

## Notice of KEY Executive Decision (Special Urgency)

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Resilience of Children’s Centres and MyPlace Youth and Community Centre during COVID-19 Pandemic
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Robert Benham, Deputy Leader, Lead Member for Children and Learning.
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Robert South, Director, Children’s Services
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Helen Harding, Head of Early Help Service  Anita Stewart, Head of Virtual School, Youth Services and Youth Offending Team
<b>Policy context:</b>	Havering Council Major Emergency Plan
<b>Financial summary:</b>	There are no direct financial costs associated with this decision
<b>Reason decision is Key</b>	Significant effect on two or more Wards
<b>Date notice given of intended decision:</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee
<b>Is it an urgent decision?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	<b><i>Yes, due to Special Urgency</i></b>

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering  
Places making Havering

[]  
[]

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Opportunities making Havering  
Connections making Havering

[X]  
[]

## **Part A – Report seeking decision**

### **DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION**

In light of the current situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeking approval of the below proposals in order to maintain a reasonable and safe service delivery. This is during a time when staffing numbers are reduced to illness or self-isolation and fewer children and families are accessing services for the same reasons.

- Temporarily close Chippenham Road Children’s Centre and Hilldene Children’s Centre for a period of six weeks from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This is to be reviewed in line with government and public health guidance in four weeks (Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April) to determine if the closure period should be extended or ceased.
- Retain the option of closing Rainham Village Children’s Centre, if the staffing complement is reduced to such levels that it is no longer possible to keep the centre open. The time period for closure will be determined at the time of decision making, but is not likely to be less than four weeks.
- Maintain service delivery from the remaining five children’s centres (Collier Row, Ingrebourne (Harold Hill), Elm Park and St Kilda’s (Romford). This will enable us to carry on delivering core services for targeted families in key areas of the borough, as well as provide alternative venue space for other key services (such as education provision) if required.
- Face to face targeted services to be replaced by telephone and/or video call contact, as outlined below and in attached supporting document.
- Temporarily close MyPlace Youth and Community Centre for a period of six weeks from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This is to be reviewed in line with government and public health guidance in four weeks (Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April) to determine if the closure period should be extended or ceased. This will enable the redeployment of Youth Service Workers to support vulnerable and at risk children, young people and families.
- Contact will be made with the corporate communications team to ensure that the public are made aware of any closures and provided with details of how and where to contact the children’s centre team if needed.

### **AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

The Director as a member of SLT has the following relevant powers under Part 3 section 3.4 As follows:

- (a) To take any steps necessary for proper management and administration for their allocated portfolios.
- (b) ...
- (c) To manage buildings and facilities under their control including letting, hiring or otherwise permitting the use of such premises and property for occasional purposes...
- (d) To be responsible and accountable for all health and safety matters.

## Key Executive Decision

### **STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

This decision is required under “Special Urgency” to allow the Council to plan and undertake effective strategies for working and service delivery during the current Covid 19 outbreak.

#### Children’s Centres

The decision to temporarily close Chippenham Road and Hilldene Children’s Centres has been made based on very low numbers of attendance/footfall and the ability to move core health service provision (midwifery and health visiting) to deliver from Ingrebourne Children’s Centre. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub will also be relocated from Mercury House to deliver from Ingrebourne Children’s Centre. They will be working in a part of the centre away from the health service delivery to minimise the number of people expectant mothers come in to contact with, and to encourage social distancing.

We are requesting the option to decide to close Rainham Village Children’s Centre, if the staffing complement is reduced to such levels that maintaining a service delivery is not possible. At the point this decision is made then all core health services that are still able to run will be moved to an alternative location. The public will be advised via corporate communications and information shared at the location. Another reason for the consideration of closure for Rainham Village Children’s Centre is its shared entrance and grounds with Rainham Village Primary School. Government has requested all schools to close from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, which is likely to significantly impact the footfall at the centre.

Another consideration for temporarily reducing the number of centres offering a service is to concentrate cleaning and sanitising services on the remaining buildings, thus ensuring the environment in which we are operating is as clean and safe as possible.

#### Targeted Service Delivery

To ensure that the most vulnerable residents and service users are supported during this time of heightened anxiety and isolation, we are adapting our core services to ensure that they are available virtually by phone and/or video call. Please see attached document outlining contingency planning for the targeted offer.

The majority of services that have stopped or reduced are considered universal, such as stay and play or ready, steady, talk groups. These have been changed following the guidance from central government regarding social distancing, avoid large gatherings and non-essential social activity.

Some targeted commissioned services have made the decision to cease for the foreseeable future, such as IMAGO young carers and groups for children with disabilities. The team supervising contact for children in care are only holding sessions at one centre to reduce the need for staff having to travel around and the FGC service will only be holding court-ordered family meetings.

#### Health Services

Midwifery services (delivered by BHRUT) are continuing however pregnant mothers are being asked not to bring children to the centres when attending appointments. The midwives are scaling down the ante-natal appointments following public health guidance that pregnant mother’s fall into the ‘at risk’ category. They are instead increasing post-natal contact to ensure new mothers and new-born babies are seen. These contacts are taking place at the larger children’s centres rather than midwives attending homes. Health visiting services (provided by NELFT) have suspended all child health clinics following government guidelines to reduce mass gatherings and implement social distancing. Instead the Health Visiting team are focusing on supporting those children and families who are vulnerable or at risk. The

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centres that we have recommended for temporary closure are not current locations for health service delivery.

