



Executive
12th February 2007

**Report from the Director of
Children and Families**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Phase 2 Children's Centre Capital Programme

Forward Plan Ref: C&F06/07-021

Appendix 3 of this report is "Not for Publication"

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 In November 2006 the Executive approved capital project proposals and associated capital allocations from the block grant for the phase 2 Children's Centre Capital Programme.
- 1.2 This report reviews the risks attached to four of those projects and makes recommendations to develop alternative site options and confirm all project proposals in order to manage risk effectively and to ensure successful delivery of all seven centres by March 2008.

2.0 Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve in principle the model of service delivery and management proposed for St Raphael's Community Centre and authorise officers to undertake further work to develop it (see paragraphs 3.2 – 3.10).
- 2.2 Approve the capital allocation of £412,548 to be spent on providing suitable facilities at St Raphael's Community Centre as detailed in paragraph 3.8.
- 2.3 Approve the development of a standalone Children's Centre at Queens Park Community School with the associated capital allocation, as detailed in paragraphs 3.11 – 3.15.

2.4 Approve officers undertaking further work with Brent tPCT to secure suitable and sufficient accommodation for Children's Centres to be opened at both Willesden and Wembley Centres for Health and Care noting the risk attached to working with the PCT at this time. In the event that this cannot be achieved by the end of March 2007 approve the development of the following alternative options:

2.4.1 In the Willesden locality, to provide a small standalone building on the site of Treetops Nursery with an associated capital budget allocation of £600,000 to be funded from Sure Start Sustainability Capital (not from Children's Centre capital).

2.4.2 In the Wembley locality, to build 2 classrooms at Barham Primary School to release the nursery block for use as Children's Centre with an associated capital budget of £308,166 (see paragraph 4.1).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Following Executive approval in July and November 2006, work continues to progress on Wembley Primary, Lyon Park and Fryent Primary Children's Centres, with no further key decisions required. The centres are expected to open on the following dates:

- Lyon Park Schools – March 2008
- Fryent Primary School – March 2008
- Wembley Primary School – Spring 2008

The development of phase 2 Children's Centres is led by the Children and Families Department and officers continue to work with colleagues from across the Council departments.

St Raphael's Community Centre

3.2 In March 2006 the Executive was asked to note the preferred locations identified for Phase 2 Children's Centres. The preferred location to serve the St Raphael's community was the Heritage Family Centre with St Raphael's Community Centre. The second and only alternative was Monks Park Clinic which does not offer sufficient accommodation to provide the full core offer and which brings with it inherent risks associated with working with the PCT (as shown with the Wembley and Willesden Centres for Health and Care). Officers have not explored other alternative sites because in July 2006 the Executive agreed in principle to the change of use of St Raphael's Youth and Community Centre in favour of a combined Children's Centre and Community Centre. Possible alternative sites include the three schools in the catchment area; Oakington Manor School, Park Lane Primary School and Vernon House School. However exploring these options now would add significant risk to the delivery of this centre by March 2008 and bring unknown budget implications. None of the alternative sites are in the most disadvantaged part of the catchment area (St Raphael's estate) which means that those families most in need of services would have to travel furthest to access them. St Raphael's Community Centre is more than large enough to accommodate the Children's Centre core offer, is in an excellent location to

deliver services to those most in need and presents the opportunity to use this grant funding to invest in a Council asset for the benefit of the whole community not just the target group of under five year olds. Officers are satisfied that St Raphael's Community Centre is the most suitable site to deliver Children's Centre services to this isolated estate and that the refurbishment of the centre will provide an opportunity to deliver enhanced services to the wider community.

