

Little Owls Nurseries Review

Date: 11 November 2024

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The Children and Families Scrutiny Board considered an item on the Little Owls Nurseries Review through a call in meeting on 9 July 2024. Since that time a further report to Executive Board, at its meeting on 16 October, further considered the nursery provision offered by the Council.

A key driver for the service review of the Council's Little Owls Nursery provision is the ongoing financial challenge being faced by the directorate and Council as a whole. The outturn position for the Little Owls service in 2022/23 reflected an overspend of £1,969,000 and in 2023/24, a an overspend of £841,000 was reported.

Given the wider context of the budgetary challenge being faced by the authority a full business review of the service was conducted which led to proposals to withdraw from three nursery settings and to undertake a market sounding exercise at a further twelve nurseries.

Appendix 1 to this report provides the 16 October Executive Board report for further comment and to enable the Board to follow up on previous consideration of this issue earlier in the 2024/25 municipal year.

Recommendations

- a) The Board is asked to note and comment on the report and the appendices on the Little Owls Nurseries Review.

What is this report about?

- 1 Little Owls is a day care provision delivered by the Council for children aged 3 months to 5 years. The Council's statutory obligation in relation to nursery provision is, by way of the Childcare Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2016, a duty to secure sufficient childcare to ensure parents can work/train. This does not mean the Council has to provide it themselves but must ensure that it is in place.
- 2 As a result of continuing budget pressure being faced by the Council a review of the Little Owls Nursery provision in the city has taken place. This was the subject of a call in meeting held on 9 July 2024 which related to an Executive Board decision taken on 19 June 2024. This report therefore seeks to follow up on past consideration of this issue by bringing the latest Little Owls Nurseries Review proposals, approved by Executive Board on 16 October 2024, to the Board for comment and consideration.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 3 This report provides the Board with an opportunity to comment on the latest proposals on the Little Owls Nurseries Review.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 4 The terms of reference of Scrutiny Boards in Leeds promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities of the Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 5 Appendix 2 to this report provides details on the consultation and engagement that has taken place linked to the review of this service.

What are the resource implications?

- 6 Any resource Implications are included in Appendix 1 to this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 7 Any risks associated with the proposals are included in Appendix 1 to this report.

What are the legal implications?

- 8 Any legal Implications are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 9 This report is provided as an update to the Board as such no proposals are being made so no other options were considered

How will success be measured?

10 Not applicable

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

11 Not applicable

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – 16 October 2024 Executive Board report Little Owls Nurseries Review
- Appendix 2 - - Little Owls Consultation and Engagement Feedback Focus Group Discussions and Questionnaire Summary Background papers
- Appendix 3 - Little Owls Nurseries Review Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) impact assessment

Background papers

- None