

## Cabinet – 15 July 2020

### Future of Stanleys Nursery Birchills

**Portfolio:** Councillor T Wilson, Children's

**Related portfolios:** Councillor C Towe

**Service:** Early Help, Childrens Services

**Wards:** Birchills/Leamore

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### 1 Aim

To determine the future of the childcare provision known as Stanley's Nursery, based at Birchills Sure Start Centre.

#### 2 Summary

Birchills childcare is the last remaining non statutory childcare provision directly provided by the council. The service is heavily subsidised by the council (Childrens Services budget) with an overspend in 2019/20 of £0.095m, forecasted to increase in 2020/21 to £0.138m.

The council is responsible for ensuring there are sufficient childcare places across the borough to meet demand but there is no statutory requirement to be a provider of childcare.

In February 2020, Cabinet approved the commencement of a consultation exercise with parents/carers and stakeholders about the future options for the service following two unsuccessful procurement / tendering exercises to transfer the service and the ongoing budget pressure.

This report sets out the approach to that consultation with parents/carers and stakeholders between March 2020 and May 2020 and provides a detailed analysis of the feedback received on the 4 options which were:

Option 1: Keep Stanley's Nursery open and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of +£70,000 and we ask for your suggestions.

Option 2: Keep Stanley's Nursery open and in order to cover running costs raise childcare fees to £110 a day, £55 half day.

Option 3: Keep Stanley's Nursery open, charging the market rate of £50 full day and £25 half day and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of £55,000. We seek your suggestions.

Option 4: Close Stanley's Nursery meaning 105 children would need to find alternative childcare provision and 19 staff would be put at risk of redundancy.

\* The original shortfall & fees in option 1 & 2 circulated as part of the consultation were based on the forecasted overspend of £0.070m as at February 2020. The 19 staff in option 4 related directly to those employed at the time to provide the childcare day service, not the cleaning and caretaking function. The 105 children relate to the children registered at the nursery as of February 2020, 48 of these children will be leaving the nursery to start nursery/school in September 2020.

This is a key decision because the proposal is above threshold for expenditure and requires cabinet approval.

Cabinet will note the following Appendices attached to this report

- Appendix 1 – Consultation Correspondence to Parents/carers
- Appendix 2 – Consultation Correspondence to Stakeholders
- Appendix 3 – EqIA Policies. Procedures, Services
- Appendix 4 – EqIA Organisational Change

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That action taken to date in relation to Stanley's Nursery Birchills is noted
- 3.3 That the results and feedback from parents / carers and stakeholders consulted on 4 options about the future of Stanley's Nursery are considered

That the closure of Stanley's Nursery, Birchills (option 4) is approved

### 4 Report Detail – Know

#### 4.1 Stanleys Nursery, Birchills

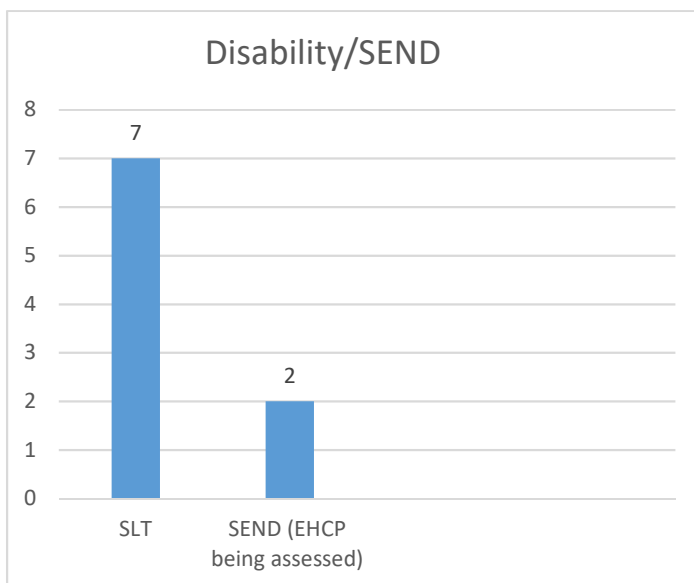
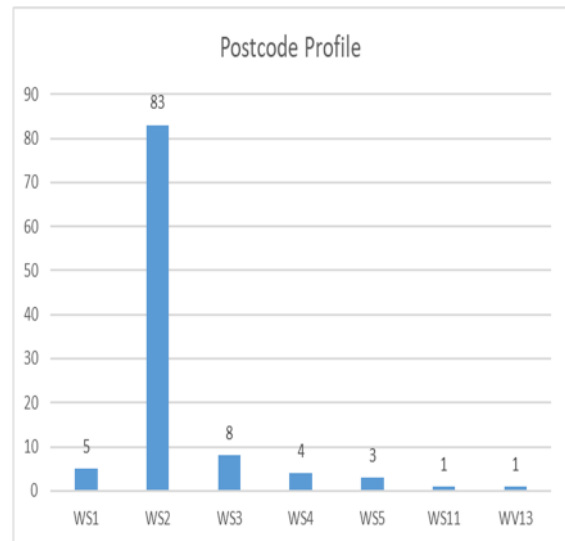
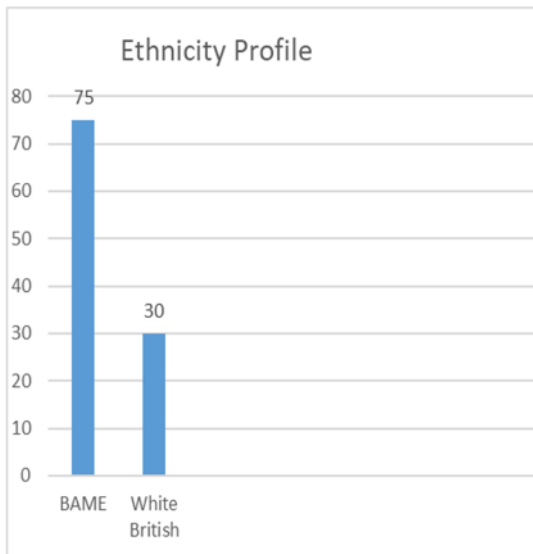
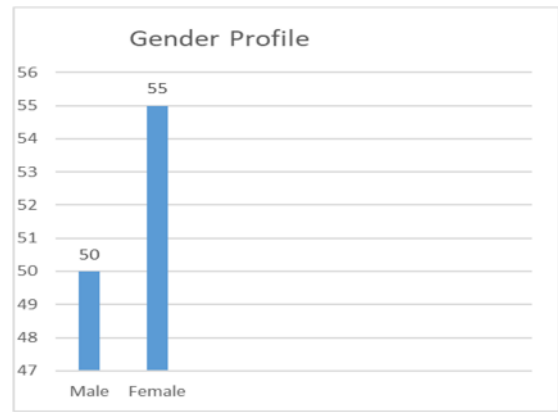
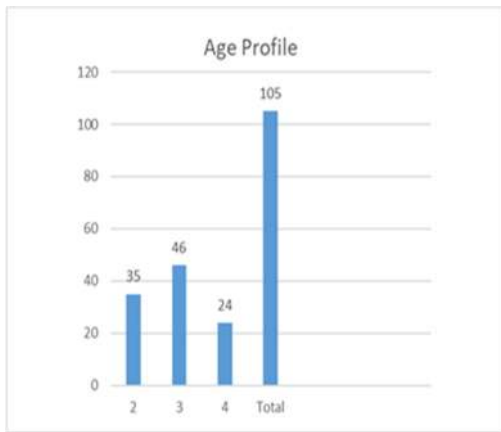
Stanley's Nursery is the last remaining childcare service in the borough directly provided by Walsall Council. The provision of childcare by a Local Authority is not a statutory requirement; Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient childcare places across the borough to meet demand.

The nursery is a day care provision for children aged 2 years to 4 years of age. There are currently 105 children registered at the nursery with a total of 23 members of staff (including cleaning & caretaking employees)

The current weekly childcare usage is as follows:

Days attending	Total no. of children attending	All day	Mornings Only	Afternoons Only
Every Day	81	4	47	30
4 days a week	4	3		1
3 days a week	7	6	1	
2 days a week	11	6	5	
1 day a week	2	1		

The profile of the children attending nursery is as follows:



\*SLT: Speech & Language Therapy  
 SEND: EHCP currently being assessed

The proposal impacts children under 5 years of age, However, of the current 105 cohort of children attending the nursery provision, 48 children (46%) will be leaving in July 2020 to start Nursery School or Primary School in September 2020.

These 48 children have a transition plan in place and work is on-going with the new setting in preparation for a smooth transition.

The parents and carers of the remaining 57 children will be provided with a detailed and personal transition plan, along with a dedicated support package from the Family Information Service to secure alternative provision from school nurseries, private providers and/or child minders. Each child will have an individual action plan which will be reviewed weekly.

For the children receiving Speech & Language Therapy, 3 are due to leave July 2020, a transition plan to their new school/nursery will be provided. For the remaining 5, again the dedicated Family Information Service will ensure support is provided and appropriate alternative setting secured, relevant information shared as part of the transition planning.