- 3.3 In November 2006, the Executive approved the capital allocation of £412,548 to refurbish St Raphael's Community Centre pending consultation with the local community. Prior to and since the Executive meeting in November 2006, officers have discussed the proposals with a range of key stakeholders including the current tenant, Ward Members and the wider local community. All three Ward Members were supportive of the proposals both to develop the Community Centre and the consultation process to be adopted. Ward Members also attended a subsequent meeting with the current tenant. This was a positive meeting in which the opportunity to make a significant investment in the St Raphael's community was first formally tabled. Representatives of the tenant organisation had the opportunity to learn about Children's Centre services, the processes followed to date and the planned consultation process, as well as the opportunity to raise questions primarily about the future of existing services for the wider community.
- 3.4 Following meetings with Ward Members and the current tenant, officers attended a Neighbourhood Forum meeting (a regular meeting facilitated by the Neighbourhood Renewal Project). This was an opportunity to discuss the proposals with a wider group of approximately 25 residents of the Brentfield, Mitchell Brook and St Raphael's Estates. Officers heard resident's concerns about both the current use of the centre and the proposed future uses. This meeting demonstrated the strength of feeling for a Community Centre that is both accessible and able to address some of the most significant needs of the whole community and of the estate. Plans for wider consultation were discussed at the meeting and invitations were distributed to all residents and stakeholder groups before Christmas.
- 3.5 Two formal consultation sessions took place on 9th January 2007 at St Raphael's Community Centre. The sessions were attended by local residents and service providers and facilitated by the Council's consultation team, who prepared the draft report attached as Appendix 1. Attendees were asked to focus on three main questions: what services do residents want in the Children's Centre?, how should the centre be refurbished? and what are the options for the management of the centre?. Officers have prepared an analysis summary of the consultation report and this is attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The consultation sessions demonstrated that the majority of the community are disengaged from the St Raphael's Community Centre and its activities. Strong support was expressed by the tenant (ACPO) and current service providers for maintaining current arrangements. However, equally strong views were expressed by residents about the lack of access to the centre due to high rental costs and current activities not meeting their needs. The consultation sessions demonstrated that a greater range of community activities are required at the centre; that centre management needs to be robust, transparent and include

community representation, and that refurbishment work should make the building more accessible and flexible to meet the wider range of usage. In responding to this consultation, officers across the Council will develop a model for services to be run from the centre where Children's Centre and Youth and Community Services co-exist with access, duties and responsibilities governed by a management and/or operational agreement. The details of these management, governance and operational arrangements will be further developed by officers based on the results of the consultation exercise and internal decisions about the management of the building in light of integrated service delivery. It is expected that a model will be established which will give local people representing the wider community a role in running the Community Centre. This centre, along with all other Children's Centres that share buildings with wider community usage, will be managed in terms of buildings and facilities by Property and Asset Management. The Executive is recommended to approve the principle of this service delivery model and authorise officers to undertake further work to develop it.

3.7 The tenant provided officers with a timetable of existing centre activities; some of which officers know not to have been in operation at the time of its preparation. In its current form, the timetable demonstrates that large parts of the building are under-utilised. Current initial proposals suggest that at least one third of the building would be available throughout weekdays, evenings and weekends for hire and use by the wider community. This would be a good sized hall space that could be used as a self-contained area if necessary with separate toilet and kitchen facilities. Ancillary provision and spaces used for Children's Centre activities form the remainder of the accommodation in the building. It is likely that the Children's Centre will use most of these spaces during the day however there will be opportunities for creative timetabling and extensive use of these areas in the evenings and weekends. The majority of the centre's current usage is during the evening and at weekends. Due to its size, St Raphael's Community Centre gives greater flexibility than other proposed phase 2 Children's Centres to create a much more accessible venue for local residents to use activities and services provided by the Council and others. In order to respect the community nature of this building and to enhance its usage, a community hub is proposed for the entrance to the building. This area would welcome all users and offer an additional area for all people to meet, relax and gather information relevant to all community members. Consultation is planned for the wider community to work on ideas for the development of the centre and officers have already begun to ask the local community including young people for their ideas for the refurbishment of the centre.

3.8 A provisional allocation of £412,548 from Children's Centre capital was approved by the Executive in November 2006 to refurbish St Raphael's Community Centre. This allocation was not based on actual planned costs and represented an estimated budget figure linked to the balance of funding available. Initial feasibility work indicates that remodelling and refurbishment only will be achievable in this centre with the capital allocation available. A maintenance plan prepared for Brent Council by consultants in October 2005 indicates that "the standard of maintenance has been allowed to lapse and those repair works that have been undertaken are of a poor standard". Officers believe that the community would benefit from this investment of capital into these facilities. An

extension to the building will not be provided although the centre was originally designed in such a way as to facilitate this in the future should further funds become available and need is established. As detailed in paragraph 3.7 above, it is expected that an appropriate timetable of activities could be created ensuring wider community use of the building is established. The Executive is recommended to approve this capital allocation and its expenditure on providing the facilities necessary for a range of community activities.

