

People and Health Overview Committee

6 February 2024

Family Hub Network Development

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Portfolio Holder: Cllr B Quayle, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This report outlines proposals for the development of Dorset's Family Hub Network Model aiming to improve access to and take up of child and family services, in line with requirements of the DfE's grant funded Transformation Programme, local need and strategic priorities.

Recommendation:

To recommend to Cabinet that the proposed development of Dorset's Family Hub Network be approved, in order to optimise the use of community and council owned premises to facilitate co-location, and to enable place-based delivery of integrated, intergenerational services.

Reason for Recommendation:

1. Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council:
As detailed in Dorset's successful Family Hub TF1 bid, Dorset Council are committed to developing at least 8 Family Hubs by September 2024 in lieu of 22 children's centres, plus community delivery (network / outreach points)

Family Hubs aim to improve access to, and take up of services for babies, children, young people, and their families, through coordinated multi agency delivery of information and support located in accessible spaces within communities.

2. Creating stronger healthier communities:

Asset based community development (ABCD) is a localised and bottom-up way of strengthening communities through recognising, identifying and harnessing existing 'assets' (i.e. things like skills, knowledge, capacity, resources, experience or enthusiasm) that individuals and communities have which can help to strengthen and improve things locally. Instead of looking at what a community needs or lacks, the approach focuses on utilising the 'assets' that are already there, building resource and capacity through identification of existing strengths.

3. Driving economic prosperity:

The plans contained within this report are aligned to the Council's Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan promoting effective use of the asset base, aiming to enable the Council to meet its social and financial challenges through asset disposals, generation of capital receipts, savings in costs through the reduction, rationalisation and improved efficiency of the estate and more importantly the generation of value through income generation and the repurposing, redirecting and reuse of land and buildings.

1. **Report**

1.1 DfE grant funded Family Hub Transformation Programme

The DfE describe Family Hubs as 'a place-based way of joining up locally in the planning and delivery of family services. They bring services together to improve ACCESS, improve the CONNECTION between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put RELATIONSHIPS at the heart of family support'

Dorset have received funding from the DfE Family Hub Transformation Programme 1 (TF1) to develop and deliver a Family Hub approach. In addition to this funding, Dorset have also invested council transformation funding.

Dorset have committed to meet specific requirements as defined by the DfE, in addition to ensuring that local needs and strategic priorities underpin the development of our Family Hub approach.

Family Hubs are seen as a significant vehicle in which we will deliver much of the Strategic Alliance for Children, Young People and Families Plan and Family Help element of the Families First for Children Pathfinder, enabling non-stigmatised Family Help to be delivered within localities.

The rural nature of Dorset presents several challenges for implementing a Family Hub model that meets the needs of all families as such we are placing emphasis on developing a Family Hub Network, with main Family Hub sites supplemented by associated community outreach points, with development aligned to our locality model. The type of Family Hub delivered in a local area will be dependent on the needs and requirements within each community and will be developed in response to local need.

Our Family Hub Network is built upon an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, recognising the strengths of community-based assets and service provision, and building capacity and resource within local areas. This is leading to mixed model of Family Hubs, developed from Community Centres, Children's Centres and Libraries

Family Hubs are for all families living in Dorset Council area. They provide information and services for families with children from conception to age 18. This is up to age 25 for children and young people with SEND.

All families need information or support from time to time, but sometimes it can be difficult to know where to go or who to ask. Family Hubs bring together workers from Dorset Council, Health Services, and Voluntary and Community Organisations in one place. This helps to get the right support as they need it.

Dorset's 'network' approach acknowledges and addresses the particular challenges in accessing support for many families living in more rural areas of the county and those whereby transport / travel is a barrier, by providing an increased number of designated spaces across the county, with systems and processes to support improved coordination across multi-agency delivery partners in response to local need.

1.2 Children's Centres

Sure Start children's centres were designed to deliver a place in every community that would provide integrated care and services for young children and their families.

The implementation of children's centres began in 2004. The programme was rolled out first in the 20% most deprived communities in England (Phase 1, 2004 to 2006). This phase mostly involved converting existing Sure Start Local Programmes – but also provision established through earlier initiatives, such as Early Excellence Centres and Neighbourhood Nurseries – into children's centres, although there was some new building. Centres in the second phase, rolled out

from 2006 to 2008, brought the core offer to remaining areas in the bottom 30% of the deprivation scale. Centres in the third phase, established between 2008 and 2010, covered more all areas and did not have to provide childcare and early education places.

Dorset Council currently manages 22 designated Children's Centres. However use of some centres has changed over the past years, with many operating reduced opening hours and others utilised for early education provision only. Where this is the case services have moved to other local community spaces in response to parental feedback and local need.

