

Delivery of Early Years Provision to serve Abbey Division, Cambridge

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 1 March 2022

From: Executive Director: People & Communities

Electoral division(s): Abbey, Cambridge

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Outcome: Relocation of Seesaw Pre-School from its current temporary accommodation on the site of The Galfrid Primary School to permanent, purpose-built accommodation as part of the re-development of the East Barnwell Community Hub in line with expectations set at the time the Pre-School was required to move from the Hub to facilitate the re-development project.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Support the proposal that the Strategy and Resources Committee be asked to approve the inclusion of accommodation for delivery of early years and childcare in the design and build specification for the re-development of the East Barnwell Community Hub, and the associated capital funding for this.
- b) Approve the proposal that the Council would not be required to undertake a tender process for the early years and childcare provision on the basis that the Seesaw Pre-School previously operated from the East Barnwell Community Hub and had no option other than to relocate to temporary accommodation on the site of The Galfrid Primary School to facilitate the re-development project.

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1. Background

- 1.1 Early years provision in the Abbey Ward in Cambridge is currently provided at Seesaw Pre-school and at The Fields Nursery, both of which are co-located with The Galfrid Primary School.
- 1.2 Prior to August 2019, Seesaw Pre-school operated from a separate building on the East Barnwell Community Centre site, approximately 0.5 miles from The Galfrid Primary School site (Appendix 1). The setting had been on this site for over 20 years providing sessional early years provision from 8am to 3pm daily in term time only.
- 1.3 In August 2019 Seesaw Pre-school was relocated to The Galfrid Primary School site in preparation for re-development of the East Barnwell Community Hub site. The re-development plans for the site, which is owned by the Council, included provision for private/affordable housing, a community centre, library, early years provision and office space for use by Council staff
- 1.4 Seesaw Pre-School has occupied a two-classroom mobile on The Galfrid Primary School since that time under a lease arrangement with the Council.
- 1.5 In 2021, as the Directorate responsible for delivering the Council's statutory early years sufficiency duty, People & Communities were asked to confirm whether it would like the plans for the re-development of the East Barnwell Community Centre to include early years provision in order for these to be finalised.
- 1.6 The subsequent report to result from this review was presented to the Children & Young People's Committee on [9 March 2021](#). The Committee concluded that, taking account of the fact that the relocation of the Seesaw Pre-School to The Galfrid Primary School site had not had an adverse impact on either the early years setting or the families it served, it could continue to operate successfully from that site and, therefore, the Council should not invest capital funding for delivery of early years provision in the replacement for the East Barnwell Community Centre. This decision was strongly opposed by the local Ward member. Seesaw Pre-School also expressed their significant disappointment that the Council had not supported their case for relocation back to East Barnwell. It was made clear that their expectation had been that their move to The Galfrid Primary School site would only be a temporary measure.
- 1.7 In the intervening period there have been further member and stakeholder representations challenging the decision to not include the Pre-school provision in the plans for the East Barnwell Community Centre development. (Correspondence set out in **Appendix 2**). As well as this there have been two stakeholder meetings which affirmed the aspirations of the members and stakeholders to ensure the development performs the function of a community hub and that the added social value of retaining Pre-School, Library and Community Centre provision on one site is achieved.
- 1.8 The Strategy & Resources (S&R) Committee has responsibility for approving the plans for the redevelopment of the East Barnwell Community Hub site and the associated financial appraisal. The decision and views of CYP Committee on the future delivery of early years provision will be reported to the 29 March 2022 meeting of the S&R Committee.

2.0 Main Issues

2.1 The Council's Statutory duties

Under the Childcare Act 2006, Local Authorities (LAs) have specific sufficiency duties, including to secure:

- sufficient and suitable childcare places to enable parents to work, or to undertake education or training which could lead to employment;
- sufficient and suitable early years places to meet predicted demand; and
- free early years provision for all 3 and 4 year olds (and the 40% most vulnerable 2 year olds) of 15 hours per week 38 weeks per year and up to 30 hours per week for working parents who meet the associated qualifying criteria.

