

AGENDA ITEM: 12

Page nos. 58 - 62

Meeting	Cabinet Resources Committee
Date	30 March 2006
Subject	Interim Fees and Charges for the Wingfield Children's Centre 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007
Report of	Cabinet Member for Resources Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning
Summary	To approve interim fees and charges for childcare at the new Wingfield Children's Centre.

Officer Contributors	Chief Education Officer
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	Not applicable
Enclosures	Appendix: proposed interim charges
For decision by	Cabinet Resources Committee
Function of	Executive
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in (if appropriate)	N/A

Contact for further information: Julia Gay 0208 359 7839

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Committee agree the charges for childcare (as laid out in Appendix 1) at the new Wingfield Children's Centre with effect from 1 April 2006 as a pilot, for review in January 2007.**
- 1.2 That parents accessing the crèche be asked for a contribution of £1 for session.**
- 1.3 That eight places be allocated free of charge to children with complex needs, i.e., those referred by Children and Families as Children in Need (1989 Children Act).**
- 1.4 That all children currently attending Wingfield Children & Family Centre continue to attend the Children's Centre at no charge to the parents.**

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 None.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 Fees were not charged for attendance by Wingfield Children & Family Centre as this was a provision for Children in Need (Children Act 1989).
- 4.2 Consultation with local parents has indicated that there is demand for flexible, affordable, good quality childcare in the Colindale area. However, national research shows that families on low incomes cannot access childcare. If the fee level is not competitive, take up of places might be affected which might, in turn jeopardise financial viability of the children's centre.

5. FINANCIAL, STAFFING, ICT AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Staff from Wingfield Children and Families Centre will be assimilated into the staffing structure for Wingfield Children's Centre.
- 5.2 The current budget of the Wingfield Children and Families Centre will meet the costs of the places for Children in Need and other children's centre activities.

6. LEGAL ISSUES

- 6.1 The LA may provide child care centres for any child under 5, s18 Children Act '89. The LEA has the power to provide education facilities for the education of children under 5 - EEA '96 - s17. When providing services in accordance with its duty the LA is entitled to charge or provide the service free of charge. If the LA proposes to charge for the service, it may only charge what it regards is a reasonable sum - s29 (1) CA '89. Where the LA is satisfied that the person's

means are insufficient for it to be reasonably practicable for him to pay the charge, it shall not require him to pay more than he can reasonably expect to pay. (s29(2) CA '89). Before making any conditions the LA must have regard to the means of the child and his parents.(s 17 (8)) . There is specific provision in the CA to prevent a person becoming liable to make any payments which may be required when in receipt of working tax credit or any element of child tax credit other than the family element ss 17 (9), 29(3) and regulations 2003 SI 2003/2077.

7. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

- 7.1 The Council's Constitution Part 3 paragraph 3.6 authorises Cabinet Resources Committee to approve income sources and charging policies

8 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

8.1 National Context

The Children Act 2004 and the Childcare Bill, currently before parliament, outline the Government's commitment that, by 2010, all parents should have access to one-stop-shop support at a Children's Centre so that "childcare and education, health and employment advice and parenting support are in easy reach of every parent". A children's centre will provide the following core offer of services:

- Early education (including a qualified teacher) together with childcare available from 8am-6pm to be flexible in response to parents' needs. Sessional nursery education for 3-4 year olds will remain free, but wrap-around care and childcare for under 3 year olds will be charged at an affordable rate.
- Lifelong learning opportunities for parents and advice on employment, for example, welfare benefit advice.
- Family support and outreach to parents, for example parenting education and support groups.
- Health services, for example speech and language therapy, childhood mental health services and ante-natal care.

8.2 Children's Centres in Barnet

The Government has set a target for Barnet to provide 2 children's centres by 2006:

- Wingfield Children and Families Centre, in the area of the authority's highest need, will become a Children's Centre from 1 April 2006;
- the second, at Parkfield, which will bring together Parkfield Primary School, Lakeview Children and Family Centre, and the Sure Start Local Programme, is due to open in September 2006.