Where a capital asset funded wholly or partly by the department's Sure Start capital grant has its usage changed, is transferred or otherwise disposed of, the local authority may be liable to repay the grant money to the DfE through the claw back process in line with the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant capital guidance.

There are 2 criteria by which claw back may be deferred:

- If the building remains to be used predominantly for the delivery of early years services (at least 51%)
- Where local authorities are not able to keep buildings open or in use predominantly for early years services, subject to prior approval by DfE, the claw back rules allow local authorities to avoid claw back by reinvesting any remaining value of a capital asset in a new asset used for similar purposes. In these circumstances, DfE defers claw back and transfers its interest to the new asset

1.3 Family Hub Network Development

An Asset Based Community Development approach is guiding identification of potential Family Hub sites, with additional feasibility assessment to ensure that designated hubs can meet the requirements as defined by the DfE in line with grant funding conditions.

The Family Hub network is being developed from existing community spaces where families tell us they feel comfortable and welcome and are being led by services and providers with existing and well-established relationships with local families. This is supporting delivery of non-stigmatised, accessible information and support in local areas.

This approach is leading to mixed model of delivery, with Family Hubs developing from a range of existing places such as children's centres, community centres and libraries.

Assessments have been undertaken for each Children's Centre supporting identification of potential Family Hub sites or potential vacation / de-designation of centres deemed surplus to requirements: enabling realisation and financial savings through relocation of services into new Family Hub buildings and community outreach points (The Family Hub network).

Centres are identified as surplus to requirements either because we are developing a Family Hub in that area and/or, they are already underutilised and therefore its closure as a children's centre will have no or minimal adverse impact on families or delivery partners.

Individual impact assessments for each of our children's centre confirm that all centres identified for potential vacation / de-designation meet one of the 2 criteria for Sure Start Clawback deferral and will inform individual vacation plans.

Vacation of children's centres will be led by the Family Hubs project team and Communications and Engagement team to ensure we meet all our duties in relation to consultation, and supported by Assets & Regeneration. Vacant children's centres will be assessed by the Assets & Regeneration service for repurposing / development / disposal in line with the council's asset decision making process.

Importantly, development of our Family Hub network approach will increase the level of service provision, with no reduction of existing services.

1.4 Alignment to Library Strategy

Dorset's recently published Library Strategy sets out a vision to develop 'trusted community spaces for everyone, with services to inspire your future', with the following aims:

- To connect with and meet the needs of our communities.
- To create accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use.

The strategy details plans for a new model of delivery across the library network.

Library and Children's Services recognise the synergies in their priorities and plans and acknowledge the potential benefits of alignment to enable place-based delivery of services, through development of premises that enable integration of

delivery partners from across a broad range of services and organisations through co-location and shared use of space.

We aim to maximise the benefits of this opportunity, designating libraries as Family Hub network points, enabling children and family services to be delivered in non stigmatised community venues in accessible spaces across the Dorset Council area.

As a minimum all public access computers will enable families to access the online Family Hub and library staff will be trained to connect families to information, help and support as required. In many libraries children and family services will be delivered directly on site.

2. Financial Implications

Through the rationalisation of the property estate and the re-provisioning of existing assets the Council will be able to generate not only efficiency savings and capital receipts but also generate income and both commercial and social value through the repurposing and redirection of the existing estate in order to meet the Council's social, economic and financial needs and aims.

In order to develop a network of community spaces that enable integrated service delivery, we are working towards a strategic agreement defining arrangements for shared use of premises. This is aligned with the implementation of the Effective Property Services approach across all Dorset Libraries. Thus, enabling Council services to be delivered from Council buildings with avoidance of unnecessary financial transactions between Council services.