For the children with SEND, currently having an EHCP assessment, both are leaving and a transition plan will be in place.

Parents and carers of children seeking a placement at Stanley's Nursery have been advised of the uncertainty of the future provision since Cabinet approval to consult (February 2020) and therefore there are no children currently on the waiting list for Stanley's Nursery Birchills. This decision was made to avoid unnecessary anxieties and delay in securing alternative placements with nearby providers. The Family Information Service has provided advice and assistance to secure alternative provision for any parents/carers making enquiries.

***Appendix 3 EqIA Policies. Procedures, Services provides further detail relating to children, parents/carers.***

#### 4.1.1 Sufficiency of Provision

The provision of childcare by a Local Authority is not a statutory requirement, Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient childcare places across the borough to meet demand.

A recent review of the childcare market place and sufficiency within the borough (February 2020) concluded that there are sufficient placements available for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

As part of the sufficiency drive within the local area to Birchills Nursery, a local school (Croft Primary Academy) are extending provision for children aged 2yrs, creating an additional 24 places, this will support the transition for some of the 57 children requiring an alternative placement.

#### 4.1.2 Cabinet Decision making

In February 2015 Cabinet approved the implementation of a new model of delivery for children's centres, the transfer of some former children centre buildings to schools and a procurement process to transfer remaining childcare and buildings to suitable third party organisation/s.

Procurement was completed and services successfully transferred to alternative providers, for all except Stanley's Nursery Birchills

As part of a follow on report on the redesign of children centre services in February 2017, Cabinet approved the undertaking of a competitive procurement process to determine the most suitable provider(s) for the provision of childcare and early learning and to commence delivery from early Autumn 2017.

#### 4.1.3 Procurement Activity

Following the Cabinet decision in February 2017, a tendering exercise took place between 25th April and 25th May 2017 to find an organisation to take over the running of Stanley's Nursery, Birchills but there were no bidders. A further tender exercise was undertaken between 26th June and 7th July 2017, one bid was received which did not meet the Council's requirements. Since the tender process was unsuccessful, a negotiation process was undertaken with the organisation that submitted a bid which led to them providing an initial business case. However, when further negotiations were undertaken to establish the validity of the business case the organisation found that there were some costs which they had not taken into account which meant that the business case was not viable and they withdrew from the negotiations in February 2018.

The Council was approached in May 2018 by another potential provider, negotiation took place based on the initial specification to determine if Stanley's Nursery Birchills could be a suitable site and an initial business case was developed but after further negotiations it was found that the business case was not viable and they withdrew from the negotiations.

#### 4.1.4 Consultation & Analysis of Finding

Following Cabinet approval (February 2020) to consult on the future of the Nursery provision, comprehensive consultation has taken place, in line with the council's statutory duty to consult.

Consultation commenced 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 with the parents/carers of the 105 children attending the nursery at that time and with 6 stakeholders utilising, free of charge, the building to deliver services to children and young people such as Health Assessments, Speech & Language Support.

#### 4.1.5 Parents/Carers Consultation

- Week commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 letters were hand delivered and signed for by all parents and carers of the 105 children attending the nursery provision
- Paper questionnaires with a stamped address envelope for return were provided
- A telephone helpline for advice and assistance for parents/carers, including support with any language barriers was provided.
- Drop in sessions were arranged, 6 in total, covering different days and various times to ensure all parents/cares were given with an opportunity to seek further information, encourage to complete the questionnaires provided, help and support regarding alternative settings hold they require

- Follow-up telephone calls were made to parents/carers that had not been seen during drop in sessions to encourage participation in the consultation process
- A comments box was left at the nursery reception to encourage parents/carers to leave their comments and/or completed questionnaires
- 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, letters were sent to all parents/carers confirming consultation had been 'paused' due to the Covid 19 pandemic, (all parents had been spoken to the week prior regarding the Covid situation)
- 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020 letters sent to parents/carers advising on the conclusion of the consultation and extension to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to allow additional time for people to respond

20<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 telephone calls made to all parents and carers who had not been directly spoken to during the drop in session or previous telephone 'ring around' (30 parents in total)

During the consultation period parents/carers were asked to comment and give consideration of 4 options:

Option 1: Keep Stanley's Nursery open and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of +£70,000 and we ask for your suggestions.

Option 2: Keep Stanley's Nursery open and in order to cover running costs raise childcare fees to £110 a day, £55 half day.

Option 3: Keep Stanley's Nursery open charging the market rate of £50 full day and £25 half day and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of £55,000. We seek your suggestions.

Option 4: Close Stanley's Nursery meaning 105 children would need to find alternative childcare provision and 19 staff would be put at risk of redundancy.

\* The original shortfall & fees in option 1 & 2 circulated as part of the consultation were based on the forecasted overspend of £0.070m as at February 2020. The 19 staff in option 4 related directly to those employed at the time to provide the childcare day service, not the cleaning and caretaking function. The 105 children relate to the children registered at the nursery as of February 2020, 48 of these children will be leaving the nursery to start nursery/school in September 2020.

By the final closing date of consultation

- 26 out of 103 questionnaires had been completed and returned (sibling groups received one questionnaire per household)
- 38 parents/carers had been seen at the drop in sessions
- All but 4 families were contacted successfully via telephone to encourage participation in the consultation
- 11 comments were received via the comment box left at the nursery

**Appendix 1** provides detailed analyses of the questionnaire feedback received

**Appendix 2** provides detailed analyses of the face to face, telephone calls and comment box feedback received.

When presented with four options for the future of Stanley's Nursery, the majority of those parents/carers who responded thought that the nursery should be kept open and the shortfall in funding met some other way (option 1). Suggestions for how the £70,000 shortfall could be met included generating income from making better use of the building through private room hire or through fundraising events. No suggestions were likely to generate the £70,000 required.

Some parents/carers felt that it should also be kept open and the fees increased to the market rate (option 3), 31% (8) of those parents/carers responding suggested this, however there was little support for increasing the fees to cover the running costs (option 2) or closing the nursery (option 4).

Regarding Option 4, closing the nursery, most parents/carers stated that should the nursery close they would find an alternative private nursery, 43% of parents & carers spoken to during the one to one drop in sessions advised that their child/ren would be leaving to start Nursery School or Primary School in September 2020. A few said they would no longer engage in early years' provision at all and seek childcare from family or friends, the main reason stated were around finding suitable local nurseries with places available, particularly one close to home. For a few possible closure would necessitate the reduction of work / study hours or giving up work/ study altogether, whilst others advised they would seek childcare from family and friends.

In terms of usage, 92 % of parents and carers responding were current users of the nursery with at least 1 child attending on a full or half day rota. The majority of childcare tends to be on a part-time basis as table below indicates. Of the parents/carers who responded to the consultation 73% state that their child / children get 15 hours free childcare a week and therefore attend for this number of hours. One parent/carers said they were entitled to 30 hours free childcare and their child attends for 23 hours a week, three said they attend for 12 hours or less a week.

Whilst most parents and carers stated that they utilise their free childcare entitlement, just two stated they pay the full cost of childcare, with their children attending for 20 hours and 5 hours a week.

Start and end times vary however most children (9) start at 09.00 in the morning and of these 8 stay until 12.00, all of these receive 15 hours free childcare. A total of 6 start earlier, between 07.30 and 08.30 and 5 children stay all day. Four of these receive 15 hours free childcare and one 30 hours.

#### 4.1.6 Stakeholder Consultation

Responses have been received from 2 of the stakeholders, One Walsall who utilise rooms to provide adult weight management clinics and Dorothy Pattison Hospital who provide perinatal mental health services.

Both felt disheartened at the possibility of the building and facilities closing stating they provided much needed services to support the local community that potentially may impact families in the on the long term.

One Walsall raised a concern around the reduced availability and access to venues across Walsall and suggested renting out part of the building to organisations to help fund the shortfall.

#### 4.1.7 Covid 19 Implications

Due to Covid 19 consultation was paused on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and resumed 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

As part of the Government guidance to re-open Early Years settings, parents/carers were contacted to understand the potential demand on the service.

Of the 105 children attending the nursery, only 14 parents/carers have indicated that their children will be returning to the nursery before the summer break, with 33 parents stating they may consider an early return dependant on risk assessments and new working practices being implemented. At the time of this report being written work is undergoing to meet the Covid 19 recommendations with a view of re-opening on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020. Following the advice the capacity of children that can return is 24 children. Priority will be given to those aged 3 and 4 in preparation to support transition into Nursery School and/or School for the September admissions, there are 45 children (43%) due to leave by this date.

## **4.2 Council Corporate Plan Priorities**

There are sufficient childcare places available across the borough to meet the needs of all 2, 3 and 4 year old children. The support that will be provided to all parents/carers of those children requiring alternative childcare will be critical in ensuring children have the best start in life, are safe from harm, happy, healthy & learning well.