Barnet has an additional target to deliver 15 more children's centres by 2008.

8.3 Wingfield Children's Centre

- 8.3.1 Wingfield Children's Centre is due for designation as a Children's Centre on 1 April 2006 by DfES Sure Start Unit. Local provision for services, identified

from extensive consultation with partner agencies and parents, include childcare, drop-in crèche, English classes for adults and information surgeries. Wingfield Children's Centre has been registered with Ofsted to provide integrated early education and childcare for 32 children aged 2 – 5 years. 10 babies aged 0 – 2 will be cared for by a network of childminders working alongside the children centre. It has also been registered for a crèche with 12 places to allow parents to participate in community learning activities.

- 8.3.2 It is proposed that 8 (20%) of places will be allocated to Children in Need (i.e. on Child Protection Register, Looked After or with complex need) with no charge.
- 8.3.3 Children who are currently attending Wingfield Children and Families Centre will continue to attend Wingfield Children's Centre at no charge to their parents
- 8.3.4 All children aged 3-4 are entitled to free nursery education for 12 ½ hours per week (15 hours from 2007-08) funded by Nursery Education Fund (£1558 for 38 weeks).
- 8.3.5 Parents who are students or returning to work/training through government schemes are entitled to grants/subsidies towards childcare costs and will be paying significantly less than the full fees. (see Appendix 3). Parents in work are entitled to claim working tax credit. Those qualifying for the highest rate will receive 80% credit against a maximum childcare cost of £175 per week, i.e., the actual cost to parent will be £35 (see Appendix 3).
- 8.3.6 Charges in neighbouring boroughs vary between £110 and £200 per week depending on the age of the child and the parents' financial circumstances (see Appendix 2). However, a common consideration appears to be setting the fees at the Working Tax Credit limit, which from April 2006 will be £175.
- 8.3.7 Taking into account the charges of other providers in the area in neighbouring boroughs, it is proposed that the interim charges for childcare are set at a comparable market level. Details are set out in Appendix 1. It is also proposed that there is a reduction of 20% for any additional siblings.
- 8.3.8 These charges should be set for 2006-07 with a thorough review and of the charging policy, in one year, before setting a borough-wide scheme.

9 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

Legal: JEL
CFO: CM

APPENDIX 1: Proposed Interim Childcare Charges at Wingfield Children's Centre

Fees	Full Extended Day 8am-6pm	Weekly 8am-6pm
0-2 childminder	£30	£150
2-3	£35	£175
3-5	£27 (term time -38 weeks) £35 (additional 10weeks)	£ 135 (term time -38 weeks) £175 (additional 10weeks)

- 20% reduction for each additional sibling.
- Charges for part time place will be set pro-rata.

APPENDIX 2: Comparative Charges

Barnet		Reduced Fees	Standard Fees
Barnfield NNI	0 – 2	£147	£202
	2 – 3	£141	£175
	3 – 4	£105/138	£119 */154
Joel Nursery	2-3		£160
	3-4		£120 */£160
Colindale	2-3		£176
	2-5		£136 */£176

* term time

Neighbouring Boroughs		
Camden	Residents on low incomes	£135 per week
	Residents on high incomes	£175 per week
Haringey	0 – 3	£160
	3 – 4	£110 (term time)
Enfield	2 – 3	£180
	3 – 4	£170

APPENDIX 3: Grants/Financial Support Available to Parents

	1 Child		2 Children	
	Possible Benefit available	Parental contribution after benefit	Possible Benefit available	Parental contribution after benefit
	£s	£s	£s	£s
Working Tax Credit	140.00	35.00	240.00	110.00
Care to Learn	145.00	30.00	145.00	205.00
Childcare Grant	114.75	60.25	170.00	180.00
New deal for Lone Parents – training	135.00	40.00	135.00	215.00
New deal for Lone Parents – work under 16 hours	67.50	107.50	100.00	250.00
NHS Childcare allowance	114.75	60.25	170.00	180.00