

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services

Date of Meeting: 4th May 2010
Report of: Lorraine Butcher, Head of Service for Children & Families
Subject/Title: Wrenbury Primary School – Change of Age Range

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services for officers to commence the statutory process to change the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 years old at Wrenbury Primary School, Nantwich Road, Wrenbury, Cheshire, CW5 8EN.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the officers be authorised to consult on and publish a statutory notice in respect of proposals to change the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 years old at Wrenbury Primary School.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To enable continued provision of the Free Early Education Entitlement by the school to meet the Local Authority duties laid out in the Childcare Act 2006 and improve outcomes for children.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Cholmondeley Ward

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Councillor Rachel Bailey
Councillor Stan Davies
Councillor Margaret Hollins

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 A change in age range would enable the school to continue to provide the Free Early Education Entitlement to children aged 3 and 4 years.
- 6.2 Maintaining the current age range would prevent the school from providing the Free Early Education Entitlement to children aged 3 and 4 years and result in closure of the nursery.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

N/A

8.0 Financial Implications 2010/11 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 8.1 The Single Funding Formula would meet the cost of nursery provision on a part time basis, working closely with the pre-school to provide a flexible full day offer. An increase in occupancy may enable the delivery of more nursery sessions funded by the Single Funding Formula for the Free Early Education Entitlement.
- 8.2 There would be no transition costs if the proposal were to proceed as the status quo would be maintained.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 9.1 The Childcare Act 2006 has imposed two key duties on local authorities regarding childcare:
- A duty to secure sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents and those training for work (Section 6 Childcare Act 2006).
 - A duty to secure free early years provision for all three and four year old children (Section 7 Childcare Act 2006).
- 9.2 The Local Authority therefore has a duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all eligible children can access a free place, (the Free Education Entitlement). Changing the age range at Wrenbury to admit children from age 3 will enable parents to access their free entitlement at this school and increase the number of childcare places available for parents. .
- 9.3 Changing the age range at a maintained mainstream school is a statutory process requiring the publication of statutory proposals and it is for the individual cabinet member for children & families to make the decision to commence that statutory process.

10.0 Risk Management

- 10.1 If the future of early years education at Wrenbury is not secured through the continuation of existing provision, there is a risk that the Local Authority may not meet its statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare.
- 10.2 Funding for the free entitlement from April 2010 under the Single Funding Formula is linked to occupancy. Anticipated occupancy should be sufficient to secure sustainable provision for at least 3 afternoons per week.

- 10.3 If the age range is not extended, the nursery will close and the Local Authority will be required to secure alternative provision

11.0 Background and Options

- 11.1 Audlem, Bridgemere and Wrenbury primary schools form the South Cheshire Rural Nursery Consortium. The consortium was established to enable 3 and 4 year olds in rural areas to access at least part of their free early education entitlement at these schools.
- 11.2 Audlem serves as the lead school, employing the staff and holding the budget. Between 3 and 5 sessions of 2½ hours are delivered per week at each school.
- 11.3 The introduction of the Single Funding Formula (SFF) from April 2010 and the enhanced flexible entitlement from September 2010 has resulted in the reshaping of provision at each of the three schools.
- 11.4 Wrenbury has a voluntary pre-school on site providing 5 morning sessions plus lunch, working in partnership with the school providing 3 afternoon sessions per week (and possibly more afternoon sessions in future based on demand). The pre-school itself does not have the capacity to expand the provision any further and there are no other private providers in the local area able to offer the required provision.
- 11.5 Nursery pupils are covered by the 3-11 age range of Audlem as the lead school in the consortium. The consortium will be disbanded and the schools funded individually from April 2010. Consequently, each school will require the ability to admit children from age 3. It will be necessary to extend the age range at Wrenbury.
- 11.6 The proposal to change the age range at Wrenbury Primary School from 4-11 to 3-11 years old is a prescribed alteration under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and therefore the prescribed statutory process set out in regulations must be followed.
- 11.7 Should the Cabinet Member for Children & Families allow the consultation and publishing of statutory notices, the formal consultation period on the change of age range would commence as soon as possible after the 4th May for approximately 6 weeks.
- 11.8 The formal statutory change in age range process will be carried out in 5 stages; Stage 1 Consultation (6 weeks period), Stage 2 Publication of a Statutory Notice, Stage 3 Representation Period (12 week period to receive objections and representations), Stage 4 Decision – The Local Authority as the decision maker aim for a decision in time for Stage 5, implementation on 1st September 2010. This final decision to obtain approval for implementation (assuming there are no objections) will be taken by the Individual Cabinet Member. If there are objections, it is

proposed to convene a meeting of the Cabinet School Organisation Sub-Committee in to make the final decision.

12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

N/A

13.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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