

BODY:	CABINET
DATE:	5 DECEMBER 2002
SUBJECT:	CLOSURE OF SOVEREIGN CENTRE CRECHE
REPORT OF:	Director of Tourism & Leisure
Ward(s):	All
Purpose:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To put forward a proposal for the closure of the Sovereign Centre creche from 1 January 2003. 2. To describe the staffing implications for Cabinet information.
Decision type:	<p>Key decision</p> <p>Christine Haynes, General Manager – Eastbourne Leisure</p>
Contact:	Telephone 01323 415465 or internally on extension 5465
Recommendations:	That the Committee agrees to the cessation of the service
1.0	<u>Introduction</u>
1.1	This report has been written to bring to the Cabinet's attention the reasons the closure of the creche is being recommended.

1.2	The creche was first registered with East Sussex County Council Inspection Unit in 1996. It now has to operate under the OFSTED regulations which severely restrict the numbers of children able to be looked after and particularly, the ratios of children to qualified staff.
2.0	<u>Creche Operation</u>
2.1	The creche operates Monday to Friday from 9.00am – 1.00pm. It is registered with OFSTED as a sessional creche. This allows children to be looked after for specific periods whilst parents are in the centre. It has no adjacent washing facilities or toilets. It is not in place permanently and has to be set up and put away at the beginning and end of each session.
2.2	The current Full Time Equivalent number of staff employed in the Creche is 1½. Over the past few months there has been a significant turnover in the staff of the creche. It has proved to be extremely difficult to recruit staff qualified to the standards required. Two attempts have been made to recruit a Creche Supervisor in the past two months and have been unsuccessful. The qualification for this post is NVQ Level 3 or NNEB equivalent.
2.3	There is currently no Creche Supervisor. This in itself would present OFSTED with problems in allowing the registration to continue. It will soon become a regulation that at least 50% of staff working with children must have at least NVQ Level 2 in Childcare. Only two of the current staff have attained this level of qualification.
2.4	Because of the stringent staff/children ratios it has been a problem accommodating some customers' children. This is not due to overcrowding but because of the previously mentioned ratios and the limited facilities that the creche can offer.
3.0	<u>Financial Implications</u>

	The creche staffing costs are high and the income generated does not offset these costs.
3.1	The current average daily attendance is 10 children over a 4 hour period.
3.2	From April 2002 – October 2002, creche income has been approximately £1,760 and the expenditure on staff costs £7,700. This equates to a loss of some £860 per month. This scale of loss is not sustainable. The increase in fees that would be required to meet this deficit would in themselves prohibit any customer from using the facility in its present form. There is no scope within the Centre for creating a permanent and better facility at this time.
3.3	The cost of financing the creche has had to be consumed within the net trading budget available to Eastbourne Leisure. Effectively, it has been financed at the expense of other programmed expenditure e.g. repairs and maintenance. Its closure will allow management to implement some of the previously displaced programme.
3.4	In the unlikely event of a redundancy situation, any costs will be absorbed within the Eastbourne Leisure trading budget. This is equally true for any other costs associated with this closure.
4.0	<u>Human Resource Implications</u>
	<u>Staffing</u>
4.1	Staffing implications will be discussed in private and confidential.
5.0	<u>Summary of Options</u>

	In order to retain OFSTED registration and, therefore, to be able to continue to run the Creche, a Creche Supervisor with appropriate qualifications must be recruited. Whilst it is possible that a significant increase in the rate of pay for the job would generate some interest, this is not guaranteed. If a higher rate of pay were to be offered, the financial deficit would increase.
5.1	The need to employ more suitably qualified staff will present a problem to the current workforce as they will have to obtain qualifications in order to work in a creche or nursery setting.
6.0	<p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>It is with regret that the conclusion, after exploring all options, is that the Sovereign Centre creche should be closed because of the inability to recruit qualified staff in order to meet OFSTED regulations and the severe financial losses this facility is incurring daily.</p>
6.1	The General Manager of Eastbourne Leisure is the Registered Day Care Provider, and is personally liable for all aspects of the OFSTED regulations and requirements.
Diane Bagley	
Head of Sport, Recreation & Leisure	
Background Papers:	
The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:	
National Standards Creches	
National Standards Sessional Care	
The Children Act 1989	
To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.	
(document reference)	