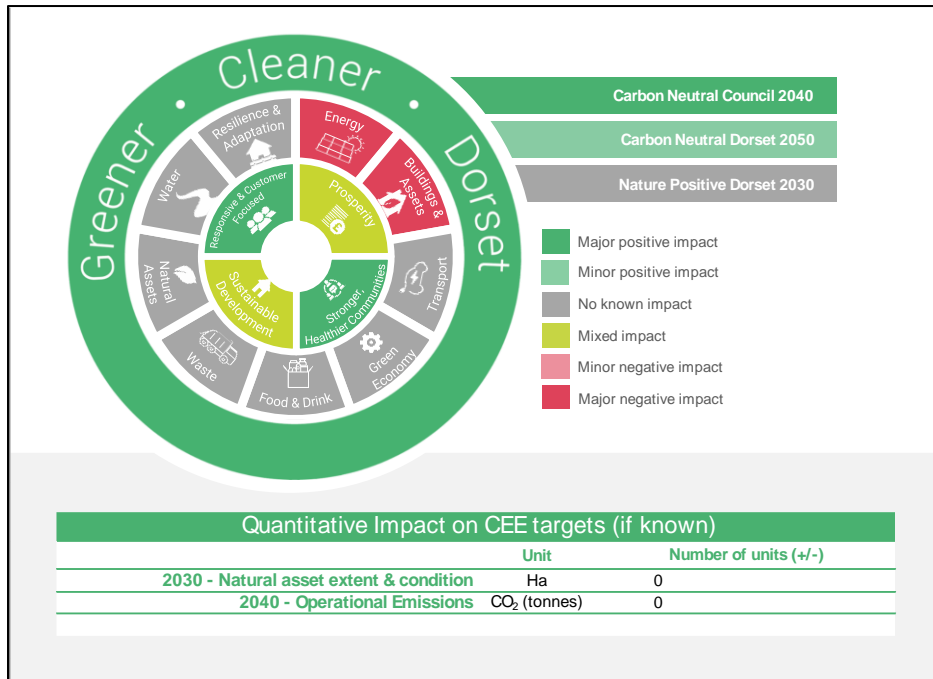
The library service offer space for use by community groups and other public services at subsidised booking rates.

Increased occupancy and ad hoc use of library buildings by children's services will reduce the ability for the library service to generate income from the higher of its meeting rooms and venues. Therefore, the income generating target for the library service will be reduced in line with the children's services anticipated use of the library spaces this will be informed by a review of the library estates by children's services. The resulting figure will be shared in future updates, but it is estimated to be in the region of £30-40,000. We will look to mitigate the financial impact of this through the balancing of savings achieved under the family hub programme.

3. Environmental Implications

The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and is committed to taking direct action to reduce the negative environmental impact of our services. Included within the Council's Draft Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy is a Buildings & Built Assets Detailed Technical Paper which has established a series of objectives and an action plan for the estate to ensure that it becomes zero carbon by 2040.

This report aligns with the Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan recognises the above objectives and as part of any Asset Review and new Council developments will work to implement the necessary actions in order to reach the Council's carbon reduction target.



Recommendations:

1. Ensure all electrical equipment is the most energy efficient.
2. Maximise energy efficiency of the building fabric (e.g. Loft & wall insulation, triple glazing)

Response: Any capital works or improvements associated with development of the Family Hub network will incorporate the most energy efficient options available.

NB, *The decision wheel is currently focused on projects relating to individual buildings whilst the family hubs project relates to a number of buildings across the county. The Assets & Regeneration team are working with the Climate team*

on revising the environment & climate policy & strategy to better reflect work programmes of this nature.

4. Well-being and Health Implications

Family hubs provide families with a single access point to integrated family support services for early help with social, emotional, and physical needs.

Family Hubs also provide opportunities for social interaction for all family members, aiming to reduce isolation, support connections and strengthen relationships.

5. Other Implications

There are no other implications to consider.

6. Risk Assessment

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and verified by Dorset Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer. The impacts for each of the protected characteristics groups are classed as either positive or neutral.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Family Hub Network

Background Papers

None

Appendix 1 – Family Hub Network

The table below shows the proposed Family Hub network points, alongside the Children’s Centres proposed for designation.

Locality	Children’s Centre	Family Hub Main Sites (bold) and Delivery Points
EAST		The Centre
		Leigh Park Children’s Centre
		Verwood Hub
		Corfe Mullen Library and Children’s Centre
		Ferndown Library
		Wareham Library
		Westmoors Library
		Wimbourne Library
PURBECK	Wool & Bovington	Verwood Library
	Wareham	Bovington MoD Hub
		Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation
		Swanage Children’s and Community Centre
DORCHESTER	Poundbury	Upton Library and Children’s Centre
	Broadmayne	Lytchett Matravers Library
		Swanage Library
CHESIL	Westham	Dorchester Library
	Outlooks Portland	Relate
		Crossways Library
		Weymouth TBC
		Portland
		Islanders Club
WEST	Beaminster & Lyme	Portland Town Council
		TopClub Littlemoor
		Weymouth Library
		Littlemoor Library
		Wyke Regis Library
		Beaminster Library
NORTH	Blandford	Lyme Regis Library
	Shaftsbury	Bridport Children’s Centre
	Sherborne	Bridport Library
		Blandford TBC
		Shaftsbury Library
		Sherborne Library
	Gillingham Library	
	Sturminster Newton Library	
	Vale Pantry	

We will continue to grow the network of Family Hub delivery points, connecting existing community assets through engagement with community delivery partners.