

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at
3.30 pm on Friday, 12 February 2016

Present:

Members: Councillor E Ruane

Councillor A Andrews (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

People A Cole, F Doyle, M McGinty

Resources C Bradford, G Paddan

Public Business

29. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Matters Arising:

- a) Further to Minute 24 (3) headed 'Coventry Children's Centres – Quarterly progress Update' – report on performance Management within Family First Teams will be presented at a future meeting, as this meeting was specifically to hear petitions.
- b) Further to Minute 26 (4) headed 'Staying Put Policy' – The Cabinet Member ascertained whether the Director of Children's Services had written to the appropriate Minister regarding extending the duty to provide Staying Put support to young people; to be confirmed at next meeting.

31. Play Centres - Petitions

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People considered a report of the Executive Director of People that responded to an e-petition and four written petitions which had been presented to the Council requesting that it reconsider the proposed closure of play centres. These petitions related to the Edgewick and Eagle Street Play Centres which provide play activities for children from 5 to 12 year olds after school and in the school holidays.

On 24 November 2015 Cabinet approved a 'Connecting Communities' report which contained a recommendation to hold a period of consultation from 7 December 2015 to 1 February 2016 on a set of ten proposals for changes to some services. These ten proposals will deliver the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) target of £1 million proposed in the original City Centre First programme

(now Connecting Communities) for 2016/17 and exceed this target for a full year effect by an additional £0.2 million. Proposals to achieve a further £3.8 million savings needed for 2017/18 will be developed following engagement and further consultation. The ten proposals which will deliver the saving required for 2016/17 include a proposal for the Council to stop providing play activities at Edgewick and Eagle Street Play Centres and to explore the option for them to be used for nursery provision for two, three and four year olds instead.

The following five petitions were considered:

1. An e-petition titled 'To save the closure of Edgewick and Eagle Street Play Centres' bearing 12 signatures was received by the Council on 8 January 2016. The e-petition was organised by a Foleshill Ward resident.
2. A written petition titled '*This petition is to save the closure of Edgewick and Eagle Street Play Centres*' bearing 72 signatures was submitted to the Council on 17 December 2015 by a Foleshill Ward resident. The petition organiser attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners.
3. A written petition was submitted by a Foleshill Ward resident bearing 153 signatures, stating '*We, the undersigned parents have benefited from the play centres. We believe that taking the centre away will have a very negative effect on our communities and ask the Council to consider how they can be saved*'. R. Ahmed attended the meeting and spoke in support of the petition.
4. A written petition was submitted by a Foleshill Ward resident bearing 145 signatures, titled '*Petition to save our centres Edgewick and Eagle Street*'.
5. A written petition was submitted to Council bearing 311 signatures, titled '*Change their stance on public service cuts for free childcare!*'

In accordance with the City Council's procedure for dealing with petitions, those relating to play centre issues were heard by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

The report noted that a total of 173 children aged 5-12 years old were registered at the two play centres as at 31 August 2015. A total of 80 children had attended five or more sessions per week.

The petition organisers present spoke on behalf of the petitioners and requested that the play centres remain open to provide activity sessions and support young people from play to youth and help build life skills in an informal and fun environment. The sessions provided various activities such as drama, trips and sports. Play centres have allowed young people to seek advice, support and guidance within a multicultural setting. Reference was made to the future use of the building and the interest shown by private providers for delivering the two, three and four year olds free entitlement to quality daycare.

Officers present reported on the timescales and potential use of the building together with conversations which have been held with the private nursery sector and local schools. The building would be used to increase the number of nursery

places in the Foleshill area for two, three and four year olds, as above and improve the chances of children to be ready for school and provide a potential rental income for the Council.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the public's participation in the consultation and thanked them for their responses and suggestions on the future of the play centres. He advised that a report was scheduled to be considered at the Cabinet meeting at which the results of the recent consultation exercise on the proposals contained in the Connecting Communities report would be detailed.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report, the matters raised at the meeting and the petitions that had been submitted as part of the Connecting Communities Consultation, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People recommends that the Cabinet take into account at their meeting on 23 February 2016 the issues raised through the petitions when considering the Connecting Communities report.

32. **Outstanding Issues Report**

The Cabinet Member noted a report of the Executive Director of Resources that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested and were outstanding so that progress could be monitored.

33. **Any Other Business**

There were no items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 4.15pm)