



## RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

Key Decision ✓

### **SUBJECT:**

Expansion of the Welsh Government Childcare Offer pilot into other areas of RCT and to discuss possible partnership working with other member authorities in the Central South Consortium in order for them to implement the offer.

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Director, Education & lifelong Learning, to seek approval to expand the Welsh Government Childcare Offer pilot into other areas of RCT and to discuss possible partnership working with other member authorities in the Central South Consortium.

### **DELEGATED DECISION:**

It was **AGREED:**

That the Welsh Government Childcare Offer pilot will be expanded to other areas of RCT, and possible partnership working with other member of authorities in the Central South Consortium will be explored, as outlined within the report.

  
**Chief Officer Signature**

ESTHER THOMAS  
**Print Name**

21.03.18  
**Date**

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

**CONSULTATION**

Jay Rosser

21.3.18

CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

DATE

CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE (if required)

DATE

**CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.**

**IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

No ✓

*If deemed urgent* - signature of Mayor or Deputy Mayor or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:

.....N/A.....  
(Mayor)

.....  
(Dated)

**NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.**

**PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES**

**PUBLICATION**

Publication on the Councils Website:- 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018

**DATE**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

**Note:** This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 5 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Subject to Call In the implementation date will be 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**DATE**

  
**Secretary to the Cabinet Signature**

CHRISTIAN SSIHANAGAN  
**Print Name**

21/3/18  
**Date**

Further Information

Directorate:	Education and Lifelong Learning
Contact Name:	Denise Humphries
Designation:	Senior 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Project Manager (Childcare & Special Projects)
Tel.No.	01443 744026

## DELEGATED DECISION

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### REPORT TO ACCOMPANY A DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

MARCH 2018

#### EXPANSION OF WELSH GOVERNMENT CHILDCARE OFFER

**AUTHOR(s):** Esther Thomas, Director for Education & Lifelong Learning Tel: 01443 744002 and Denise Humphries, Senior 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Project Manager (Childcare & Special Projects) Tel: 01443 744026

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

- 1.1 To seek approval for expansion of the Welsh Government Childcare Offer pilot into other areas of RCT and to discuss possible joint working with other member authorities in the Central South Consortium to support implementation of the offer in their areas.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the expansion plans be approved.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Welsh Government has committed to provide 30 hours per week of free early education and childcare for eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for 48 weeks of the year, 'the Childcare Offer'. To support Welsh Government in implementing the Childcare Offer, RCT is one of seven Local Authorities in Wales selected to initially pilot the offer.
- 3.2 The original pilot areas in RCT comprised of the postcodes within the communities for the associated primary schools of Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Ferndale Community School, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and YG Rhydywaun.
- 3.3 The offer went live in September 2017 and as of the end of February 2018, there were 199 children eligible to receive the offer in RCT, with 3 applications deemed ineligible.
- 3.4 An online eligibility checker has been developed and this has been successful in indicating to parents if they are likely to be eligible or not. This has meant that parents have not spent time submitting applications that would be refused. The online application process has been largely successful. Initial problems with uploading documents were quickly resolved and we have generally received

positive feedback. Parents can submit paper applications if preferred and, to date, we have received 2 paper applications.

- 3.5 In December 2017, Welsh Government asked us to change our pilot areas from school catchment areas to electoral wards. This was to bring us in line with the other Early Implementer Local Authorities (EILA's).
- 3.6 This was agreed by Members and was implemented from January 2018. The previous pilot areas remained the same but with the addition of the Pontyclun and Ynyshir electoral wards (as some postcodes from these wards were part of the original school catchment pilot areas).
- 3.7 Since September 2017, officers have continued to promote the offer to parents and childcare providers. They have also amended the webpages based on feedback, and simplified the provider claim form and parent application process.

#### **4 PROPOSED EXPANSION**

- 4.1 Plans are now being finalised by Welsh Government to expand the Childcare Offer into other Local Authorities. They have also indicated that the pilot in RCT should expand to additional areas. Officers have submitted expansion plans to Welsh Government and met with officials to discuss these in more detail.

##### *Internal expansion*

- 4.2 It had previously been agreed by the Childcare Offer Project Group and by Members to select the Hawthorn school catchment area as the first expansion area in RCT. Using the new system of selecting pilot areas, the electoral wards that will be included in this expansion are:

- Graig
- Hawthorn
- Rhydyfelin Central
- Taffs Well
- Trallwng
- Treforest

- 4.3 In addition to these wards, officers have asked Welsh Government to consider if the offer can be expanded to include the electoral wards of:
  - Brynna
  - Llanharan
  - Llanharry
  - Talbot Green

The inclusion of these four additional electoral wards will result in the whole of the South Taf area of RCT being included.

- 4.4 Welsh medium provision will also be supported. There are three Welsh medium / Dual language primary schools within the electoral wards listed above and the offer may help to stimulate increased demand for Welsh medium childcare provision in these areas.

- 4.5 Welsh Government has confirmed that the offer can be expanded to these additional electoral wards with immediate effect. Additionally, Welsh Government has confirmed that they are happy for the offer to be rolled out to the rest of RCT from September 2018.

*Expansion to other LA's*

- 4.6 As part of Welsh Government plans to increase the number of Local Authorities participating in the Childcare Offer pilot, officials have met with all EILA's to discuss the possibilities of regional/joint working. This is to build on best practice and to ensure economies of scale.
- 4.7 If approved, RCT would work with other members of the Central South Consortium (Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Vale of Glamorgan). It is not anticipated that RCT would work in partnership with all Central South member authorities.
- 4.8 The exact nature of possible joint working is yet to be discussed but is likely to be administrative support processing applications, assessing eligibility and possibly processing childcare provider payments on behalf of the partner Local Authorities. Local promotion of the offer and development of the childcare sector would remain the responsibility of the individual Local Authority. Any joint working would be fully funded by Welsh Government and would not be introduced until January 2019 at the earliest.

## **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 Welsh Government is currently conducting parent and childcare provider consultation to evaluate the first year of the Childcare Offer pilot. This will inform development of the offer during the remainder of the pilot period.

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

- 7.1 Welsh Government has confirmed that the administration grant has been extended until September 2019. This grant is used to support staffing costs, promotional materials and other miscellaneous costs incurred whilst implementing the offer.
- 7.2 Any possible expansion to include processing of applications for neighbouring Local Authorities will be subject to an increase in this grant to ensure additional administrative support can be secured.
- 7.3 The grant letter for the childcare costs for 2018-19 is expected imminently. Following the same process as in the 2017-18 financial year, Welsh Government has indicated that this grant will be increased if more children participate in the pilot than 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."
- 8.2 Any possible collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities will be subject to a Memorandum of Understanding outlining specific duties and responsibilities.

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

- 9.1 This report encompasses the priorities set out in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Corporate Plan, particularly the objectives of '*building a strong economy*' and '*promoting independence and positive lives for everyone*' and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 well-being goals.
- 9.2 The expansion of the offer will also support the priorities set out in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).

## **10 CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 Officers are confident that the procedures and processes developed to implement the Childcare Offer have been sufficiently tested to cope with the additional numbers of applications that full roll out will create.
- 10.2 Likewise, officers are confident that possible collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities will be manageable, subject to additional admin support via an increase in the Welsh Government administration grant and a robust Memorandum of Understanding in place.

### **Other Information:-**

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

Children and Young People

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

Denise Humphries, Senior 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Project Manager (Childcare & Special Projects)

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