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**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 8 December 2011

**Subject:** Children's Centre Review

**Report of:** Director of Young People and Families

**Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** Yes    **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes

**Exempt/Confidential**    No

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### **Purpose/Summary**

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the feedback on the consultation on the review of Children's Centres and note the recommendations of the Children's Centre Review Board.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Cabinet is recommended:

- (i) To continue to implement a funding reduction in line with the Council resolution of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011;
- (ii) To maintain a network of Children's Centres across the borough, without closing bases;
- (iii) To agree to merge centres across the Borough, in order to maintain an appropriate service delivery model to the communities they serve; and
- (iv) To request the Children Centre Review Board to evaluate an alternative proposal presented by the Core Group for Freshfield Children's Centre, subject to additional information being provided.
- (v) To agree use of £600,000 one-off Council reserves to underwrite shortfall against 2011/12 Children Centre saving target.

### **How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

	<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community	√		
2	Jobs and Prosperity	√		
3	Environmental Sustainability		√	
4	Health and Well-Being	√		
5	Children and Young People	√		
6	Creating Safe Communities	√		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy	√		

**Reasons for the Recommendation:**

- To carry out the Council resolution made on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011, to realise a savings target of £900,000 from the children’s centres’ budget
- Maintain a network of children’s centres and bases to deliver universal and targeted early years intervention and prevention services
- To direct resources to both individual and community needs

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

The timescale for the strategic review of Children’s Centre delivery has meant that there will be a shortfall of £600,000 against the £900,000 saving target identified for 2011/12.

The Council resolution on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 recommended that any shortfall in savings should be underwritten by one-off resources from Council reserves. This report identifies the specific amount to be requested for underwriting.

The proposed measures will fully achieve next year's target saving of £900,000.

**(B) Capital Costs**

Not applicable.

**Implications:**

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal</b> Under Section 5 of the Childcare Act 2006, the Council has a statutory duty to make arrangements, so far as reasonably practicable, for the sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need.		
<b>Human Resources</b>		
<b>Equality</b>		
1.	No Equality Implication	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Impact on Service Delivery:**

There should be limited impact on service delivery.

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

The Head of Corporate Finance (FD1168) and Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD528/11) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

**Are there any other options available for consideration? No  
Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet/Cabinet Member Meeting

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**Background Papers:**

The following papers are available for inspection by contacting the above officer(s).

- Children Centre Communication Plan
- Children Centre Consultation Plan
- Children Centre Consultation Pro-Forma

and also available online at: [www.sefton.gov.uk/childrenscentres](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/childrenscentres)

## 1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Terms of Reference and timescale for a strategic review of Sefton Children's Centres was approved by Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2011. At its meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 the Council resolved that a savings target of £0.9m in 2011/12 to be applied to the Strategic Review of Sure Start Children's Centres be approved and that areas identified for saving be brought forward at the earliest opportunity and not left until the final report stage.
- 1.2 A Children's Centre Review Board was established to:
- Realise a saving target of £900,000
  - Maintain a network of children centres and bases to deliver universal and targeted early years intervention and prevention services
  - Direct resources to both individual and community needs
- 1.3 Since then preparation has taken place with the Review Board and three reference groups. The Board considered a range of children's centre data and principles such as:
- Purposes of children's centres
  - Data & Quality of performance
  - Future purpose of children's centres
  - Partnership working
  - Different levels of need across areas
  - Number of families currently accessing service
- 1.4 The Children's Centre Review Board consulted on the proposals listed below (The Local Authority has a Statutory Duty for the provision of Children's Centres: Under section 5D of the Childcare Act 2006 to consult on any "significant" changes.)

### **Proposed changes to Children's Centres**

1. To apply an overall percentage funding reduction across all children's centre bases proportionate to the levels of deprivation they serve:
  - 10% for Phase 1 centres
  - 25% for Phase 2 centres
  - 30% for Phase 3 centres
2. To maintain a network of children centres across the borough, without closing bases.
3. There will be a number of mergers across the borough, with no more than 2 or 3 centres in any one merger, under a single management structure to maintain an appropriate service delivery model to the communities they serve.
4. To reduce overall management and running costs

- 1.5 A report on the consultation was presented to the Children's Centre Review Board on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and a copy is appended to this report as **Appendix 1**. Following the discussion at the Children's Centre Review Board, a number of recommendations were agreed to be made to Cabinet. The mergers sustain the existing network of Children's Centres bases and also maintain, as far as possible, front line services to our children, young people and families. The savings for the merger are drawn principally for management, administration and running costs as well as through fostering better value for money in relation to the existing menu of services.
- 1.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) considered a report on the consultation arrangements and the report by the Children's Centre Review Board at its meeting held on 22 November 2011 and a copy of the Committee minute is appended as **Appendix 2**.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 In line with the Council resolution on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011, a shortfall in the achievement of the savings target in 2011/12 is expected. Currently, savings of £300,000 have been identified and the shortfall therefore stands at £600,000.
- 2.2 The measures outlined in the report will fully achieve the previously agreed savings of £900,000 from Children's Centre budgets in 2012/13.