

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 26 November 2024

Decision No: (CAB 24/25 46237)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
PORTFOLIO AREA:	Cabinet Member for Children and Learning
SUBJECT:	Startpoint Sholing Day Nursery
AUTHOR:	Darrin Hunter

THE DECISION

- (i) To approve the closure of Startpoint Sholing Childcare Nursery with immediate effect.
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Executive Director of Community Wellbeing, Children and Learning, following consultation with the Executive Director of Enabling Services, to take any action necessary to give effect to recommendation 1 including but not limited to undertaking any relevant HR and contractual processes.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. Any deficit in the nursery budget has not been included and therefore alternative budget savings would need to be found within the wider Early Years Service. This can only be achieved through further staff redundancies every year. The remaining staff employed within the Early Years Service are undertaking key statutory roles and any reductions would have an adverse effect on Southampton City Council's ability to fully discharge its statutory childcare duties placed upon them under the Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare Act 2016.
2. Our statutory duty to ensure childcare sufficiency is already being met through the wide range of other childcare providers throughout the city and within the local area. These include alternative Day Nurseries, Pre-schools, Childminders and School/Academy run nurseries.
3. All previously registered children attending the nursery have since transitioned into school in September 2024. There are currently no children on roll. Any new requests from parents have been delayed until the outcome of a decision by Cabinet. This decision was based on the best interests of the children and their development from being adversely impacted by any possible closure so soon after starting having developed relationships with other children and staff and establishing routines etc.
4. Quality of childcare provision – Startpoint Sholing was judged as 'Good' at their last Ofsted Inspection. Southampton's Childcare sector has higher

than the national average number of childcare providers ranked 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted at their most recent inspection. Out of the 300+ Ofsted registered childcare providers within the city, only one provider is currently judged less than good by Ofsted. In fact, Southampton also has above the national average of providers judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Therefore, parents/carers do have a choice on a range of high-quality early years and childcare places that are available throughout the city in every ward.

5. Levels of support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – Startpoint Sholing Childcare Nursery is not a specialist nursery, although the stakeholder consultation identifies that they do offer good support to families for children with SEND.

The Council does have a service contract in place with another established provider, recognised for their work with children with complex needs. It also includes a Family Support Worker who provides extended support to the family. They have expanded their outreach offer within the city which has enabled them to support many more children. In addition, the Early Years and Childcare Service has available the following accredited training for providers to support children with SEND:

- Level 3 – SEND Co-ordinator (over 85% of the city's early years settings now have at least one SENDCo trained at level 3).
- Level 2 – SEND Practitioner (we want all practitioners who work with children in early years to be a SEND practitioner).
- Level 1 – Dingley's free on-line Training for staff and parents to have a better understanding and awareness in supporting children with SEND.
- Bespoke Training Programme to support quality improvement and SEND support.

Lastly, for any parent/carer of any child who is struggling to find a childcare place that meets their needs, then the Early Years Service offers a free 'Childcare Brokerage Service' to families where we will work with them to identify suitable childcare that meets their needs.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

1. Do Nothing – For this option to be considered it would need the ongoing annual investment of more than £300k each year from the Council to cover the ongoing operational deficit.
2. Re-structure – A task and finish group was set up, comprising of membership from HR, Finance, Early Years colleagues, SEND, Nursery Management, Southampton's nursery sector and representatives from the DfE Early Years Experts and Mentors programme who between them have investigated countless re-structuring models. Unfortunately, none of these have proved to be sustainable without significant ongoing subsidy from the Council. A further remodelling scenario was considered as a specialist inclusive nursery. However, this option forecasts an even higher deficit for the nursery.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

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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:	Decision Maker:
_____	The Cabinet
_____	_____
_____	Proper Officer:
_____	Claire Heather / 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>

Decision No:

Decision No:

Forward Plan No:
This record relates to on the agenda for the Decision-Making