3.9 In order to minimise disruption to centre users and to ensure a safe and speedy refurbishment, it is necessary for the centre to be vacant during refurbishment works. Council officers will work with local groups to identify alternative accommodation for existing activities to run during this period. Existing activities are those shown on activity timetables provided by the tenant on 5th January 2007. It is expected that activities will be able to run from alternative venues on or near to the St Raphael's Estate and/or by the provision of temporary accommodation on the site. The cost of providing temporary accommodation will be met by the Children and Families Department from the revenue grant available to support Children's Centres and costs recovered through lettings charges. Any temporary accommodation provided on the site will be managed by Council officers. Property and Asset Management continue to lead on Landlord issues relating to the current Lead Tenant and the need to ensure the centre is vacant when required. This will entail the service of relevant Notices under the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. The service of notices is within the general delegations to Service Directors in the Constitution (see Appendix 3 for details).

3.10 Should the Executive not approve the recommendations made in respect of St Raphael's Community Centre, the investment of £412,548 will not be able to be made directly to the St Raphael's community. There is significant risk to the Council that this will be perceived negatively by the local community and that local opposition will be raised to the continuance of the current arrangements at the centre. This is an opportunity for the Council to invest in the whole community, should the Council not capitalise on it, it is unlikely that St Raphael's Community Centre will receive the capital investment it requires to deliver good quality facilities to the local community. St Raphael's parents will have to take their youngest children across the North Circular to Harmony Children's Centre which is unlikely to increase their accessibility to services. This arrangement also puts pressure on Harmony Children's Centre which currently has a catchment area of 1800 children instead of the 800 children Government recommend. Should the capital investment not be made in St Raphaels, alternative site options outside the St Raphael's estate but within the catchment area will have to be explored. This brings significant risk to the delivery of this centre by March 2008 and unknown budget implications. If an appropriate alternative site cannot be secured and a project developed that will ensure completion on time and budget, the capital funding (£412,548) will be lost and the Local Authority will not be able to deliver Children's Centre services to the target number of children under five in the borough.

Queens Park Community School

- 3.11 Following Executive approval in principle to a combined Primary Care and Children's Centre at Queens Park Community School in July 2006, officers have been undertaking further work to confirm the feasibility of the project. In November 2006 the Executive was asked to note the risks attached to this project and to receive a further detailed report in the future. At that time the risks to this project included the securing of both planning and DfES approval to construct the combined development as described above including health provision on school playing fields, the possible enforceability of a covenant restricting all development except a sports pavilion on part of the site and the need to clarify the project brief (including confirmation of finance arrangements) with Brent PCT/Staverton Surgery. The most significant of these risks was that the PCT Board was unable to approve revenue funding for Staverton Surgery when it met in September 2006. This revenue funding was required to provide a rental income to the Council to support the raising of capital to construct the building under the prudential borrowing scheme. It was anticipated that Staverton Surgery would request financial support from the PCT Board in January 2007.
- 3.12 In view of the nature of the risks involved with this project and the timescale for the delivery of the Children's Centre, the Children's Centre Steering Group took a view that alternative options ought to be explored. Officers undertook to have the feasibility study for this project extended to consider alternative options for the provision of a Children's Centre without health centre or nursery on the school site. The Executive is asked to consider the alternative option recommended and approve the development of that option. Since this feasibility work was completed, officers have been informed by Staverton Surgery that the PCT is not in a position to provide financial support to this project for the foreseeable future and Staverton Surgery have therefore reluctantly withdrawn from the collaborative project originally proposed.
- 3.13 Officers recommend the development of a standalone Children's Centre (without health centre or nursery) be provided on the school site close to the City Learning Centre. The development has been planned in such a way as to avoid covenanted land, to minimise impact on land potentially usable as playing fields and to create a community zone within one corner of the school site. Potential future expansion of the school has also been considered and would fit neatly alongside the proposed development at a later date. Feasibility studies show how a Primary Care Centre could be developed on the school site linked to this community zone, should funds be made available and planning approval be achieved. The feasibility report shows that a standalone Children's Centre could be delivered before March 2008 and officers will work with the design team to ensure this is deliverable within the previously approved capital budget figure of £558,166. The budget remains the same despite the project being smaller because the additional elements to the Children's Centre (Primary Care Centre and Nursery) were expected to be self-financing. Should alternative options be developed in Wembley and Willesden, this budget would have to be reduced to £450,000. This is in line with the Fryent Primary School which is also a standalone new build. In order to manage the risk effectively, the QPCS project will be designed to the £450,000 budget. In the event that alternative options were developed in Wembley and Willesden, the required £108,166 would be available. Should those alternatives not be developed, the remaining budget would act as a contingency amount for all Children's Centre projects to be used

as required and with the approval of the Directors of Children and Families and Finance and Corporate Resources.