## **4.3 Risk management**

### **4.3.1 Buildings**

Capital grant funding was obtained for Children's Centres under the Governments Sure Start programme. The Council's funding agreement with the Department for Schools, Families and Children includes provisions whereby a proportion of the grant must be repaid in the event that the use of the building for childcare ceases.

Where the Council is the accountable body for Children's Centres which have been funded using Sure Start grant capital funding, it is under an obligation to notify and consult with the Education Funding Agency (EFA) about any proposal to dispose of or change the use of a property funded by such grant. The claw back will potentially apply for any property disposal or change of use within a period of 25 years from the date of the grant. Claw back of funding is triggered where an asset, wholly or partly funded by the grant, is disposed of or the asset is no longer used to meet the aims and objectives of Sure Start. The EFA has clarified that the grant of a lease of Children's Centres by the Council could trigger a capital claw back risk to the Council

To mitigate the risk of capital claw back Children's Services will utilise the building as part of the Transformation Programme and delivery of the existing 0-19 Early Help Locality Model, where services to children and young people will continue. The proposed future use of the building will be noted in the application to the Education Funding Agency for the deferral of the claw back as a mitigating factor.

### **4.3.2 Child Care**

There is a risk to the 57 children remaining at Stanleys Nursery in securing an alternative provision. However, to mitigate the risks there will be a 3 month transition plan for each parent, carer and child. The Family Information Service will provide a dedicated personal resource to support all parents/carers to identify appropriate alternative provision for their children.



Each child will receive an individual transition plan reviewed on a weekly basis in partnership with parents/carers to consider the alternative options and supported, where requested to make applications and secure placements.

Children already moving into Nursery and/or School from September 2020 have existing individual transition plans which will continue to be supported, along with the appropriate liaison with the new setting including the sharing of appropriate/relevant information regarding SEND support needs and plans.

To avoid any unnecessary anxieties for parents/carers there are no children currently on the waiting list for Stanley's Nursery Birchills. Following Cabinet February 2020 local parents were advised of the consultation process and the uncertainty of the future of the provision, support has been provided to parents/cares making enquiries to secure alternative provision via the Family Information Service.

#### 4.4 Financial Implications

Stanley's Nursery was overspent in the past financial year and is forecasted to be again in 2020/21 by £0.138m. This is expected to reduce to £0.096m if the nursery were to close by end of December 2020

	2020/21 Forecast
	£m
Staffing costs	0.357
Non-staffing costs	0.033
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>0.390</b>
<b>Total expected income</b>	<b>(0.251)</b>
<b>Overspend</b>	<b>0.138</b>

This position is an ongoing pressure, for which an ongoing solution needs to be found if the nursery is not closed. There is a requirement for a set number of employees in relation to the number of children attending the nursery, so it is not possible to reduce staffing costs. Therefore additional income would need to be generated to offset the expected overspend. Please see table below for possible changes to fees:

	All day £	AM £	PM £	Increase in total income £
Current Rate	37.50	19.25	19.30	
Market Rate	55.00	25.00	25.00	17,108
Original rate required to cover all costs in 2019/20	110.00	55.00	55.00	71,765
Rate required to cover all costs in 2020/21	165.00	82.50	82.50	137,898

An increase from the current rate of pay to the market rate would generate an additional £0.017m income based on the current cohort of children, which would not be sufficient to cover the running costs.

The original fee increases circulated as part of the consultation were based on the forecasted overspend of £0.070m as at February 2020. The 2019/20 outturn position was actually an overspend of £0.095m prior to mitigating actions. The overspend for 2020/21 is forecasted to increase to £0.138m prior to mitigating actions so the rate increase to £110/£55 (based on February 2020 forecast position) would no longer be sufficient to cover the expected costs. The rates would need to increase to £165/£82.50 to cover all the forecasted costs for 2020/21. The amount fees would have to be increased by to cover all costs is not realistic.

If the council continues to run the nursery, a budget would need to be allocated from within Childrens Services to cover the additional costs of operating the service. This is not considered feasible, as there are already significant funding pressures on statutory services so it is not possible to remove budget from these services to fund a non-statutory service.

Should the decision be to close the nursery, there will be one-off redundancy and pension costs of circa £0.156m.

#### 4.5 Legal Implications

There has been significant change to both national and local policy on Early Years since Children's Centres were first established, including the Government's policy on free early education for disadvantaged 2 year olds and the announcement of the increase to 30 hours a week of the free early education entitlement for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. Section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities to secure early years provision free of charge for eligible 2 year olds.

This free entitlement to learning is aimed at improving disadvantaged children's social and cognitive outcomes so that by the age of 5 they are as ready as their more advantaged peers to start and fully benefit from school.

Whilst the Council has a duty to ensure sufficiency of childcare places within the borough, there is no statutory duty for the Council to provide childcare services.

#### **4.6 Procurement Implications/Social Value**

Procurement to transfer the Birchills Childcare has taken place twice without success. The specification has been reviewed however there is limited capacity for the council to make any further amendments that would attract any bidders. The deficit operational costs and the pension liabilities remain a key area of concern to potential bidders. Whilst Children's Service can continue to scope the market and carry out a further procurement exercise it is unlikely to be successful without significant financial incentives being put in place.

#### **4.7 Property Implications**

In the event that Stanley's Nursery is approved for closure, under the Corporate Landlord Model, the operational need for the building within Children's Services will need to be considered. If the building is considered to be surplus to Children's Services' requirements, then it will revert to being a corporate asset and consideration will be given to potential alternative operational uses for the building. If no such uses are identified, then consideration would be given to declaring the building surplus to the Council's requirements and seeking to dispose of the asset. As detailed above, the cessation of the use for early years and / or the disposal of the building are triggers for the capital claw back of the grant funding. Accordingly, the feasibility of the relocation of the Children's Services Early Help Central and South Locality hub is being considered.

#### **4.8 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

The Council is required to provide sufficient Childcare places and to secure early education for every eligible 2 year old. Children's Services Early Years team have confirmed that there are sufficient places within the immediate and wider areas to accommodate the childcare needs that will continue to support the health and wellbeing of the children and the parents/carers.

As described in 4.8.4 above there are plans to support the parents and carers of the 57 children who will require alternative provision, with individual transition plans, reviewed and monitored weekly over a 3 month transition period to ensure all children and secured alternative placements.

#### **4.9 Staffing Implications**

The implication of the closure of Stanley's Nursery Birchills may result in up to 23 staff redundancies. This includes staff from cleaning and caretaking. Staff will be formally consulted in line with the Council's Redundancy Policy and will have access to redeployment opportunities in line with the Council's Redeployment Policy once the future model of delivery has been agreed.

#### ***Appendix 4 EqIA Organisational Change***

Staff and Unions have been advised and updated throughout this process.

Birchills is the largest childcare service operated by Children's Services and is the last of the childcare service that is directly provided by the Council, meaning there is no opportunity for staff to assimilate into the same role elsewhere within the Authority. However, HR and Managers will work with staff who would like to consider alternative roles to explore any suitable opportunities available to them via redeployment. As there are also caretaking and cleaning staff employed at the Nursery consultation will take

place with those staff via Facilities Management and again where possible staff will be redeployed within any service vacancies.

#### **4.10 Reducing Inequalities**

Equality Impact Assessment's (EqIA) has been completed, see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.

This proposal does effect some protected characteristic groups negatively including staff, children, parents and carers. As detailed in the EqIA's including:

- children under the age of 5, a high proportion of whom are BAME
- small group of children with SEND
- staff who are predominately female and
- parents and carers who took part in the consultation activities were all female.

However actions to mitigate impact have been taken into account as follows:

- all parents/carers will be provided with a dedicated resource from the Family Information Service to identify and secure alternative provision. Each child will have an individual transition plan reviewed weekly with parents/carers
- all children with SEND needs, will have a detailed and personal transition plan implemented for their new nursery and/or school or child minder
- the survey feedback with parents/carers did not highlight concerns negatively around BAME, this will be monitored
- parents/carers consulted with were predominately female, this would be expected as it is predominately 'mums' who bring their children into nursery and who tend to be the liaison with nursery on a daily basis, again feedback did not raise issues around this, letters were sent to the home address allowing all parents/cares to be involved with the consultation activities

#### **4.11 Consultation**

A comprehensive consultation plan has been implemented and meets the statutory requirements which included engagement with parents/cares and partner stakeholders.

Appropriate staff consultation will take place subject to the decision made by Cabinet, in light of the current Covid 19 situation and the limitations this presents in terms of face to face consultation, Trade Unions will be informed of proposed appropriate methods of consultation with employees in the event that the decision necessitates this.

#### **5. Decide**

Cabinet to decide if the recommendation for the closure of Stanley's Nursery, Birchills is to be approved, taking into account

- The childcare provision is a non-statutory service the Local Authorities responsibility is to ensure there are sufficient childcare places across the borough
- There are sufficient childcare places across the borough, with an additional 24 places for 2 year olds being provided by a local school within a close proximity of Stanley's Nursery

- The service is heavily subsidised by the council, with Childrens Services having an overspend 2019/20 of £0.095m, forecasted to increase in 2020/21 to £0.138m.
- Detailed consultation with parents/ cares and stakeholders has been completed
- The continued delivery of the nursery is not financially viable

## 6. Respond

Children's Services to implement the approved recommendation and take the appropriate action.

