

APPENDIX 2 – 19 JUNE 2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES EXTRACT

EXECUTIVE BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 19TH JUNE, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor J Lewis in the Chair

Councillors S Arif, D Coupar, H Hayden,
A Lamb, J Lennox, J Pryor, M Rafique and
F Venner

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Harland

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

7 Little Owls Nurseries Review

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which presented the findings from the review work undertaken into Little Owls nurseries provision to date, together with the associated consultation and engagement responses received. The report, in taking such findings into consideration, made a number of recommendations to the Board in relation to next steps.

In introducing the report, the Executive Member provided an overview of the proposals which were to close 3 of the Little Owls settings, undertake an exploration of other options for the future delivery of childcare in a further 12 settings, and for at least 9 Little Owls settings to remain in operation by the Council where most needed. The impact faced by those affected was acknowledged, however, the reasons for the proposals were highlighted, with reference being made to the significant financial challenges which continued to be faced. Details were also provided on the range of factors taken into consideration as part of the review.

As part of the proposals, it was highlighted that guaranteed places were available for those children currently attending the 3 settings proposed for closure at other local Little Owls nurseries. It was also noted that there were sufficient vacancies in settings within the service to accommodate affected staff.

Responding to a number of enquiries and concerns raised by a Member regarding the proposals, further information was provided on the following:

- The range of consultation and engagement which had been undertaken with parents and carers as part of the review;
- The information which was used to determine the cost per day for a place in a Little Owls setting;
- The actions which had been taken to reduce the overspend position during 2023/24;

- Further information was provided on the context within which the proposals were being made and the actions taken to date to reduce costs and to maximise efficiency;
- Responding to an enquiry regarding the alternative options which had been considered, the Board received further detail on the methodology used during the review that had led to the proposals as presented in the report;
- In responding to a question about the increase in fees that was needed to close the current overspend, it was highlighted that the Council looked to strike the correct balance to ensure that a sustainable service providing value was delivered, and which fulfilled the Council's statutory duties around sufficiency of places, whilst also operating within the agreed budgeted position;
- It was reiterated that guaranteed places were available for those children currently attending the 3 settings proposed for closure at other local Little Owls nurseries, with Members receiving an overview of the responses received to that offer.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That in general terms, the contents of the submitted report, be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that the Council will continue to directly deliver day care at the following Little Owls settings:
- Chapeltown
 - Harehills
 - Middleton Laurel Bank
 - New Bewerley
 - Swarcliffe
 - Two Willows
 - Little London
 - Seacroft
 - Armley Moor
- (c) That the consultation and engagement responses in relation to the proposal, as detailed within the submitted report and appendices, be noted; and having had regard to those, the withdrawal from and/or closure of Little Owls Gipton North, Little Owls Chapel Allerton and Little Owls Kentmere, be approved;
- (d) That following resolution (c) above, where possible and noting ancillary use, those buildings be declared surplus to operational requirements following the closedown of Little Owls functions;
- (e) That the initial consultation and engagement responses in relation to the proposal to explore the potential amalgamation of some Little Owls settings and to explore potential and viable interest from other providers, as detailed within the submitted report and appendices, be noted; and that agreement be given to the undertaking of a 'market sounding exercise' to deliver additional nursery places to replace specific Council run settings at the following locations:
- Shepherds Lane
 - City & Holbeck
 - Hunslet Rylestone
 - Meanwood
 - Parklands
 - Osmondthorpe
 - St Mary's Hunslet
 - Quarry Mount
 - Rothwell
 - Hawksworth Wood
 - Bramley
 - Burley Park

- (f) That the subsequent 'market sounding exercise' in relation to the settings set out in resolution (e) above, be agreed, and that it be noted that those 'market sounding exercises' will commence immediately;
- (g) That it be noted that the Director of Children and Families may take further decisions in respect of the settings listed at resolution (e) above following the market sounding exercise for the twelve settings indicated, which would be as a direct consequence of this decision.

(Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5, Councillor A Lamb required it to be recorded that he abstained from voting on the decisions referred to within this minute)

DATE OF PUBLICATION: FRIDAY, 21ST JUNE 2024

**LAST DATE FOR CALL IN
OF ELIGIBLE DECISIONS:** 5.00PM, FRIDAY, 28TH JUNE 2024