

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date: **3 August 2004**

Title of Report: **Integrated Children's Centres**

By: **Director of Education and Libraries**

Purpose of Report: **To seek the agreement of the Cabinet to the development of nine integrated children's centres between 2004 and 2006, building on the current local Sure Start programmes, and to specific proposals for a children's centre in the Ore Valley area of Hastings**

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**Recommendation:**  
**The Cabinet is recommended to:**

- (i) agree the development of an initial tranche of nine integrated children's centres, managed by the County Council either directly or through service level agreements with other agencies, as described in Appendix 2 to the Annex attached;**
  - (ii) agree the proposed approach to minimising and managing the risks associated with the programme; and**
  - (iii) agree specific proposals for a children's centre in the Ore Valley area of Hastings, set out in Appendix 3 to the Annex attached.**
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## **1 Financial appraisal**

1.1 The financial implications of the proposals are set out fully in paragraphs 35-37 of the Annex attached. The costs of the centres over the next two years are covered through General Sure Start Grant and local Sure Start programme grant. The costs to the authority centrally in terms of management and scrutiny can also be covered by General Sure Start grant but may also need a further contribution from the Council's own budget. This is being considered as part of the reconciling policy and resources exercise for 2005/2006. The financial viability of the initiative, over the medium to long term, depends very significantly on the level of support from Government.

## **2 Supporting Information**

2.1 A children's centre is a local establishment providing integrated child care, early education, health and social care services, with links to training and employment advice for parents and carers. Attached as an Annex to this paper is a detailed report setting out the expectations of local authorities in relation to the development of children's centres over the next two years and beyond, and how children's centres relate to the current local Sure Start programmes. The report considers:

- the history of local Sure Start programmes: what they are and the position so far reached in East Sussex
- Government policy on "integrated children's centres": how the centres relate to Sure Start programmes and what local authorities are expected to do over the next few years
- the work which has been done on children's centres by officers with partners (particularly with the health service and the local Sure Start programmes) over the last year and the position reached so far
- the opportunities created by the children's centre programme and links to key County Council strategies

- the risks associated with the programme, both overall and in relation to each proposed centre, and the approach to risk management which we now recommend
- the decisions the County Council needs to take now and the timing of further decisions
- the financial implications of the proposals

### **3. Conclusion and recommendations**

3.1 The children's centre programme offers exciting opportunities to improve and extend services for young children and their families, building on effective practice in the current local Sure Start programmes. There are risks for the County Council associated with the programme but we believe these risks can be managed and that the opportunities it offers should be embraced by the Council.

3.2 An early decision about the proposed centre in the Ore Valley area of Hastings is important if the funds available to support the capital development are to be used by the deadline set by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). I recommend that the Cabinet agree to the proposed capital grant and to take on the proposed site lease in principle, with authority delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources for the approval of detailed terms.

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Director of Education and Libraries

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