

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 23 FEBRUARY 2016

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE CHARGED SESSIONS

REPORT BY THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval to offer parents the option to purchase additional early learning and childcare in school nurseries in localities where local private or voluntary provision cannot meet demand. This will ensure a more cost effective, efficient service which will afford greater flexibility for parents in our early learning and childcare settings.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approve Angus Council's proposals to offer additional flexible early learning and childcare provision in line with Scottish Government requirements in settings where no other provision of this kind is offered from partners;
- (ii) Approve Angus Council's proposals to charge parents £14.10 per session for this additional provision extending beyond the core 600 hours and the five sessions currently available; and
- (iii) Agree that the current system of priority categorisation for early learning and childcare will apply for any additional funded places.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/CORPORATE PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
- Individuals are involved in their communities

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Part 6 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 focuses on increasing the number of hours of early learning and childcare that three and four year olds, and some two year olds, are entitled to. The following groups are entitled to 600 hours of early learning and childcare:

- all three and four year olds
- looked-after two year old children or those subject to kinship care orders
- two year olds in families seeking work
- two year old children who are entitled to free school meals

3.2 Reference is made to report number 7/15 which sets out arrangements for admissions and priority categorisation for early learning and childcare provision.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Angus currently offers 600 hours early learning and childcare provision for all three and four year olds through funded places:

- in nursery classes within school settings
- in private providers who are currently in partnership with Angus Council (through a Service Level Agreement)
- in voluntary providers, playgroups, who are currently in partnership with Angus Council (through a Service Level Agreement)

4.2 Eligible two year old early funded places are also offered through partner providers, community child minders and in four school settings.

4.3 Currently the Council does not offer parents the opportunity for additional Early Learning and Child Care in its own settings over and above the core 600 hours required by statute. Parental consultation has highlighted a demand for this, currently, in two rural school settings, Isla and Tannadice, where access to paid provision would involve travelling to Kirriemuir. A pilot has been trialled to determine likely uptake and parents were advised that the cost would be in the region of £12 per session based on recovering the costs incurred. The pilot progressed in February of last year albeit without charges being raised. It has been very successful. Parents are keen for this to continue but also want to know the costs associated with purchasing this additional provision.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 It is proposed to offer early learning and childcare places over and above the core funded hours where no other private or voluntary provision is available. This provision will be charged at a rate which covers the costs of the provision.

It is proposed to continue with the schools listed above and extend provision, where necessary. Notes of interest will be sought from parents within schools where there are no alternative local private providers.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The proposed charge has been calculated from the average of six children attending, which as of January 2016 is £14.10. In the event that uptake exceeds the projected level then any surplus income which is generated will be offset against any area where there is lower uptake of places.

6.2 It should be noted that these sessions are provided within the school day therefore the only additional building costs would be any lighting and use of electrical items within this time period. The school spaces are already being heated.

6.3 The council reserves the right to decline requests for additional provision where numbers are deemed too low to make this financially viable.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Head Teachers, parents and partner providers have been consulted on the pilot and a high level of parental interest has been noted.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Dawn Archibald
EMAIL DETAILS: ArchibaldDA@Angus.gov.uk