

**SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE OF CABINET
– 1st OCTOBER 2020**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report: Revocation of Decision to Discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre

Author(s): Executive Director of Neighbourhoods

Purpose of Report: The purpose of this report is to request the revocation of the School Organisation Committee of Cabinet's previous decision (November 2019) to discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre.

Description of Decision: School Organisation Committee of Cabinet is asked to:

Note the responses and consider the statutory proposal which is:

- REVOCATION PROPOSAL: Revocation of the Decision to Discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre

Under the provisions of the relevant Regulations, the Authority may approve published proposals with or without modification or may reject them.

The Committee is requested to approve the proposal as detailed above.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Reason for the Decision

Laidlaw Learning Trust has withdrawn from the proposed amalgamation of Pennywell Early Years Centre and Academy 360 but the requirement for the early years places at Pennywell Early Years Centre remains to ensure the Council can meet its statutory requirement to provide enough school places in the St Anne's Ward for nursery aged children

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

- Proceed with the discontinuation of Pennywell Early Years Centre

Impacts analysed;

Equality Privacy Sustainability Crime and Disorder

Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? Yes

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution?

No

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions?

No

REVOCATION OF DECISION TO DISCONTINUE PENNYWELL EARLY YEARS CENTRE

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to request the revocation of the School Organisation Committee of Cabinet's previous decision (November 2019) to discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre.

2. Description of Decision

2.1 School Organisation Committee of Cabinet is asked to:

Note the responses and consider the statutory proposal which is:

- **REVOCATION PROPOSAL:** Revocation of the Decision to Discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre

Under the provisions of the relevant Regulations, the Authority may approve published proposals with or without modification or may reject them. The Committee is requested to approve the proposal as detailed above.

3. Current Position

3.1 Pennywell Early Years Centre is a maintained nursery school in the St Anne's ward. It is maintained by Sunderland City Council.

3.2 On 7th November 2019, the School Organisation Committee of Cabinet approved a proposal to discontinue the nursery. The Council took the decision to discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre on the basis that, post discontinuance, the Pennywell Early Years Centre provision and staff would be amalgamated within the educational offer at a neighbouring academy (Academy 360). This amalgamation was to occur on 1st April 2020.

3.3 Pennywell Early Years Centre was to continue to provide early years provision for the area under the management of Academy 360 post 1st April 2020.

3.4 Laidlaw Learning Trust, the sponsor of Academy 360, withdrew from the proposal to amalgamate Pennywell Early Years Centre within its Trust on 31st March 2020. Consequently, and given the requirement for nursery places in the area remains, the implementation of the proposal to discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre would be unreasonably difficult and is no longer considered appropriate. Therefore, the Council proposes to revoke the decision to discontinue the nursery.

4.0 Statutory Representation

4.1 The Council published the statutory proposal to revoke the previous decision to discontinue the Pennywell Early Years Centre on 9th July 2020. The statutory notice period ended 6th August 2020. The statutory notice was published in the following places:

- Sunderland City Council's website
- Pennywell Early Years Centre's website
- The Sunderland Echo

The notice was also displayed at the entrances of the current buildings used by Pennywell Early Years Centre.

4.2 In addition to the publication of notices the following groups were consulted with as part of this process:

- Parents of pupils attending the Nursery
- Current staff
- The local Church of England diocese
- The local Roman Catholic diocese and
- The Secretary of State for Education.

4.3 The Council has received no responses to the notice. The statutory notice is attached as Appendix 1.

5. Reasons for the Decision

5.1 Laidlaw Learning Trust has withdrawn from the proposed amalgamation of Pennywell Early Years Centre and Academy 360 but the requirement for the early years places at Pennywell Early Years Centre remains to ensure the Council can meet its statutory requirement to provide sufficient school places in the St Anne's Ward for nursery aged children

6. Alternative Options

Proceed with the discontinuation of Pennywell Early Years Centre

6.1 There is no early years provision at the two schools closest to Pennywell Early Years Centre (Academy 360 and Christ's College). It is considered that the places offered by the nursery are required to ensure enough early years places are available to families in the area and to discontinue the provision without either recreating these places elsewhere or merging the provision with another setting while maintaining the current premises would lead to a deficit in local provision.

7. Impact Analysis

Sustainability – The above proposal will ensure the ongoing provision of early years school places in the St Anne's Ward remains sustainable.

Equalities Analysis – The proposal is not projected to disadvantage any individual, social group or organisation.

8. Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations

8.1 Co-operative values – At Annual Council in May 2015, it was resolved that the following statement be included in the Constitution to reflect the values of the “Co-operative Council”.

“Sunderland City Council is a co-operative council and in being so will act ethically in all its actions while adhering to and actively promoting its co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. These values will underpin its decision making and actions.”

8.2 Financial implications

This decision will result in no change to the current financial requirements associated with the operation of Pennywell Early Years Centre.

8.3 Legal Implications

Throughout the process, from informal consultation to the publication of the statutory proposals (including the revocation proposals), the Council has complied with the requirements of the applicable legislation (the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013) and has also adhered to the Department for Education’s 2019 Statutory Guidance ‘Opening and Closing Maintained Schools’.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statutory Notice to Revoke Decision to Discontinue Pennywell Early Years Centre

10. Background Papers

7th November 2019 SOCOC report – Proposed Closure of Pennywell Early Years Centre