2.2 The local demography indicates that there is a clear need for early years provision in the Abbey Division. If either Seesaw Pre-School or The Fields Nursery were to close there would be insufficient places to meet families' needs.

2.3 As stated above, Seesaw Pre-School has been operating from a two-classroom mobile on the Galfrid School Site since August 2019. The mobile was originally provided by the Council in 2015 to enable Abbey Meadows Primary School (as The Galfrid Primary School was formerly known) to run its own pre-school provision to serve children living in the Abbey ward. The school closed its pre-school in July 2017 as there were insufficient numbers of children for the setting to be viable.

The Council invested £15k in setting up this new location for Seesaw and the mobile is in a good condition with an expected economic life of approximately another 20 years.

The mobile is larger than currently required, therefore, there is room for future expansion of if there is a demand for more places to be provided. It also has its own pedestrian entrance, ensuring that it can operate completely independently of The Galfrid Primary School.

2.4 The alternative option to ensure continued sufficiency of early years places in the Abbey ward would be to proceed with the original plan to provide permanent accommodation for early years and childcare delivery as part of the re-development of the East Barnwell Community Hub. The design specification would be for a space large enough to re-provide the current level of provision offered by Seesaw Pre-school. There will be no ability to increase provision from this building were it to be required in the future.

When the Committee previously considered this option at its meeting on 9 March 2021, Members were advised that discussions with the East Barnwell stakeholder group, including Members from the County and City Councils, and public consultations had established the expectation that Seesaw Pre-School would relocate to the re-developed East Barnwell Community Hub on completion of the building project. Subsequent meetings and discussions with the various stakeholders and interested parties have confirmed that this remains the case.

2.5 There is strong local support for the Seesaw Pre-school to relocate back to the site it occupied previously for over 20 years. Abbey is the most deprived ward in Cambridge City with the majority of the deprivation in the homes to the north of Newmarket Road where the East Barnwell Community Hub is located. The inclusion of accommodation dedicated to the

delivery of early years and childcare in the specification for the re-development of site would enable parents and families to access a range of services and facilities in one place.

- 2.6 If Seesaw Pre-School were no longer sharing a site with The Fields Nursery School this could help to reinforce the fact that there are two separate early years providers serving the Abbey ward, each of which offers something different for families. This could serve to support The Fields Nursery School's future sustainability.
- 2.7 Taking the above into account together with the very clear expectation established at the time that Seesaw's relocation to The Galfrid Primary School site was temporary, the Committee is asked to support a recommendation to the S&R Committee that capital funding be allocated to this project to meet the cost of including early years and childcare in the design specification.
- 2.8 Once the re-development project is complete, Seesaw Pre-School, as a provider who has been operating in, and providing services to families in the Abbey Ward for many years, should be able to relocate from its current temporary accommodation on The Galfrid Primary School site to the East Barnwell Community Hub, without the need to enter into a competitive tender to be able to deliver early years and childcare from that site. This would also provide the opportunity for consideration to be given to alternative education uses for the mobile on The Galfrid Primary School site.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

The report above sets out the implications for this priority in 2.1, 2.2 as it is important that parents can access a childcare place in their community.

3.2 A good quality of life for everyone

This corporate priority is explicit throughout the report as it relates to early years provision, which not only supports children to learn, thrive and achieve their full potential but also supports parents to undertake learning and to work.

3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

This corporate priority is explicit throughout the report as it relates to young children gaining access to early years education which will support their learning and development. This is key to securing optimal outcomes for all children, as well as supporting their wellbeing and playing an important role in safeguarding them.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

This corporate priority is evident in paragraph 2.2 in the report, which confirms the need to maintain current levels of early years provision in the Abbey ward. By doing so, the Council will be supporting parents to access childcare close to home and therefore reduce the need for families to travel.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

High quality early years plays a role in caring for and safeguarding all children who access it. The provision referred to within the report covers early years education for funded 2-year olds, 3- and 4-year olds and childcare for the children of all ages of working families.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

