

Update Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee 13th December 2022

Title	Maintained Nursery Update
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1. **Introduction:**

1.1 As North Northamptonshire Council is only funded for the 15 hours universal entitlement based on participation in Maintained Nursery Supplement (MNS), it was decided that a move towards a participation model of funding for MNS in 2023-24. This is deemed the only proportionate, fair and sustainable mechanism. This was presented to School Forum earlier this year.

1.2 In order to ensure MNS funding was being spent appropriately and to ensure future sustainability of the four maintained nurseries a Scrutiny sub-committee was set up to visit the four maintained nurseries and review the outcomes of the financial audits that took place in the summer in order to arrive at a decision as to whether moving to participation based funding as agreed at School Forum was the right decision.

2. Below is a summary of all activity that has taken place to date:

2.2 **Finance and Compliance Audit**

An in depth financial/compliance audit of each of the four maintained nurseries has now been completed and the final reports with minimal recommendations have been agreed with Heads and circulated to Scrutiny Panel for oversight. All recommendations and actions will be re-visited in spring/summer term 2023.

Due to the complexities of staffing and financial processes in one of the nurseries, it resulted in the need to make additional audit enquiries in relation to safer recruitment processes, this audit was completed and recommendations were put in place and addressed by the setting.

2.3 As per October update to this committee, an independent provider has now been identified and procured to undertake a complete Safeguarding Audit in each of the four maintained nurseries. This audit will appraise measures currently in place to ensure that they are up to standard and effective, fully compliant legally but also that all policies and procedures are read and understood by staff. The audits will be scheduled to take place in January 2023.

3 **Maintained Nursery Schools Review - Task & Finish Group**

The sub-committee was convened to undertake visits to each of the four nurseries and these have now been completed.

An Officer accompanied the committee on their visits and the committee was supported in the compilation of questions and gathering of additional information, the outcome of the visits and questions were summarised for consideration by the panel however the meeting set for 14th December 2022 has been postponed and another date is in the process of being arranged as a decision on the outcome of the Scrutiny review will need to be reflected at School Forum in January 2023 when the funding amounts will need to be announced for 2023/24.

4. **One-year Transition Grant**

The Council awarded the four maintained nurseries a one-off LA Transition Grant from the Council's Contingency Budget to support the nurseries and ensure their sustainability moving forward. The award was as follows:

- £350k to Pen Green
- £100k each to Croyland, Highfield and Ronald Tree

4.1.1 All grant agreements were signed and nurseries are now in receipt of funding. In addition, the first monitoring meeting has taken place and all settings have a plan in place to evidence spend of the grant by March 2023. The second monitoring meetings are due to take place in January following the outcome of the Scrutiny decision.