The Family Information Services within Early Help will provide a dedicated helpline and contact all parents and carers of the 57 children remaining registered at the nursery from September 2020 to support the identification of alternative childcare provision and support parents/carers where required to secure placements.

All staff will be advised of the outcome of Cabinet decision, will be treated fairly and in line with HR policies and procedures.

## 7. Review

The sufficiency of childcare within the area will continue to be monitored and the Early Years team will work with providers to meet any future demand.

### Background papers

- Cabinet Papers February 2015
- Cabinet Papers February 2017
- Cabinet Papers February 2020

### Author

Julie Jones  
Group Manager Early Help  
☎ 07557541064  
✉ julie.jones@walsall.gov.uk



Sally Rowe  
Executive Director  
6 July 2020



Councillor Wilson  
Portfolio holder  
6 July 2020

## **1. The Future of Stanley's Nursery - Findings from consultation**

### **1.1 Background and approach to consultation**

Stanley's Nursery is the borough's remaining childcare service provided and subsidised by Walsall council. The annual subsidiary rate is currently £70,000 and is predicted to rise to £87,000 by the next financial year. In order to inform decisions about the nursery's future, a programme of consultation with parents and carers was conducted, the findings of which would be used alongside other information to inform the final decision.

On 2 March 2020 letters explaining the consultation and questionnaires were given to parents / carers of children who attend the nursery or are due to attend. In addition, in order to gain a richer understanding 6 face to face sessions were arranged where officers were on hand to take comments or provide assistance completing the questionnaire. Unfortunately due to the Covid 19 situation 4 out of the 6 drop in face to face sessions were delivered.

Feedback gathered at these sessions is summarised in appendix 2

Consultation began on 2 March 2020 and was due to conclude on 31 March 2020, however the COVID-19 crisis meant that on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 consultation was paused while the service and families themselves adjusted to the challenges that the pandemic brought. Consultation resumed on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020 with a final deadline of 27 May 2020. Letters were sent to all parents and carers on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 notifying them of the extension to the consultation and the final deadline.

During the consultation efforts were made to encourage response. Parents and carers were reminded to respond when dropping off / collecting their children as well as phone calls being made week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

By the final closing date

- 26 out of 103 questionnaires had been completed
- 38 parents/carers had been seen at the drop in sessions help
- All but 4 families were contacted successfully via telephone to encourage participation in the consultation
- 11 comments were received via the comment box left at the Nursery
- 2 of the stakeholders and provided feedback

## **2. Key findings**

- Respondents tend to use childcare at Stanley's Nursery on a part-time basis, with most getting 15 hours free childcare a week. Just two respondents pay the full cost of childcare.

- Being close to home is the main reason why parents chose Stanley's Nursery for their childcare needs.
- The staff, the quality of care / the Ofsted report and the good reputation of the nursery in the community were also common reasons for choosing the nursery. Due to the large proportion of users getting free childcare places, cost is not a major factor.
- The importance of being close to home reflects the fact that most respondents walk their children to nursery.
- Most respondents thought that the nursery should be kept open and the shortfall in funding met some other way (option 1).
- There was some support for keeping it open and increasing the fees to the market rate (option 3), however there was little support for increasing the fees to cover the running costs (option 2) or closing the nursery (option 4).
- Suggestions for how the £70,000 shortfall could be met included generating income from making better use of the building through private room hire or through fundraising events. No suggestions were likely to generate for £70,000 required.
- Most state they if the nursery closed they would find an alternative private nursery.
- For a few possible closure would necessitate the reduction of work / study hours or giving up work/ study altogether. Some would seek childcare from family and friends.
- For some, closure would mean that they would no longer engage in early years' provision at all.
- Many feel that possible closure and the resulting change of routine would be unsettling for their child, several respondents express how much their child enjoys going to Stanley's Nursery and the benefit it brings.
- Some feel it will be difficult to find suitable local nurseries with places available, particularly ones close to home.

### 3. Main findings

The following summarises the results from the questionnaire and is based on the views of 26 people. Due to the small number of responses percentages may be misleading and therefore only counts are reported here.

In terms of usage, most respondents were current users of the nursery with at least 1 child attending. 24 respondents currently use full or half day childcare with one respondent saying they plan to use full or half day childcare at Stanley's Nursery.

17 respondents require term-time only childcare and 5 all year round.

Childcare tends to be on a part-time basis. Most respondents (19) state that their child / children get 15 hours free childcare a week and therefore attend for this number of hours. One respondent said they were entitled to 30 hours free childcare and their child attends for 23 hours a week. Three said they attend for 12 hours or less a week.

Whilst most respondents utilise their free childcare entitlement, just two respondents pay the full cost of childcare, with their children attending for 20 hours and 5 hours a week.

Start and end times vary however most children (9) start at 09.00 in the morning and of these 8 stay until 12.00, all of these receive 15 hours free childcare. A total of 6 start earlier, between 07.30 and 08.30 and 5 children stay all day. Four of these receive 15 hours free childcare and one 30 hours.

Being close to home is the main reason why parents chose Stanley's Nursery for their childcare needs, all but three respondents selected this. The staff, the quality of care / the Ofsted report and the good reputation of the nursery in the community were also common reasons for choosing the nursery. Due to the large proportion of users getting free childcare places, cost is not a major factor.

<b>Q6 reasons for choosing Stanley's Nursery</b>	
Close to home	23
The staff	17
Quality of care / Ofsted report	15
Good reputation in the community	14
The building and facilities	12
Security and safety	12
Recommend by family / friend / Health Professional / Social Worker	10
Opening hours	8
Places available / no waiting list	7
Parking / drop off	6
Close / on route to place of work / study	5



Low cost compared to other providers	4
Attached to local school	2
Other, please tell us	1

The importance of being close to home reflects the fact that 17 respondents walk their children to nursery. Just 5 used the car and 2 the bus.

When presented with four options for the future of Stanley's Nursery, most respondents (13) thought that the nursery should be kept open and the shortfall in funding met some other way. Eight felt that it should also be kept open and the fees increased to the market rate (option 3).

<b>Q7. Which of the following options do you think should be taken?</b>	
Option 1: Keep Stanley's Nursery open and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of +£70,000	13
Option 2: Keep Stanley's Nursery open and in order to cover running costs raise childcare fees to £110 a day, £55 half day	3
Option 3: Keep Stanley's Nursery open charging the market rate of £50 full day and £25 half day and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of +£70,000	8
Option 4: Close Stanley's nursery meaning 105 children would need to find alternative childcare provision and 19 staff would be put at risk of redundancy.	1

Just 3 were prepared to pay fees that covered the running costs and 1 said close the nursery (option 4).

Reasons given for why option 1 should be taken included the negative affect it would have on their children and that the council should prioritise funding this important service:

*"Because closing the school will affect the kids."*

*"Wouldn't want the nursery to close. Will be very stressful for the children and for the parents to find somewhere else that is as good as Stanley's nursery. The nursery is very good and the staff are really good there. My child is really happy there. I really do not want it to close. It's a great place for the community to get together and offers lots of resources."*

*"Other funding for different areas provided by Walsall Council aren't necessary- whereas nurseries are NECESSARY."*

*"Childcare, investing in young people and family should be a priority for a council not some cost-cutting exercise."*

*"Council has money so they should fund it, especially if we can have 15/30 hours free, what does our tax money go on?!"*

*"Because not a lot of people can afford."*

*"Baby room like college. Bring back paying parents."*

*"Local to parents - easier to get here for all. Easy to walk to."*

Reasons given for preferring option 2 (keep open and increase fees to cover costs) included:

*"Because Stanley Nursery is a good nursery."*

*"Would make more sense instead of making more people unemployed. Making parents find a different nursery when others have long waiting lists and making parents cut down their work hours and find childcare moving children when they are settled, they know their teachers and friends."*

Reasons given for preferring option 3 (keep open and charge the market rate) included:

*"It is a service required in the area, priority should be given to working parents. Volunteer drive should be increased to reduce the amount spent on wages."*

*"Only nursery in borough funded by council. Also, not able to find nursery places for children at schools so I sent my child here. Schools not willing to take on nursery children till reception because they do not have any places in nursery left."*

*"Reasonable compromise. Don't think it's fair on children structure childcare to use rooms."*

*"Keep the nursery going, very good."*

*"Want to see nursery stay open."*

When asked to suggest a different option, no detailed suggestions were put forward.

*"Council pay for it."*

*"Option 2 unrealistic. Why don't you take babies?"*

*"Plan to send her here. 5 min walk. Universal Credit not working."*

When asked how Children's Services could make the necessary savings of +£70,000 a number of respondents suggested generating income from making better use of the building through private room hire or through fundraising events. None are likely to generate for £70,000 required.