### **Early Years Settings**

There are providers of early year's settings delivering out of both children's centres and MyPlace. The provider delivering out of Elm Park Children's Centre has made the decision to close for the foreseeable future. The remaining providers at other centres remain open for the time being and providing services as outlined in the government advice. The provider at MyPlace can retain access to the building as they intend to continue delivering a service for children of key workers and those who are vulnerable. They use a dedicated space and the building would not need to be fully open for this provider to continue their service. The children's centres that we are proposing to close temporarily are not ones that have early year's settings on site.

### **MyPlace Youth and Community Centre**

The activity at MyPlace has reduced significantly over the last week, with the majority of hirers withdrawing their services for the foreseeable future. Alongside this, all of the usual reception staff are unavailable due to self-isolation which means a requirement to potentially draw on support from other areas of the service. The closure of the building to the public would mean that Youth Services staff can be deployed elsewhere supporting vulnerable children, young people and families. This can include delivery or collection of care packages and food parcels or doorstep contact to ensure safety and wellbeing of those children staying at home due to school closures. The space would also be available to host other vital services that are required to continue delivering but are not able to do so at their usual venue.

## **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Continuing service delivery as normal; this is not possible due to reduced staffing capacity and government guidelines issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

N/A

## **NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Jane Carroll

Designation: Assistant Director – Children's Social Care

Signature:

Date: 20/03/2020

## **Part B - Assessment of implications and risks**

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

#### **Temporary closure of the Children's Centres**

A local authority has a duty under s.3(2) of the Childcare Act 2006 ("the Act") to make arrangements to secure early childhood services in their area.

In order to meet its duty under s.3(2) of the Act, a local authority must make arrangements for the sufficient provision of children's centres to meet their local need (s.5A(1)). "Local need" is defined in the Act as the needs of parents, prospective parents and young children in the local authority's area (s.5A(2)).

It is therefore for the local authority to consider whether the services it offers are meeting the "local need". It follows that where the need for such services diminishes, it is within the local authority's powers to reduce services to meet the reduction in need.

#### **Provision of telephone / video call contact in place of face to face targeted service delivery**

The services delivered through targeted service delivery may include core social work and health functions. However, these will continue to be delivered in the alternative ways outlined in the Report. There is nothing in terms of the legal obligations of the local authority to carry out face to face in a physical building and the continuation of a service remotely will ensure that frontline teams can continue to provide core services.

#### **Closure of Myplace Youth and Community Centre**

Local authorities have a statutory duty to "secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people" under s.507B of the Education Act 1996 ("the EA 1996").

In considering whether a local authority's provisions are "sufficient" for the purposes of the EA 1996, the local authority must have regard to the quantity of provisions it supplies.

Further a local authority is under a duty to publish the provisions it offers across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEND under s.30 of the Children and Families Act 2014 in its Local Offer. It is noted that the centre provides services which are provided for under the Local Offer. A local authority is generally required to consult on any review or decision which will affect the services offered under its Local Offer. However, it is considered that the changes proposed in this report are unlikely to give rise to a need to consult. It is expected that there will generally be acceptance of the need to reduce and / or temporarily cease service provisions in light of the guidance provided by the Government and requirements for social distances and to discourage social gatherings.

#### **General**

The local authority has to bear in mind its duties to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its staff and visitors to its premises and the steps proposed are in line with those duties.

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### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There will be no additional financial costs associated with the temporary closures of Chippenham Road and Hildene Children's Centres and My Place. Any costs that are currently incurred that cannot be reduced or suspended during closure of services will be met from within existing budgets.

Any normal operating costs incurred for the remaining Children's Centres, which will remain open, will be met from within the existing budgets for Children's Centres.

Any additional costs that are incurred, that are directly in relation to Covid-19 related activity, will be charged to a specific Covid-19 cost centre, and will come from the contingency reserve in the short term, until Covid-19 grant funding is received from Central Government. These costs will not need to be met via the Children's Centre's normal revenue funded budgets.

For the periods of closure, there will be a loss of rental income, and fees and charges, to the respective Children's Centres that are closed. This is due to normal clubs not running at these centres. The loss of income will be reported separately as part of further discussions being held by Corporate Finance colleagues and the S151 Officer.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

The proposals contained in this report will directly impact on all staff that work at these Centres who will be managed in accordance with the Council's published COVID-19 Managers Guidance

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

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An EqHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) is usually carried out when a current or planned service/policy/activity is likely to affect staff, service users, or other residents. It is acknowledged that due to the urgency of the threat posed by the coronavirus, it will not be possible to carry out an EqHIA in advance of the closure of a service, however, managers will undertake the required EqHIAs at the earliest opportunity. Where managers are already clear that particular groups/users will be impacted negatively by the curtailment, this will be noted in the next paragraph and/or put into draft EqHIAs. Where the impact of the closure can be mitigated, this too should be set out in this report.

The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all in all situations.

## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The recently announced 'lockdown' measures by the government have served to minimise client attendance at sites where children and families are supported, such that the impact of temporary closure is assessed to have a nominal impact upon clients when weighed against public health risks. We have ensured that some locations remain open to support families, in line both with statutory legislation and Council-wide Covid-19 guidance.

The care and consideration of all clients is paramount, and through the Emergency Planning process around COVID-19, this is being managed, to meet the ongoing needs of children and young people.

Access to support and services will be made available to clients, through professionals using smart working and remote contact tools.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None



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**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

**Details of decision maker**

Signed

Name: Robert Benham

Cabinet Portfolio held: Councillor Robert Benham

CMT Member title: Robert South

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date: 23 March 2020

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Committee Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_