- 3.14 Queens Park Community School aspire to have both a combined Primary Care and Children's Centre on the school site but accept the current climate does not permit this and wish to adopt a phased approach to providing a full community service from the school site. Arrangements for land use and building ownership are being discussed with the school and proposals are supported in principle by the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors. Both also support the recommendation made to the Executive. The Head of Property and Asset Management is authorised to agree the detailed terms for the taking up of a lease of the requisite land by the Council at a nominal ground rent for a term of 25 years. The Planning Service has provided informal comment on the feasibility plans recommended and are supportive of this planning application being made formally. The Executive is now asked to approve development of a standalone Children's Centre on the QPCS site with the previously approved capital allocation of £558,166.
- 3.15 In November 2006 officers reported that despite there being no requirement to house full day childcare in this phase 2 Children's Centre work was being undertaken with Hopscotch Nursery to help them identify alternative premises. Since November 2006 arrangements have been made for Islamia Primary School to occupy the upper two floors of Winkworth Hall, sharing occupation of the building with Hopscotch Nursery. Property and Asset Management have secured terms for Hopscotch Nursery to remain in situ for the time being and continue to work with them to explore opportunities for their re-provision as part of a redevelopment on the Winkworth Hall site or elsewhere.

Willesden and Wembley Centres for Health and Care

- 3.16 In November 2006, the Executive approved the development of Children's Centres at both Wembley and Willesden Centres for Health and Care and the associated capital allocation of £100,000 for each centre. Officers continue to work with the PCT to progress planning for these centres and to secure sufficient suitable accommodation in order to deliver the Children's Centre core offer. Written confirmation that the amount and type of accommodation detailed by the Local Authority will be available for the amount of time it is required during the week has been received from the PCT. Officers will continue to work with Brent tPCT to confirm the details of this shared accommodation use in order to achieve a mutually agreeable legal arrangement, however in the event that agreements cannot be reached by the end of March 2007 the Executive is asked to approve the following alternative options be developed.
- 3.17 For the Willesden catchment area the most suitable alternative site option is Treetops Nursery. This option will provide a good Children's Centre linked to an existing Local Authority run childcare provision. It will give an opportunity to invest in council assets and accommodate a wider range of services to the families most in need who currently access the nursery. It is also situated close to Capital City Academy with whom close working relationships will be developed. The proposal is to build a small standalone centre to the rear of the existing nursery. This will minimise disruption to the nursery which is open all

year round and will provide a neat solution to the Children's Centre provision. The Parks Service has been consulted on this proposal and officers have discussed compensatory measures that may need to be employed to ensure no disadvantage is created by development of this parkland location. There is a risk that the planning approval process may be delayed due to the nature of the site, however these issues will be addressed to minimise impact. In order to effectively manage the Children's Centre capital budget, it is proposed that this project be funded from the Sustainability Capital element of the General Sure Start Grant (see paragraph 4.2 for further details). The Executive is asked to approve development of an alternative option of a Children's Centre at Treetops Nursery and to acknowledge that this will be funded from the Sustainability Capital element of the Sure Start grant and not from the Children's Centre capital allocation referred to in this report.