*"The building can be used to host parties during weekends that will bring in income. Working parents are likely to pay to extra hours of child care, they should be given priority."*

*"Could rent rooms for meetings, parties etc."*

*"It is not a case of making savings, it is a case of making money from space that is provided at Stanley's Nursery. There are many ways that money could be made using the facilities, space and rooms that are provided at Stanley's Nursery."*

*"Get sponsors or do fundraisers and events throughout the year or do some cut backs on things parents could help with food and equipment."*

*"Fundraisers or cutting down other Council Costs!"*

*"Try to raise money on Facebook. Ask parents who use the nursery to make regular donations to go towards the £70,000 shortfall. Even those parents who get free places. If all the parents stuck together the money could be raised."*

Other comments referred to the need to make changes to the way the nursery is run and the fees that are charged.

*"Run it like a proper nursery and add a baby room which will add up funding."*

*"I think it should stay open and up their prices instead. Would make more sense as the other nurseries are full and it has taken me 4 months to get my daughter into one."*

*"Paying parents."*

When asked what they would do if the nursery closed, most (10) said they would find another private nursery. Possible closure would necessitate the reduction of work / study hours of 8 people and 6 say they would have to give up work / study altogether to look after their child themselves.

A total of 4 respondents say they would seek childcare help from family and friends. 4 respondents did not know what they would do if closed.

<b>Q10 What would you do if Stanley's Nursery closed?</b>	
Find another private nursery	10
Reduce working / study hours and look after your child / children yourself	8
Give up work / study and look after your child / children yourself	6
Don't know	4
Seek childcare help from family members	3
Seek childcare help from friends	1
It would not affect me / my child	1

Respondents were asked what impact, if any, the possible closure of Stanley's Nursery would have on them, for some it would mean that they would no longer engage in early years' provision at all and instead would see them stay at home. For one respondent closure would have a social impact on them.

*"My child would drop out of a nursery setting and spend most of her time at home which is not good for her development."*

*"My child would have to stay at home"*

*"My child will have to stay home with me while I stop work and school to look after him."*

*"Less interaction with other parents and babies as I don't have many mom-friends."*

For others their work / study would be impacted, which for some may also have an impact on income and living costs.

*"Change or lose job need 8 start 6 finish."*

*"Would have to give my course as I struggle to find childcare for my son due to his behaviour."*

*"I would have to reduce working hours resulting in lower income and a strain on living costs."*

*"By reducing hours, I will be eligible for working tax credit, housing benefit and council tax reduction possibly. So if they're 5 families like me, how much will you really save? Currently not eligible for any of the mentioned benefits because I earned enough."*

Many feel that its possible closure and change of routine would be unsettling for their child, several comments express how much their child enjoys going to Stanley's Nursery and the benefit it brings.

*"A big impact! That's the closest nursery to me and my child never left my side since he was born so it was hard for him to stay there but because of the amazing staff he loves going there."*

*"My child has been here just over a year and is doing well. If I had to move her to another nursery, this would unsettle her."*

*"My child currently enjoys his time at Stanley Nursery and he looks forward to nursery every day."*

*"Settled into nursery and is getting on really well"*

*"It would be very stressful for me and my child. He is very happy there and knows the staff. He doesn't want to come back home he is so happy there. I can't imagine him going anywhere else. I don't want it to close."*

*"Would be lost if the nursery closed. Don't know any other nursery I'd feel comfortable with. Looked at 5 other nurseries and this was the only one that made me feel comfortable and safe to send my child to. My child is very happy there. The staff are lovely and my child is settled there. I don't want any change in my child's early learning. He is doing so well at Stanley's. Do not close it. It has to stay open. For my child and the local community."*

Other comments refer to it being difficult to find suitable local nurseries with places available. Being close to home is an important factor for many.

*"Would be a pain as it took me 4 months to get my daughter into a nursery and now she's finally settled, made friends. There is nowhere else for her to go unless you sort the waiting lists out."*

*"As this is the closest childcare provider to my house, I would be forced to have my child stay at home until they start reception as all schools I have applied to for nursery places have said that they have none left."*

*"Child has learning difficulties and is not yet walking but I wouldn't go anywhere else because they are too far."*

*"At the moment, nothing but when child goes to nursery, will need to walk further or take public transport. Not familiar with the area, previously in Wolverhampton."*

In addition to childcare, a range of other services are run from Stanley's Nursery, most respondents however had not used them (11). Of those who had used the services, 2 were willing to travel to another location to access them, whilst 4 said they would no longer access those services.

<b>Q12 Other services accessed at Stanley's Nursery</b>	
None of these	11
Health visitor baby clinic	7
Speech and language	5
Stay and Play	4
One You	1
Early Help	1

#### **4. Summary of respondent demographics**

- 24 respondents were female
- The average age of respondents was 28, ranging from 19 to 37
- 4 respondents were Foster parents
- 7 were single parents
- 8 respondents worked in a part-time role and 2 in a full-time role. 7 were unemployed. A total of 4 were studying / training or on a career break / maternity. 5 respondents were looking after the home and 1 was a carer.
- 8 respondents were on a low income and claiming Universal Credit, whilst 3 respondents stated they were not entitled to Child Benefit (thus one person in the household earns £50,000+).
- Most respondents were of a White (9) or Asian (9) background. 3 were Black or Black British or other (1).
- Most respondents (20) lived in the WS2 postcode area, with 2 living in WS1 and the remainder living in WS3 and WS4.

## **1. The Future of Stanley's Nursery – Findings from face to face consultation drop in sessions, phone calls, comments box and stakeholder feedback**

### **1.1 Brief background**

To inform decisions about the future of Stanley's Nursery based at Birchills Sure Start Centre consultation with parents / carers of children who attend the nursery and Stakeholders who utilise the premises and facilities commenced on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020.

Consultation to determine the future of Stanley's Nursery commenced on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 with parents / carers of the 105 children who attend the nursery and 6 stakeholders who utilise the premises and facilities.

## **2. Consultation approach**

Parents / carers and stakeholders were given a number of opportunities to provide their views and comments including:

- Parents / carers of children attending the nursery:
  - Letters and questionnaires handed to parents / carers of 105 children
  - 4 out of 6 face to face drop in sessions took place attended by 38 parent / carers
  - Comments received via the comments box located at Stanley's Nursery reception
  - All but 4 families (96%) were contacted via the telephone to encourage response, check they had received a letter and questionnaire, make them aware of all the opportunities available to provide their views and answer any questions.
  
- Stakeholders:
  - 6 letters emailed to stakeholders – responses received from 2 stakeholders

### **2.1 Face to face drop in sessions**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March parents / carers were handed letters whilst attending the nursery explaining the reasons for the consultation and seeking their views on the 4 options being considered.

They were also offered an opportunity to attend any of the 6 face to face drop in sessions from 4<sup>th</sup> March until 25<sup>th</sup> March. Each session was supported by Officers to provide a more detailed understanding of the impact of the 4 options to their families, ask questions and receive assistance to complete the questionnaire if required.

The face to face drop in sessions were staggered over a 4 week period and timed to coincide with the drop off and pick up times of the nursery sessions.

Consultation was planned to conclude on 31 March 2020, however the COVID-19 crisis meant that on 23<sup>rd</sup> March consultation was paused and resumed on 12<sup>th</sup> May with a final deadline of 27 May 2020. Parents / carers were notified by letter of the extension and final deadline.

The 4 drop in sessions that took place were attended by a total of 38 parent / carers, a breakdown of attendance per sessions is as follows:

Date	Time	Attendance no
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	11:45 am – 12:45 pm	11
Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	08:45 am – 09:45 am	15
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	12:45 pm - 13:45 pm	9
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	17:00 pm – 18:00 pm	3 (assistance provided to complete the questionnaires)*
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	15:45 pm – 16:45 pm	Cancelled due to Covid 19
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	11:45 am – 12:45 pm	Cancelled due to Covid 19

The drop in sessions aim was to discuss the purpose of the consultation and to provide parent / carers a more detailed opportunity to talk to us to gain a better understanding about:

- Why parents / carers chose Stanley’s Nursery for their child(ren) to attend
- What they like about the Nursery
- The impact any of the 4 options will have to their family
- Suggestions of how Children Services could fund the current financial shortfall
- What would they do if Stanley’s Nursery closed

### 3. Main findings

The following summarises the responses and is based on the views of **35** participants who provided feedback at the face to face drop in sessions.

\*Please note feedback from the 3 participants who attended the drop in session on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 is included in the questionnaires feedback summary in Appendix 1.

Most participants used the nursery on a part time basis and stated they received 15 hour free childcare; 3 participants received 30 hour free child care, 4 attended play and stay and 1 full paid childcare place.

Most of the participants thought the Nursery should stay open and the shortfall in funding should be met in some other way (option 1). One participant preferred option 3 to keep the nursery open but charge the market rate for childcare.