The Council has commissioned Carter Jonas, a property consultancy, to undertake a development appraisal for the East Barnwell Community Hub, comparing scenarios including and excluding the early years provision. Amongst the impacts of including an early years setting is a reduction in the space available for housing. The actual financial impact of any change can be more precisely estimated once further work to develop the specification for the hub, in view of the early years decision, is progressed. This will include examining opportunities for cost engineering, deciding the future basis for rent and considering the balance of other uses of the building. Considering the scenarios put forward by Carter Jonas, it is estimated the extra capital requirement to deliver early years provision at East Barnwell would currently range from £400k - £625k. If this Committee recommends that early years provision is included in the community hub specification, it will be for the Strategy and Resources committee to determine overall affordability and identify capital funding in due course.

Previously budgetary provision in the capital programme for the early years element of the new Community Hub scheme was removed in 2018 due to delays with the overall scheme.

Relocation would open up the opportunity to consider alternative education uses for the mobile on The Galfrid Primary School site, recognising and maximising the £20k investment the Council has already made.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Were Seesaw Pre-school to cease operation for any reason the process to seek a new provider would be undertaken in line with the Council's procurement procedures.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

Seesaw Pre-school had no option other than to move from the East Barnwell Community Hub to its current temporary accommodation on the site of The Galfrid Primary School. The expectation was established at the time that this would be time-limited and Seesaw would be able to relocate back to the East Barnwell Community Hub on completion of the re-development project. The key risk to the Council should the Committee not support the proposals to include early years provision in the design for the Hub and for Seesaw to be able move back there is that the Council would be judged to have not listened to the local community or recognised the long association between Seesaw Pre-School and East Barnwell..

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Sufficient good quality early years provision is essential in securing better outcomes for all groups with the community, but particularly those living in disadvantage. The Abbey ward is the most disadvantaged in Cambridge City.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There have been a number of different consultation and engagement activities involving the local community and stakeholders since the proposal to re-develop the Community Hub at East Barnwell was first mooted in 2013. Further ward member communication and consultation has been ongoing since March 2021 as set out in the report with two stakeholder meetings recently in November and December 2021. All key stakeholders were in attendance. Continued stakeholder meetings will be co-chaired between Think Communities and local community groups to ensure decisions are made at a local level.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The needs of the local community and the full involvement of the local Member has been a feature throughout this long-standing project.

4.7 Public Health Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- There is good evidence that Early Years settings can do a lot to promote good nutrition and physical activity especially when habits are being formed.
- There are strong links between education and health.
- Improving school readiness is part of the Public Health Outcomes Framework

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

The following paragraphs 4.8.1. to 4.8.7 refer to the East Barnwell site compared with the current situation on The Galfrid Primary School site.

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings. Status: Positive

The new Community Hub will be delivered in line with current planning policy around energy efficient and low carbon buildings therefore the proposal will decrease energy consumption.

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport. Status: Neutral

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management. Status: Neutral

The planning application for the Hub site will include landscape designs and will be in line with planning policy to create some green space. Any trees removed and replanted as part of site clearance will be addressed through the planning application process and will be in line with current policy.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.
Status: Neutral

Waste will be produced by residents and the community centre at the Hub, generation of waste will be subject to normal recycling facilities being provided on site to residents and other public services including Council-run services will adhere to county policies on recycling.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:
Status: Neutral

The planning application for the new Hub will be submitted in line with planning policy. The statutory consultees include the Council's floods team. The design will be challenged if policy is not adhered to.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.
Status: Neutral

The planning application for the new Hub will be submitted in line with planning policy. Air pollution will be addressed as part of this process.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.
Status: Neutral

The Hub re-development project will enable improved delivery of services in the local community e.g. housing/library/coffee shop. The services provided are not specific to climate change, however local provision makes access easier during, for example, extreme weather events. On balance, this is a neutral impact on this implication.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?

Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?

Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law?

Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?
Yes

Name of Officer: Simon Cobby

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?
Yes

Name of Officer: Raj Lakshman

5. Source documents guidance

- 5.1 [Report to the Children and Young People Committee 21 March 2021 and minutes of that meeting.](#)