- 3.18 For the Wembley catchment area, a number of options were considered and officers recommend development at Barham Primary School as being the most achievable within both the budget and timeframe. The location is well placed close to Wembley Centre for Health and Care in an area considered most in need of Children's Centre services. The headteacher is fully supportive of the development of a Children's Centre on site and already provides a range of Extended Services to the school and wider community. The Vice Chair of Governors and Vice Chair of the Finance and Premises Committee have approved this proposal in principle subject to full governing body approval of detailed proposals. The development will include the provision of 2 new classrooms to re-provide accommodation currently in a separate nursery block which will then be refurbished to provide for the Children's Centre. This has the added advantage of giving the school the opportunity to develop a foundation stage unit with nursery. The major risks attached to this project are that the site is relatively constrained and that extensive enabling works are likely to be required, this is likely to increase the cost of the project. Officers will continue to manage these risks through further detailed work and refer to the delegated authority given to the Directors of Finance and Corporate Resources and Children and Families to re-profile the capital budget accordingly if necessary. The Executive is asked to approve the development of an alternative option of a Children's Centre at Barham Primary School and to approve the allocation of £308,166 from the Children's Centre capital allocation. Table 1 attached as Appendix 4 provides further financial detail.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The total Children's Centres capital allocation for 06/07 and 07/08 (combined) is £2,049,714. In addition, an allocation of £360,000 has been made from the General Sure Start Grant (Extended Schools) capital funding to support the development of Children's Centres on school sites. This is reflected in the total funding available shown in table 1 attached as Appendix 4. The capital allocation is direct grant rather than supported borrowing and therefore in itself has no net impact on the Council Tax. Table 1 (Appendix 4) shows how the capital allocations would be revised should alternative options be developed for Wembley and Willesden Centres for Health and Care and the variance between the allocations reported in November 2006.

4.2 The total capital available in the Sustainability Capital element of the Sure Start capital grant is £1,353,760 for the period of 2006 – 2008. In 07/08 (the financial year in which work in Treetops Nursery would take place), the capital available is £907,019 and to date funds are not committed to projects. An allocation of £600,000 is to be made to this project from the 07/08 capital allocation. The Sustainability Capital is to be used to support the delivery of the Government's Ten Year Strategy for Childcare, *Choice for parents: the best start for children*. Local Authorities are given flexibility to determine how this capital is most effectively spent. In Brent, the majority of this capital will be spent supporting individual childcare providers, however it is acknowledged that Children's Centre provision would best support the parents of children using Treetops Nursery and others living in that catchment area.

4.3 As reported in July and November 2006, these capital projects bring with them liability for ongoing running costs. A revenue grant is confirmed up to March 2008, after which time no revenue grant funding is confirmed for the Local Authority, although this is the expectation. The risks associated with this were detailed in the July report. It is intended that a further report seeking approval of the full revenue expenditure profile will be submitted for Executive approval at a later date.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The legal implications in respect of the Children Centre project in regard to the occupation and use of the premises at St Raphaels are set out in the exempt Appendix 3.

5.2 Works contracts in respect of the development of the Children's Centres will need to be procured in accordance with the requirements of the Council's standing orders and the EU Procurement Regulations where applicable.

5.3 A formal agreement will need to be entered into between the PCT and the Council in respect of the use of Willesden and Wembley Centres for Health and Care if the proposal to locate Children Centres there proceeds.

5.4 As these are grant funded works there will be outputs upon which the grant is dependent and there is the possibility of claw-back of grant monies should projects fail to meet their specified outputs.

5.5 The Council will need to enter into contracts and other arrangements with partners to commission services to deliver the Children's Centre services. Any such contracts and arrangements will need to be monitored to ensure that targets are met and best value is achieved.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 Diversity implications were fully considered in the July report. At the time of that report, an Equality Impact Assessment was carried out. A copy is available from the office of the Director of Children and Families. It is expected that there will be a positive impact on equalities as a result of this capital programme.

- 6.2 Services offered will not be the same everywhere, because needs and communities vary greatly, but the greatest resource for Children's Centres will go to those children most in need. Phase 2 Children's Centres cover the borough's 30% most disadvantaged super-output areas as measured by the National Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2004). The IMD 2004 measures seven domains of deprivation: income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, living environment and crime.
- 6.3 Each Children's Centre has a unique catchment area and community profile, some covering more advantaged areas where they link geographically to more disadvantaged ones. These areas are characterised by their diversity of culture, ethnicity and faith. Families living in all of these areas experience varying levels of disadvantage based on the indicators given above.
- 6.4 Children's Centres will benefit the whole community including those families considered hardest to reach. All centres will be inclusive and compliant with the access requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 There are no staffing/accommodation implications to be considered for the immediate purpose of this report.

Background Papers

- i) Equality Impact Assessment – September 06
- ii) Report re. C&F06/07-001 – Children's Centres – Phase 2 Capital Programme (17th July 2006)
- iii) Report re. C&F06/07 011 Phase 2 Children's Centres – Capital Programme Approval (13th November 2006)
- iv) Project files

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