

Report Title: **Scrutiny Review of Children's Centres**

Report of: **Chair of the Review Panel**

Wards(s) affected: **ALL**

1. Purpose

1.1 To confirm the scope and terms of reference for the Scrutiny Review of Children Centres

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the scope and terms of reference for the review as set out in this report be confirmed

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3. Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)

3.1 N/A

4. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

5.1 There are no background papers relating to this report.

5. The members of this review are Councillors Martin Newton (Chair), Gail Engert and Sheila Peacock.

6. Purpose of the review

The provision of childcare is not just a statutory duty but is one of the key strategies for improving services for all children and young people, their families and communities. One of the priorities in the Council Plan is to, "encourage lifetime, well-being, at home, work, play and learning. A key action for achieving this is by "developing high quality early childhood provision across the borough,

opening 18 Children's Centres by April 2008". It is essential, therefore, to ensure that the Borough is doing all it can to secure sufficient, high quality, sustainable provision which is responsive to the needs of children and their families.

7. Terms of Reference

These were circulated to members and it was informally agreed that this scrutiny exercise be concerned with:-

1. The range and quality of the provision provided at the Council's Children Centres including ancillary issues such as family support, health services etc and the contributions made by users. In particular whether this provision will enable "early intervention" and specific action to be taken to narrow the gap in achievement between the lowest achieving children and the rest
2. The manner in which children's centres work with other local providers of childcare
3. The processes for measuring performance including self evaluation.
4. The processes for identifying best practice and ensuring its disseminated elsewhere.

8. The Scrutiny Process

Informal Meeting – to be held at Pembury

Councillors to hold an Open House surgery session for users to talk in confidence about the service.

Meeting 1 to be held at The Triangle

Meeting to consider

a) full report from Children service on the issues referred to in 8 above, the Councils future plans and what is being done to involve disadvantaged families, vulnerable children, people with special needs and hard to reach groups.

b) views of providers, outreach workers and users.

Head of Park Lane to be invited

Meeting 2 to be held at Campsbourne

Councillors to hold an Open House surgery session for users to talk in confidence about the service.

Meeting with Sharon Shoesmith and Department civil servant