Appendix B - Summary of Public Consultation outcome regarding the proposed closure of Snowberry Nursery

The following is a summary of the responses received during the consultation period, which ran between 2 April and 14 May 2019.

There were 46 respondents to the survey. Details of responses by provider type are provided below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Respondent</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Parent/Carer of a child currently attending Snowberry Nursery</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A parent/Carer of a child who does not currently attend Snowberry Nursery</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of staff of Snowberry Nursery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of staff of a DfE registered School in the area</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Member of staff of an Ofsted Registered Provision in the area</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Ward Councillor</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An MP</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not specify</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13% (6) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to close the nursery. All 6 respondents were a member of staff from a DfE registered School or Ofsted registered provision in the locality.

A summary of the explanations given for their responses related to:

- Early Years provisions in this area are not full and struggle with this financially in both the Schools and PVI sector
- Their School/Childcare setting being able to offer places which would sustain established and effective providers
- The impact the provision of places at Snowberry Nursery has on surrounding Early Years providers
- Having to compete for numbers with an LA run nursery should never happen, particularly as it is not financially sustainable
- Alternative Early Years providers having space within premises to offer more places but waiting list does not contain enough children to justify taking on an additional member of staff to offer them
Some local Primary schools have already expanded their offer to provide free places to two year olds.
There is no evidence that the closure of Snowberry Nursery will lead to a shortage of places in the area.
If tax payers money is used to fund the cost of running the nursery then it should close as the money could be spent in other needed projects.

The explanations provided by staff from a DfE registered School or Ofsted registered provision were in line with the rationale for the proposed closure set out in the consultation.

83% (38) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed closure. Of the 38 respondents who disagreed with the proposal 1 was a member of staff from a DfE Registered School, 2 were Snowberry staff, 1 was from a relative and the remaining 34 were from parents (9 of whom do not have children who currently attend the nursery).

A summary of the explanations given for their responses related to:

- A lack of high quality nursery provision in Waltham Forest
- The provision at Snowberry being of good quality
- The loss of staff jobs who are good with the children
- Doing more advertising to fill more places at Snowberry
- Offering more flexible places at Snowberry
- Not happy with the environment and in some cases the ethos in other private nurseries
- Nice outdoor area and high levels of cleanliness at Snowberry
- Excellent care and education at a level not available elsewhere
- Feeling that this was a financial decision based on budgets, austerity imposed by central government and politics
- A loss of will on the council's part to provide childcare on its own behalf. Just because the law says you don’t have to, doesn’t mean you shouldn’t.

The explanations provided by these respondents in the main were not in line with the information/rationale for the proposed closure set out in the consultation.
There are a range of Schools, Private and Voluntary sectors within a mile of the nursery (21) who are able to offer places and have vacancies. Of these 3 have an ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted inspection outcome, 15 have a ‘Good’ Ofsted inspection outcome, and 3 have not yet been inspected.

- **91%** of all Ofsted registered Early Years provision in LBWF is **Good or Outstanding** (This is an increase of 20 percentage points from 71% in August 14)
- **90%** of Early Years Childminding provision in LBWF is **Good or Outstanding**
- **92%** of Early Years provision in non-Domestic Premises in LBWF is **Good or Outstanding**
- **31%** of the 36 schools that have a separate EY Ofsted inspection grade are ‘Outstanding’, **67%** are ‘Good’ (as at March 2019)

Every effort will be made via the Council’s HR procedures to source suitable alternative employment for any staff affected by the closure.

Filling more places and/or offering more flexible places at Snowberry nursery does not address the issue that the Council **may not** provide childcare where others are willing to, and would exacerbate the occupancy issues being experienced by other local providers further as more children would be attending Snowberry.

- A number of other Schools, Private and Voluntary sector providers in the locality have a self-contained early years provision with access to a secure outdoor play area
- The proposal to close is not a financial or political one, but based on the fact that the Council **may not** provide childcare where others are willing to, and that continuing to operate would exacerbate the occupancy issues being experienced by other local providers, who are willing to offer places, further.

### What impact would the proposal have on you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Positive Impact</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive impact</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither positive or negative impact</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Impact</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very negative impact</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of the responses (3) regarding a positive or very positive impact were from staff at a School or Ofsted registered childcare provider. The remaining 5 Schools or Ofsted registered childcare providers who responded said that the impact would be neither positive or negative, mainly as they were unsure as to how many children, that may be displaced by the closure of Snowberry Nursery, would end up taking up a place in their School or setting.

