

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**18<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2017**

#### **UPDATE ON WELSH GOVERNMENT CHILDCARE OFFER PILOT**

#### **REPORT OF THE TEMPORARY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J ROSSER.**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the progress to implement the Welsh Government Childcare Offer pilot for eligible 3 and 4 year olds in RCT.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet: -

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report;

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Welsh Government has committed to provide 30 hours per week of free early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for 48 weeks of the year, 'the Childcare Offer'.
- 3.2 To support Welsh Government in implementing the Childcare Offer, RCT is one of seven Local Authorities in Wales selected to pilot the offer.
- 3.3 To be eligible for the first phase of the Childcare Offer pilot, children must:
- Live in a postcode of the catchments for the associated primary schools of the pilot school catchment areas (these are Bryncelynnog, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and YG Rhydywaun school catchment areas)
  - Both parents or cohabitating couple (or parent if lone parent family) must work the equivalent of 16 hours per week at national minimum wage or national living wage or above
  - The offer is available from the term following their third birthday until the September following their fourth birthday

- 3.4 Children do not have to attend the associated primary schools for the school catchment areas listed above – they merely need to live in one of the eligible postcodes.

#### **4. UPDATE ON PROGRESS**

- 4.1 A lead officer and project assistant have been appointed and are the main contacts for council colleagues and Welsh Government representatives. Contact details for the lead officer are below.
- 4.2 Since December, officers have attended monthly meetings with Welsh Government and the other early implementer LA's. This is a complex offer and there are many aspects still to be discussed and agreed. These meetings are supplemented with regular emails, telephone conference calls and one to one meetings.
- 4.3 A series of provider engagement events were held in March 2017 to brief providers on the Childcare Offer. These were well attended and generally providers are positive about the scheme and the opportunities for their businesses. A further drop in session is planned for the end of June where providers can sign up to the scheme and get further information if required.
- 4.4 Officers have attended Headteacher meetings in the pilot areas to brief them on the offer and how it links into the Foundation Phase nursery education provision. These have been supplemented with regular update emails. Officers have also attended nursery parent meetings in as many of the pilot schools as possible.
- 4.5 These meetings have been valuable to inform headteachers and parents directly about the Childcare Offer and how they can find out more information. These will be ongoing and supplemented with email updates, press releases and regular updates on the dedicated webpage ([www.rctcbc.gov.uk/childcareoffer](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/childcareoffer)).
- 4.6 A project group has been formed to advise and oversee the pilot and the development of the offer. This group has representation from cabinet members, childcare umbrella organisations, Welsh Government and relevant internal departments. The first meeting for this has been held with the next meeting due to take place in August 2017.
- 4.7 An online eligibility checker for parents and an online application form have been developed. The School Admissions Capita system is being used to process applications for the childcare element of the offer. The Foundation Phase nursery education element of the offer is already being captured via this system. We anticipate that most applications for the Childcare Offer will be via this online system with supporting evidence uploaded electronically. The application portal was opened for parents on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.
- 4.8 Future promotion will include press releases and updates on social media, as well as continuing to attend school and community events where possible to promote it directly to families.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Informal consultation will be ongoing with parents, schools and childcare providers once the Childcare Offer is operational from September 2017. This, along with formal Welsh Government consultation, will help identify the impact of the offer on levels of employment and the childcare market.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 7.1 Welsh Government has confirmed that the Childcare Offer pilot will be fully funded and that RCT will not be required to use existing councils budgets to contribute towards the cost of the implementing the offer.
- 7.2 All Local Authorities involved in the Childcare Offer pilot have received an administration grant to cover staffing and development costs.
- 7.3 An additional grant will be awarded to fund the delivery of the childcare provision. This grant will be based on our projected participation numbers for year 1 of the pilot. However, Welsh Government has indicated that additional funding will be available if more children participate in the pilot than first anticipated.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 The Council has duties under section 22(1) of the Childcare Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act') to "secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by it) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare in order to enable them (a) to take up, or remain in work; or (b) to undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work."

## **9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / SIP**

- 9.1 This report supports the priorities set out in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Single Integrated Plan by supporting people to access childcare provision so that they are able to enter employment, training or volunteer opportunities.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 RCT has a range of CSSIW registered childcare provision already available, including some childcare settings who are also registered with Estyn to delivery Foundation Phase nursery education.
- 10.2 Officers consider that RCT is well placed to meet the current needs of most working parents. Development work will be ongoing to extend or create additional childcare provision where necessary in response to parental demand and in areas where there is an identified need as a consequence of the Childcare Offer pilot.

### **Other Information:-**

#### ***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

Children and Young People

#### ***Contact Officer***

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