

Education Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 28 March 2017

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Designated Children's Centres and the Implementation of the Property Strategy

Contact for further information:

Andrew Good, Tel: 01772 534053, Head of Service, Financial Management
(Development and Schools)

Andrew.good@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This report provides information on the implementation of the Property Strategy with particular reference to designated Children's Centres and transitional protection.

Recommendation

The Education Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and express any views on the implementation of the Property Strategy with particular reference to designated Children's Centres and transitional protection.

Background and Advice

As part of the Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help (WPEH) transformation the Children's Centres provision is being re-configured. This is resulting in the vacation of provision in 23 schools and a revised offer being retained within 21 schools.

In July 2016, the then Chairman of the School Forum, wrote to Asset Management following a presentation given at the July School Forum meeting. The letter, whilst understanding the financial necessity for change asked the following:

- that LCC work closely with specifically affected schools; and
- to "make available transition funding to allow schools the necessary time and financial support to remain stable and viable as the new arrangements are implemented".

The Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help (WPEH), Asset Management and the Statutory School Finance teams have held individual meetings with each of the schools impacted by the Children's Centre reconfiguration. These meetings started in December and run until mid January, and, where necessary, further follow up visits to certain schools have been made.

The purpose of these meetings was fourfold:

- for WPEH to explain how the service will meet the needs of children in areas where provision within the school setting is being withdrawn and what level of provision will be provided where WPEH are remaining;
- for Asset Management to understand what are the issues on the ground concerning current and future premises related usage. This includes what provision LCC will utilise (including non-WPEH usage) and what needs the school has in terms of space. The aim of this work being to define a new shared use agreement with schools which defines how the premises costs will be shared in future. LCC does not work on a rent basis but one of shared costs given that all buildings are ultimately the County Councils. Detailed on-site visits are being undertaken by the Asset Management Team to determine these new shared use documents;
- for the Finance team to understand any financial viability issues that the withdrawal or change of provision may have on the individual schools budget and to advice and support as needed. Also to assist Asset Management with any financial issues that may arise;
- to allow individual schools to raise any concerns or issues they may have with the services present.

The Estates service and WPEH are currently reviewing the space requirements at 21 schools where the WPEH service will be remaining. This will result in changes to the amount of funds that schools receive from LCC in the 2017/18 financial year. This will be funded from on-going LCC revenue budgets and will be reviewed moving forward as and when provision changes over time.

Following on from the initial financial assessment, proposals were developed for transitional support for the schools involved.

These proposals were agreed by the Deputy Leader of the County Council at the Decision Making Session on 23 January 2017.

The proposals were for circa £0.658m of transitional funding will be paid to all schools currently with Children's Centres irrespective of whether the authority is remaining in them or removing provision. Payment is agreed to be at the level of "running costs" identified by the authority for 2016/17. These payments are additional to any new shared use payments for the schools we are remaining within and is a one-off transition funding for 2017/18.

Correspondence has now been sent to the schools involved informing them of their individual transitional allocation for 2017/18.

Arrangements will be made to pay the allocations in the new financial year.

Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Schools Forum and with the individual schools affected by the proposals.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management**Financial**

The allocation of circa £0.658m for the 2017/18 financial year to be paid to 44 schools affected by the County Council's proposals will provide one year of certainty for schools funding and assist in ensuring financial viability where this is an issue. This will be funded from the County Council's Transitional Reserve.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Report to Deputy Leader of the County Council	23 January 2017	Paul Bonser 01772 531815

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A