A summary of the explanations given for the responses from parents, carers and staff were related to:
(Note the majority of responses were from the parents of 2 year old children who would have remained at the nursery in September 19, as half of the children currently attending will be going to Reception classes in Sept 19)

- Children being settled at Snowberry and having to get used to a new setting, new children an new staff
- Difficulty in finding a nursery as good as Snowberry elsewhere
- Nursery being nearest setting to home address
- Losing my job

In the event that Snowberry Nursery closes the following support would be provided to parents/carers to reduce impact:

- A brokerage service would be provided to assist parents in finding alternative provision that met their families needs
- We would work in partnership with local alternative providers and ask them to arrange open days to allow parents to visit the provision, see the practice and meet the staff
- Families would be supported with transition arrangements to a new school/setting
- Where possible we would work in partnership with new providers to prioritise places for those children displaced by the closure of the nursery, as the Council have no control over these organisations nursery admission processes. (this should not be an issue, particularly as occupancy levels in September are generally lower due to the number of children who move to Reception)
- Where possible we would work in partnership with new providers and parents/carers to facilitate moving groups of children so as to maintain friendship groups.
- Where possible we would work in partnership with new providers to facilitate allowing Snowberry staff, who would be working out their notice period, to be offered a placement at the new setting so that children have familiar staff working with them during their settling in period.
Respondents were asked what measures, if any, could be taken to mitigate the impact of the closure of the Nursery?

A summary of the responses from Schools and Ofsted registered providers are summarised below

- Contact all the other local provisions to confirm spaces available and make the information known to the parents.
- Early Years providers within the locality could support the transition of children to their own settings, guaranteeing priority places to those children displaced by the closure. This is an agreement I as a provider would be willing to have with the parents and carers of the nursery as it would ease the anxiety of parents and carers and further sustain the future of my own setting. Additionally settings within the locality should take into consideration feedback from parents and carers in order to ensure they are offering the most effective and attractive provision for children. This may also be implemented through collaboration with Snowberry nursery practitioners to share strategies that have attracted parents and carers to the setting.
- Signposting to neighbouring schools
- The Council should support the current parents to find alternative placements for their children, as they have when other PVI settings have closed.
- Council employees staff will presumably be entitled to redeployment.
- Parents to reassured that their children are going to offered a place in an excellent facility.

All of the above will be facilitated by the Council.

A summary of the responses from parents/carers are summarised below:

- Advertising the nursery
- Continue to run the nursery
- Guarantee my child a place in another nursery
- Relocate the nursery to another school where resources and staff could relocate

As stated previously, filling more places and/or offering more flexible places at Snowberry nursery does not address the issue that the Council may not provide childcare where others are willing to, and would exacerbate the occupancy issues being experienced by other local provider further as more children would be attending Snowberry.
The only viable option to explore further, which may have mitigated the impact of the closure of the nursery to some extent, was relocating the nursery to a local primary school that did not have a nursery provision currently.

There is only one primary school in the locality that does not have a nursery provision. During the consultation period a meeting was held with the Headteacher of this school to discuss and explore this with her.

The Headteacher made it clear that she has contacts with a number of primary schools in the area, and the Manager from one of the local PVI’s is a Governor at the school, so she has a good overview of the early years situation and the issues being faced by the Early Years sector. She is in agreement with the LA’s proposal to close the nursery, as is also of the view that the places are not required and are adding to the issues that schools and settings in the area are facing with regards to occupancy levels. She believes that if she were to agree to run new nursery provision for her school from this site, she would not be well received by schools or PVI settings in the locality. She would therefore not be open to doing this.

Conclusion:

The Department for Education’s statutory guidance states that

“An English local authority may not provide childcare for a particular child or group of children unless the local authority are satisfied

1. that no other person is willing to provide the childcare (whether in pursuance of arrangements made with the authority or otherwise), or
2. if another person is willing to do so, that in the circumstances it is appropriate for the local authority to provide the childcare.”

The public consultation appears to have confirmed the view of the Council that:

- There are sufficient other good quality School, Private and Voluntary Sector providers in the locality who have the capacity to provide free early education and childcare places, and are willing to do so
• Continuing to provide places at Snowberry Nursery is having an impact on occupancy levels and therefore potential sustainability of local Schools and Childcare Providers
• The Council will be able to meet it statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient childcare places in the locality if Snowberry Nursery were to close
• There are no circumstances that are appropriate for the local authority to continue to provide the childcare as there is sufficient alternative quality provision

Proposer’s response

Having Considered all the comments and noted the compliments of the current provision from the majority of the responders I am recommending that we move to a closure notice on the basis, not of a financial or political decision, but based on the fact that the Council may not provide childcare where others are willing to, and that continuing to operate would exacerbate the occupancy issues being experienced by other local providers.

I note the plan to support residents and children in securing appropriate alternative provision, and to offer employment support to Snowberry staff where appropriate.

Linzi Roberts-Egan
Deputy Chief Executive