Feedback was analysed based on the following key themes: close to home; quality of staffing; previous experience with the nursery; Impact to child’s development and behaviour; social impact, parental health concerns and availability of alternative suitable childcare places.

The main reason why parents chose and liked Stanley’s nursery is that it was close to home (30) with most of them living in the WS2 catchment area. Secondly, they talked about the quality of the staffing (9) stating that their child(ren) were happy and settled in the nursery as they were familiar with the staff and parents / carers also trusted the staff knowing they could manage and support their child(ren) as older siblings had previously attended the nursery (3).

*“It’s nearest to my home, I can walk to the nursery and my sister lives in walking distance to support me if needed”*

*“It’s a 5 mins drive away as I work full-time I can drop my daughter and son off on the way”*

*“My 5 year old daughter attended the nursery before and as I trust the staff my son now attends. [Mother stated she would not send her son to another setting as she was did not think he would settle elsewhere]”.*

*“My son turns 2 in May he knows the teachers which will help him settle in, he is very clingy and doesn't go to anyone.”*

*“I trust the staff with my daughter, I have health issues and find it difficult to trust people.”*

*“Staff are really good, they have built a good relationship with the children”.*

*“My daughter has delayed development and is being assessed for autism. She needs a lot of support, she loves coming and is attached to the staff who go over and above to support her needs.”*

*“All my children have loved it here, the staff understand my child's needs and she has picked up things a lot quicker with the one to one support.”*

When asked about the impact any of the 4 options would have to their family, participants talked about their concerns of the possible closure of Stanley's Nursery. These included the potential deterioration in their child's behaviour and development (4) and social impact it would have on their children's social skills (1).

*“The staff helped a lot with my son who was autistic when he attended the nursery, he wasn't sleeping and always screamed. My daughter now attends and she needs a lot of support too. She could not speak English before she came and now she is very talkative and picking things up a lot quicker”.*

*“My son has behaviour issues; he can get aggressive and has hit his nan so she's no longer able to cope with him. The staff have been good at managing his behaviour which has improved since attending the Nursery which is only 5 mins bus journey away”.*

*“My daughter is benefiting from the development and socialising with other children”.*

*“It's developing my daughter's character, opening her mind.*

*“My child is the youngest and she is already learning so much. I didn't send my other children to nursey at 2 yrs.”*

One parent / carer was visibly upset at the possibility of Stanley's Nursery closing. Her daughter is 3 years old, has delayed development and she struggles to sleep. She is currently being assessed for autism and requires a lot of support. When she started the nursery she would scream and head-butt the wall, with the help from Nursery staff her development and behaviour has significantly improved. This has impacted on mums health and she struggles to sleep and has lost weight, she fears that her health will deteriorate and she will not cope as she also has 2 other sons, one is autism.

*The hours my daughter spends at the nursery have meant the world to me. If Stanley's was not here I would struggle as I don't get a lot of sleep now and have lost weight. Family and friends are unable to cope my kids behaviour.”*

When asked for suggestions on how Children Services could fund the current financial shortfall. Participants suggested generating income from making better use of the building and offering out for room hire, sharing the places equally between funded and fee paying, ask Government to increase the funding for 2 year old places, offer a babies group and increase the fees for paid places. None are likely to generate the £70,000 shortfall required.

*“Offer venue for use for parties to generate additional funding”*

*“To offer equal number of free and fee paying places”*

*“Government should increase the funding for 2 year old places”*



*“To offer baby places for a fee”*

*“To increase fees for paying parents”*

When asked what parents / carers would do if the nursery closed, 43% of the children will be moving on to Nursery Schools or starting school in September 2020 and although the remaining parents / carers preferred to remain at Stanley’s Nursery they would consider alternative child care across the borough. However, 3 stated they would be unable to continue with the 2 – 3 year funded places, 2 of these due to the limited availability of suitable alternative local childcare places and one parent stated she would have to give up her college course to look after her son as his behaviour can be difficult to manage.

*“If the nursery would close I would have to give up college to look after my son as I don’t think other nurseries would be able to manage his behaviour. My grandparents are unable to help as they cannot cope with and my partner works full time. This nursery is close enough to fit in with my college course”.*

*“I would not send my son to another setting as I do oldn’t think he will settle elsewhere”.*

*“Would look in the Palfrey area near husbands workshop”*

*“If closed would not use 15 hours for the rest of the entitlement period from Jan 2020 – Dec 2020 as other children go to Birchills School. I would not access anywhere else.”*

#### **4. Summary of participants demographics** (this information was optional and not provided by all participants)

Majority (over 90%) were female parents/carers with 2 year olds attending the nursery.

##### 4.1 Phone calls / responses

To encourage a response to the consultation all parent / carers of the 105 children who attend Stanley’s Nursery were contacted on various occasions by telephone to check they had received the letter and questionnaire, if not questionnaires were re-issued and to answer any questions or offer any support / assistance if required.

All but 4 families were contacted successfully.

Just under half of the children (43% parents / carers are moving their children to a Nursery School or children are starting School in reception in September 2020 admissions. With another 3 considering a Nursery School provision, irrespective of the consultation for September admission. Of these 12 preferred to remain at Nursery and all but 2 spoke positively about Stanley’s Nursery.

*“Nursery is perfect, very local. I’m a student at University and use it 4 days a week”*

*“very happy with Stanley’s don’t close it”*

*“Prefer Stanley’s, more convenient and local”*

*“Prefer to keep my youngest child at Stanleys”*

2 parents and carers were not happy or had a mixed view about the support provided by the staff and the hygiene standards:

*“Not happy with the Nursery you should close it, they have no time for parents”*

*“Not happy with the hygiene at the Nursery but sad to hear it may close”.*

3 parents / carers were paying for places and requested a list of alternative child care providers in the Borough.

1 child had left the area.

#### 4.2 Comments Box

Parents / Carers were provided an additional opportunity to share their views about the Nursery via a Comments Box that was located at the front reception of the Nursery.

Overall 11 comments were received, 9 from parents / carers and 1 from a student/parent and 1 from a student.

The majority are positive comments about the service provided by the Nursery and opposing any possible closure.

*“I feel this nursery is improving a child’s mind and ability better than most nursery / primary schools within our area. They also provide a lot of support for adults and parents”.*

*“Stanley’s service provider a great service to children from the ages of 2 – 3 years. If this service closes what other place is available that is near the town.”*

*“I think Stanley’s Nursery provides an excellent service for both 2 and 3 year olds. To close this Nursery would have a huge effect on a lot of children as they have settled in well”*

*“This place is like a second home to my kid and the staff are just adorable. Please! Please! Please! Don’t shut this Nursery. Thanks*

*“Where’s the funding going? Lovely School child felt right at ease as never left parents side. Made him comfortable, settle really well and made him learn a lot of things to help with his development.”*

A couple of comments were posted by the students undertaking their placements at the Nursery. They have referred to the support they have received from staff and how it has improved their confidence. One of the students also has a child attending the Nursery and may have to re-consider continuing with her course.

*“I have been at Stanley’s Nursery for 3 years now. When I first started I was very insecure and had a lot of problems and no confidence at all. This place [Stanley’s Nursery] helped me with my problems and supported me and never judged me for them. My confidence has boosted the staff are very friendly and helpful. I don’t feel comfortable looking for a new placement so I will end up dropping out of college.”*  
(Student/Parent)

*“I have been here in Stanley’s for placement over the past 2 years. When I first started I was insecure and had a lack of confidence, whereas this place has boosted my confidence. The staff are really nice and helpful. I am not looking forward to finding a new placement. (Student).*

Other comments received were generally asking whether support will be offered to find alternative places and concerns around the limited availability of nursery places.

*“How can you not afford to keep Stanley’s Nursery open when Schools are unable to provide nursery places”.*

### 4.3 Stakeholder responses

Stanley's Nursery building is also currently utilised free of charge by 6 stakeholders to deliver services to children and young people such as health assessments, speech and language support.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 letters were emailed to all 6 stakeholders: One you Walsall; Connecting Communities – Job Club; Dorothy Pattison Hospital; Child Development Centre; Speech and Language Service and Black Country Women's Aid explaining the purpose of the consultation and seeking their views and comments on the impact the options presented may have on their services and service users.

Responses have been received from 2 of the stakeholders mainly One you Walsall who utilise rooms to provide adult weight management clinics and Dorothy Pattison Hospital to provide perinatal mental health services.

Both felt disheartened at the possibility of the building and facilities closing stating they provided much needed services to support the local community that potentially may impact families in the on the long term.

One you Walsall raised a concern around the reduced availability and access to venues across Walsall and suggested renting out part of the building to organisations to help fund the shortfall.

*"These services are much needed in the Walsall area, ranging from health to Citizen Advice to domestic violence, to mention a few. Where would these services be able to support the Walsall communities as other venues close or restrict use of the buildings."*

*"I think ideally the nursery would continue to operate with the addition of parts of the building being rented by other organisations to help fund the shortfall."*

Considering the 4 options presented, Dorothy Pattison Hospital preferred Option 1 to keep Stanley's Nursery open and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of £70,000 followed by Option 3 whereby they would prepared to cover the costs of the room hire.

