

## Rother District Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	27 July 2020
<b>Title:</b>	Children's Nursery Provision in Bexhill
<b>Report of:</b>	Councillor Christine Bayliss
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Christine Bayliss
<b>Ward(s):</b>	Bexhill Central and Bexhill Sidley
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To update Members on the current position with regard to East Sussex County Council's provision of children's nursery services in Bexhill.
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Non-key
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It be <b>RESOLVED:</b> That: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) the current position with regard to East Sussex County Council's provision of children's nursery services in Bexhill be noted; and</li><li>2) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be tasked with urgently reviewing this matter, requesting a report and attendance by East Sussex County Council at an OSC meeting and report its findings and implications of the decision to a future meeting of Cabinet.</li></ol>

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### Introduction

1. At its meeting of 8 July 2019 (minute reference C19/33 refers) full Council passed a resolution relating to the proposed closure of East Sussex County Council's consultation on Children's Services Early Help Draft Strategy 2020-2023 and objects to the proposals to:
  - a. withdraw the subsidy and to no longer provide the Cygnets (Egerton Park) and Rainbow (Sidley) nurseries in Bexhill;
  - b. encourage expressions of interest from other nursery providers to operate in these children's centres (privatise); and
  - c. relocate children's services currently delivered from the Children's Centre in Egerton Park, Bexhill to Sidley Children's and Youth Centre.
2. Rother District Council (RDC) objected on the basis that these services support the Council's core aim to provide 'Stronger, Safer Communities'; and the broad outline 'addressing deprivation and welfare needs', and in particular, that the proposal to withdraw subsidised nursery places, places a barrier to work for families in the most deprived wards in East Sussex.
3. As part of their Early Help Review, ESCC aimed "to secure sufficient availability, as far as is reasonably practicable, of nursery provision in Bexhill. Nurseries in Bexhill would no longer be operated by the Council, which would instead work

with other providers to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient nursery places in the area, as it does in the rest of the county. This process may include sub-leasing the spaces for Rainbow and Cygnets nurseries to other nursery providers, but would not incur ongoing financial or other direct responsibilities for nursery services. If development of sufficient alternative provision in Bexhill proves impossible, it may be necessary to review closure of the nurseries”.

4. The decision to close the two nurseries from 31 December 2020 with the potential loss of 18 jobs has been confirmed in the last few days
5. There are some aspects of this decision that require further consideration:
  - a. 164 children will have to find alternative nursery provision in Bexhill.
  - b. There is uncertainty over the continuing status of some of the existing nurseries, therefore leading to a question mark over whether there are sufficient spaces available with other providers.
  - c. The impact of the closures of the local job market in Bexhill and the implications for employers.
  - d. How RDC could support the creation and launch of alternative provision including a community run solution (e.g. a Community Interest Company); and
  - e. The future use of the buildings, both owned by RDC.

## Conclusion

6. As the decision has only just been confirmed there is insufficient time to address all the issues and questions this raises. Cabinet are therefore asked to note the current position and refer the matter for urgent review to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who can request a report and attendance by ESCC at an OSC meeting and report its findings and implications of the decision to a future meeting of Cabinet.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Sustainability	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

Executive Director:	NA
Proper Officer:	
Report Contact Officer:	Councillor Christine Bayliss
Appendices:	None
Relevant Previous Minutes:	Minutes of Council meeting 8 July 2019, minute reference C19/33
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None