <i>(if applicable)</i>
Results of Call-in <i>(if applicable)</i>