*"It would be such a shame to see the centre closed, or to see parents having to pay increased fees."*

*"Birchills I feel that it would be a great loss to close the service. I feel that option 3 would be the best way forward."*

Both suggestions to rent the building out and cover the costs for room hire are unlikely to fund the shortfall £70,000.

## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

<b>Proposal name</b>	<b>Future of Stanley's Nursey Birchills</b>		
<b>Directorate</b>	Children's Services		
<b>Service</b>	Early Help		
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Julie Jones		
<b>Proposal planning start</b>	28/01/2020	<b>Proposal start date (due or actual date)</b>	28/01/2020 02/03/2020 updated 04/06/2020 updated

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Policy	No	
	Procedure	No	
	Guidance	No	
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	Yes	
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?	In-house provision	
	Other - give details		
<b>2</b>	<b>What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?</b>		
	<p>Stanley's Nursery Birchills is the only remaining childcare service in the borough directly provided by Walsall Council. The provision of childcare by a Local Authority is not a statutory requirement, the Local Authorities responsibility is to ensure there are sufficient childcare places across the borough.</p> <p>Cabinet approved (February 2015) the implementation of a new model of delivery for Children's Centres, reducing the number of centres to 5 Locality Hubs along with the approval that the remaining Children Centre buildings would transfer to the applicable school, where based on a school site, and the remaining childcare and buildings form part of a procurement process to transfer to a suitable third party organisation/s.</p> <p>The procurement was successfully completed and service's transferred to the successful providers excluding Stanley's Nursery Birchills.</p> <p>Cabinet received a further report (February 2017) regarding the 'Redesign of Children's Centre Services and Sites as part of a 0-19 Early Help Locality Model and Children's Centre South Contract'. In relation to the Birchills site - Cabinet approve the undertaking of a competitive procurement process to determine the most suitable provider(s) for the provision of childcare and early learning and to commence delivery from early Autumn 2017.</p>		



Two procurement/tendering exercises for Stanley's Nursery along with negotiations with a range of different providers have been held however the transfer of the provision has to date been unsuccessful.

The provision is heavily subsidised by Children's Services in 2019/20 total subsidy £95k with a forecast to increase 2020/21 to £138k. Due to the financial pressures on the directorate, Cabinet (February 2020) approved a further consultation with parents/cares and key stakeholders on the future of the nursery provision.

Four options were provided as part of the consultation

**Option 1:** Keep Stanley's Nursery open and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of +£70,000 and we ask for your suggestions.

**Option 2:** Keep Stanley's Nursery open and in order to cover running costs raise childcare fees to £110 a day, £55 half day.

**Option 3:** Keep Stanley's Nursery open charging the market rate of £50 full day and £25 half day and identify a proposal to fund the shortfall of £55,000. We seek your suggestions.

**Option 4:** Close Stanley's Nursery meaning 105 children would need to find alternative childcare provision and 19 staff would be put at risk of redundancy

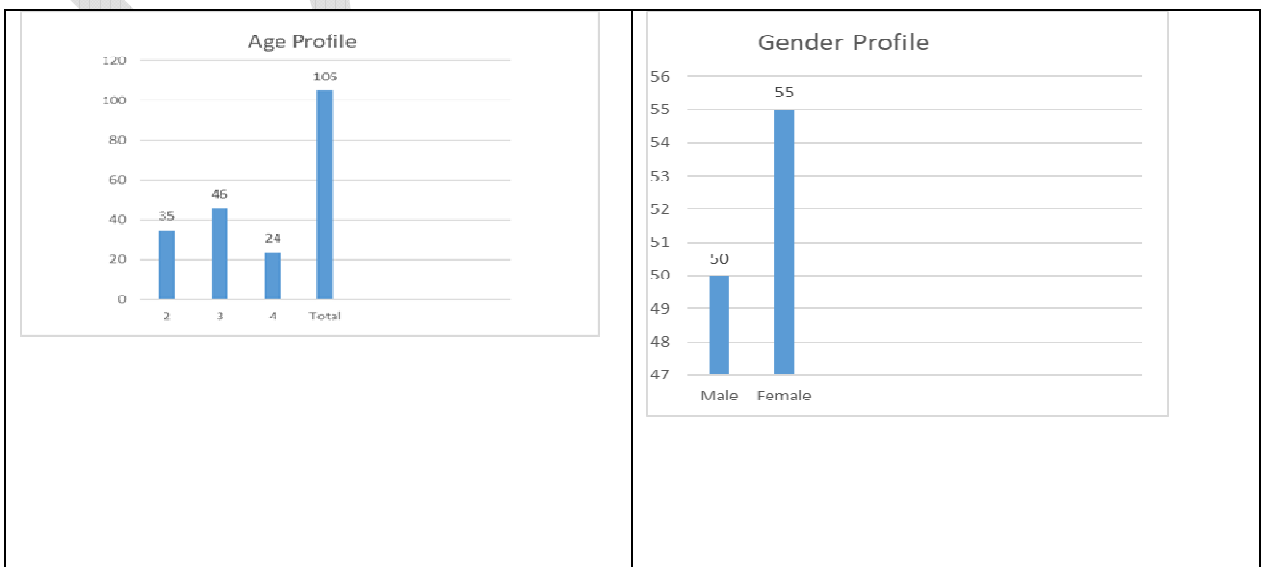
**3 Who is the proposal likely to affect?**

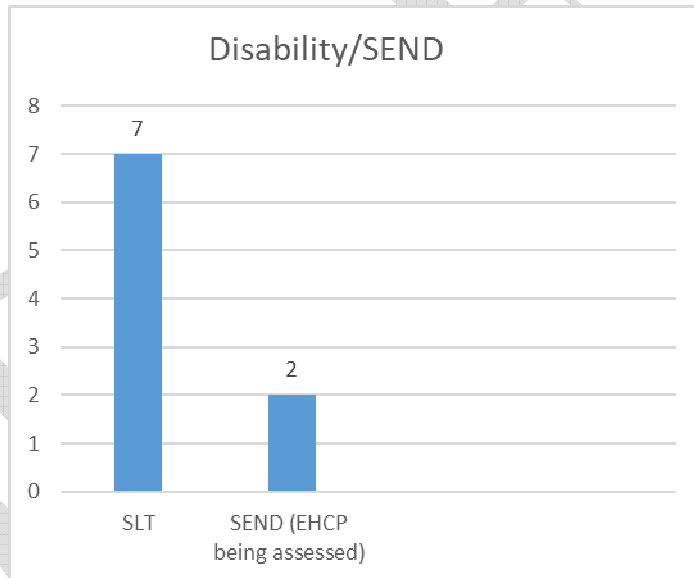
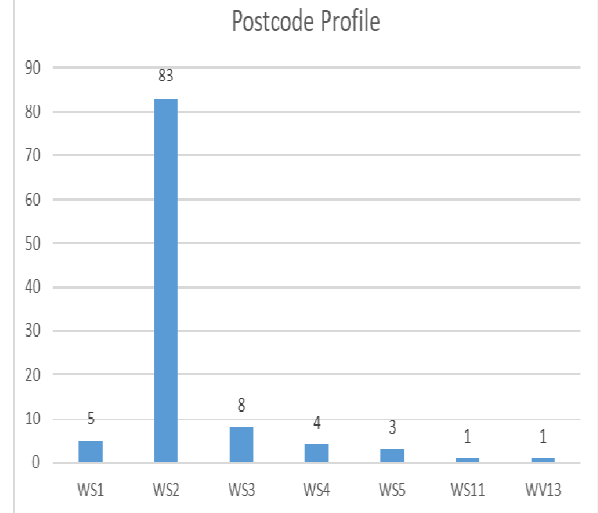
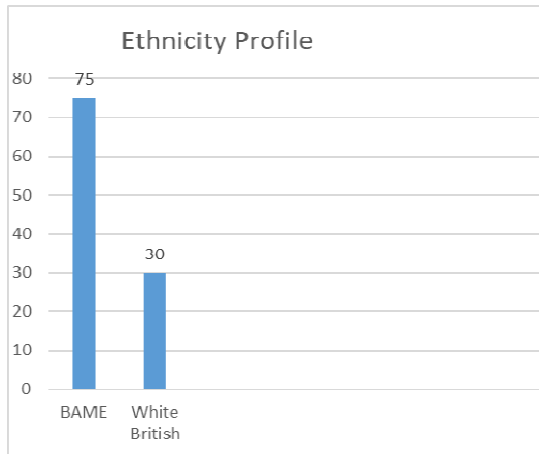
People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail
All	No	Children aged 2, 3 & 4 years of age who attend the Birchills Nursery and their parents/carers
Specific group/s	Yes	
Council employees	Yes	
Other (identify)		

**4 Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.**

Profile of the 105 children attending the nursery in

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Postcode Area of Home Address
- SEND/EHCP is as follows:





- SLT: Receiving Speech & Language Therapy
- SEND: EHCP currently being assessed

As at the end of August 45 out of the 105 remaining children will be leaving the nursery provision to attend Nursery School or commence School with Reception Year.

