

Meeting: Policy Development and Decision Group

Date: 5 November 2018

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Early Years Sufficiency Annual Report

Is the decision a key decision? No

When does the decision need to be implemented? November 2018

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1. Proposal and Introduction

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 years (or up to 18 years for disabled children).
- 1.2 As part of these duties, Torbay Council is required to report annually to Elected Members on the local arrangements to ensure those duties meet and ensure any report is available and accessible for parents.
- 1.3 A copy of the Childcare Sufficiency Report (September 2018) is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The full report demonstrates that there are sufficient childcare places in Torbay to meet the statutory duty to ensure sufficiency of places for children entitled to a funded place. However, there is a need for growth to accommodate the growing numbers of young children in Torbay through increased birth rates and migration from other areas (5% of the Torbay population are aged under 5 years old and may require a childcare place). There is also a need to accommodate children aged under 2 who are not yet funded.

2. Reason for Proposal and associated financial commitments

- 2.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Report 2018 provides an overview of the local child care market, changes in the supply and demand for places and the actions necessary to ensure these are sufficient, accessible child care places in Torbay.
- 2.2 The Childcare Sufficiency Report 2018 takes into account significant changes in Government Policy including the ongoing expansion of Free Early Education

Entitlement (FEEE) for disadvantaged two year olds and the extended entitlement (30 hours per week) for working parents of three and four year olds which came into effect from September 2017.

- 2.3 Results show the population of children in Torbay is increasing. The average increase across Torbay is just under 10%, however some areas have seen a significant increase, especially certain wards within Paignton and Torquay. Future significant housing developments and population forecasts indicate a continuing growing demand for childcare, particularly in the Shiphay (Torquay) and White Rock (Paignton) areas which are experiencing significant growth now and in the future. The impact of welfare reform and pressure on parents to go back to work, particularly in more deprived areas, is likely to lead to changes in demand for childcare to meet the needs of parents.
- 2.4 It is important to note that as a small Local Authority, the residents of Torbay who need it tend to have a thorough knowledge of the childcare market in the area and make judgements based on first, second or even third hand experiences of providers.
- 2.5 In addition to this, there is a significant trend for parents who would rather wait for a place at their preferred provider or location (e.g. a nursery on site or close to their preferred school) than find an alternative provider or location. This results in many children not starting their early education until sometimes 2 or 3 terms after they become entitled – especially prevalent in the 2 year old entitlement. Torbay has a significant number of economically inactive parents of which more than 50% have actively taken the decision to stay at home for the purposes of caring for their children and home.
- 2.6 This has resulted in a difficulty in managing demand. Some providers have low occupancy and advertised vacancies are difficult to fill, whereas some providers have extensive waiting lists and are already full for their September 2018 intake at March 2018.
- 2.7 From the parent consultation in 2018 it became clear that there is an issue relating to holiday childcare for early years and school age children. 75% of respondents to the consultation indicated that they use childcare to enable them to work. Using the sufficiency data collated it is evident that term time, school-based provision is popular in the area, with school nurseries being full to capacity. Therefore it is important that the issues related to a lack of appropriate and affordable holiday childcare are addressed to accommodate working families who struggle for 12 weeks of the year.
- 2.8 The report contains an updated 2017 action plan which identifies progress made, in addition to the new 2018 action plan detailing the actions that will be taken to ensure childcare capacity continues to develop in line with demand.
- 2.9 Following its approval, the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2018 will be published on the Council's website as well as providing the evidence base for the ongoing dialogue with providers, partners and stakeholders on the development of future capacity.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the Elected Mayor be recommended to approve the Torbay Childcare Sufficiency Report (September 2018) set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report enabling its publication.
- 3.2 That the Policy Development Decision Group (Joint Commissioning Team) receive an update on progress of implementing the actions in the Torbay Childcare Sufficiency Report at a future meeting.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Childcare Sufficiency Report (September 2018)

Appendix 2: Childcare Sufficiency Report (September 2018) Executive Summary

Background Documents

None