For the children receiving Speech & Language Therapy, 3 are due to leave and a transition plan to their new school/Nursery will be provided.

For the children with SEND, currently having an EHCP assessment, both are leaving and again a transition plan will be in place.

Alternative provision: A recent review of the market place and sufficiency within the borough (February 2020) concluded that with Croft Primary Academy extending their provision for children aged 2yrs, providing an additional 24 places there is sufficient places available for all 2, 3 & 4 year olds across the borough as whole to meet demand.

The Family Information Service will provide a dedicated resource to support all parents/carers to identify appropriate alternative provision for their children.

Each child will receive an individual action plan reviewed on a weekly basis in partnership with parents/carers to consider the alternative options and supported, where requested to make applications and secure placements.

Children already moving into Nursery and/or School from September 2020 have exiting individual transition plans which will continue to be supported, along with the appropriate liaison with the new setting including the sharing of appropriate information regarding SEND support needs and plans.

**5 Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).**

**Consultation Activity**

<b>Type of engagement/consultation</b>	Letter to parents/carers and stakeholders advising of consultation.	<b>Date</b>	02/03/2020 12/05/2020
<b>Who attended/participated?</b>	All parents/carers and stakeholders		
<b>Protected characteristics of participants</b>	103 Letters to parents 6 Stakeholder letters		
<b>Feedback</b> A detailed summary in contained within Section 6 below:			

<b>Type of engagement/consultation</b>	Drop In Sessions	<b>Date</b>	04/03/2020 11:45am 10/03/2020 08:45am 12/03/2020 12:45pm 16/03/20 05:00pm
<b>Who attended/participated?</b>	Parents/Carers		
<b>Protected characteristics of participants</b>	See below		

Date	Time	Parents/Carers Attendance
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	11:45 am – 12:45 pm	11
Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	08:45 am – 09:45 am	15
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	12:45 pm - 13:45 pm	9
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	17:00 pm – 18:00 pm	3 (assistance provided to complete the questionnaires)*
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	15:45 pm – 16:45 pm	Cancelled due to Covid 19
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	11:45 am – 12:45 pm	Cancelled due to Covid 19

**Feedback:** A detailed summary in contained within Section 6 below:

Summary:

## INITIAL Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Organisational Change

Proposal name	<b>Birchills Childcare</b>		
Directorate	Children's Services		
Service	Early Help		
Responsible Officer	Julie Jones		
EqIA Author	Julie Jones		
Date proposal started	12/2/2020	Proposal commencement date (due or actual)	02/03/20 updated 02/06/20 updated

		Yes or No	Notes
<b>1</b>	<b>Staffing</b>		
	Is the organisational change likely to affect staff? (e.g. at risk, redundancies)	<b>Y</b>	This will be subject to the decision of Cabinet in July 2020
	Is there business case for putting staff at risk?	<b>n/a</b>	An initial business case to consult with service users has been presented to JNCC on 28 Jan 2020, this will be updated in July 2020 depending on the outcome of the consultation which will determine if staff will be put at risk or not.
	Have selection criteria been prepared for identifying staff at risk?	<b>Y</b>	All staff based at Stanley's Nursery, Birchills will be affected along with the cleaning and caretakers associated with the Nursery.
	Has the number of staff likely to be affected been calculated?	<b>Y</b>	There are 18 Nursery staff working for Children's Services and 5 cleaning/caretaking staff working for Integrated Facility Management
<b>2</b>	<b>Consultation and engagement</b>		
	Is there a consultation and engagement plan for this organisational change?	<b>Y</b>	Consultation plan will be put in place for formal staff consultation as applicable, depending on the outcome of the Cabinet decision.



	Are all staff able to participate (e.g. disabled staff and those on, maternity leave...etc)?	Y	Staff on maternity / long term sick have been and will continue to be kept up to date and encouraged to participate in the consultation.
<b>3</b>	<b>Remote Working and location change</b>		
	Does the change involve staff in remote working or a change of location?	N	(If 'No' go to Question 4)
	Have you consulted about making reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for disabled staff?		
	Have you given access to facilities at work, for all staff, who are to work remotely or change location?		
<b>4</b>	<b>Redundancy and or Redeployment</b>		
	Does the change involve potential redundancy or redeployment?	Y	Dependent on the outcome of Cabinet Decision 15 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
	Are redundancy or redeployment procedures fair and use fair criteria?	Y	As per the councils redundancy process
	Is the selection pool lawful?	Y	
	To avoid discrimination does the selection matrix include a number of criteria or is it by a competitive appointment process?	Y	
	Are any enhanced redundancy payments calculated in the same way as statutory redundancy payments	n/a	
	Have you avoided substantial disadvantage for disabled staff?	n/aY	
	Has suitable alternative employment been offered to staff on maternity leave, if displaced?	Y	All applicable staff will have access to the Council's redeployment programme.
Can you justify all payments for age and redundancy?	Y		
<b>5</b>	<b>Providing your service</b>		
	Are there any changes to the way your services will be provided to customers?	Y	Dependent on the outcome of Cabinet 2020, the local authority may cease to provide any nursery

			childcare provision.
	Could service changes alter the impact on your customers because of their 'protected characteristic'?	Yes	(If 'No' go to Question 6)  (If 'Yes' carry out an EqlA for Policies, Procedures and Services and go to Question 6)  • Completed
<b>6</b>	<b>Summarise your evidence, engagement and consultation.</b>		
	Consultation will align with HR policy full details will be provided once the outcome of consultation is known and Cabinet has made a decision on the future provision.		
<b>7</b>	<b>How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The affect may be positive, negative or neutral, give reasons and if action is needed.</b>		
	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Affect</b>	<b>Reason</b>
			<b>Action needed (Y or N)</b>
	<b>Age</b>	Not Known	The breakdown of staff is predominately female. therefore this proposal affects all employees including those with protected characteristics in the same way
	<b>Disability</b>	Neutral	No staff are known to have a disability
	<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Neutral	This proposal affects all employees including those with protected characteristics in the same way
	<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	Neutral	This proposal affects all employees including those with protected characteristics in the same way
	<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Negative	Two members of staff are currently on maternity leave however will be included in the consultation should it be required, pending outcome of cabinet decision
	<b>Race</b>	Neutral	This proposal affects all employees including those with protected characteristics in the same way
	<b>Religion or belief</b>	Neutral	This proposal affects all employees including those with protected

		characteristics in the same way	
<b>Sex</b>	Negative	The majority of staff are female	Y
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Neutral	This proposal affects all employees including those with protected characteristics in the same way	
<b>Other (give detail)</b>			
<b>Further information</b>	<p>Equalities Breakdown Nursery Staff</p> <p>Gender: 100% Female</p> <p>Ethnicity: 56.25% White/British 37.5% BAME 6.25% Not stated</p> <p>Age: 56.25% aged between 26 &amp; 35 years of age 6.25% aged between 36 &amp; 45 years of age 25.00% aged between 46 &amp; 55 years of age 12.5 % aged between 56 &amp; 65 years of age</p> <p>Employment Status: 56.25% work full time 43.75 % work part time</p> <p>Equalities breakdown Facility Management Staff</p> <p>Gender: 80% female 20% male</p>		
<b>8</b>	<b>Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details below.</b>		(Delete one) <b>No</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Overall which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation suggest you take? (Bold which one applies)</b>		
	A	No major change required	
	B	Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality	
	<b>C</b>	<b>Continue despite possible adverse impact</b>	
	D	Stop and rethink your proposal	

**Now complete the action and monitoring plan on the next page**

<b>Action and monitoring plan</b>				
<b>Action Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Outcome Date</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
28 <sup>th</sup> January 2020	Submit to JNCC advise on consultation	Andrea Potts	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2020	JNCC advised
3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2020	Staff Meeting to advise of cabinet report	Andrea Potts	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2020	Informal meeting held to advise staff
12 <sup>th</sup> February 2020	Cabinet – seeking permission to consult	Julie Jones/Maxine Taylor	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2020	Cabinet approval consultation
28 <sup>th</sup> February 2020	Letter to staff informing of consultation and providing them with a copy of letter and questionnaire	Julie Jones		
2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2020	Consultation commences : Letters to all parents/carers along with paper questionnaire	Julie Jones		
2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2020	Email and letters to stakeholders re consultation	Julie Jones		
23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020	Letter to all parents/carers re Covid 19 closure and 'pause' of consultation	Julie Jones		
12 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	Letter to parents/carers to conclude consultation	Julie Jones		
27 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	Close of consultation	Julie Jones	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	

28 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	Review any alternative proposals following consultation for consideration within cabinet report	Julie Jones/ Anna King/ Raji Bains		Analyses of feedback
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Updates to EqlA	
Date	Detail
02/06/2020	Updated following end of consultation with parents/cares/stakeholders – Cabinet report drafted for 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2020