

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

12 February 2016

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor E Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director for People

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Play Centres - Petitions

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

On 24 November 2015, Cabinet approved a ‘Connecting Communities’ report which contained a recommendation to hold a period of public 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 on 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. This reflects the total saving of £5 million. 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.

One e-petition and four written petitions have been submitted asking for the Council to reconsider this proposal. In accordance with the City Council’s procedure for dealing with petitions, these play centre petitions are submitted for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Final decisions on all of the proposals detailed in the “Connecting Communities” report will be made by the Cabinet at their meeting on 23 February 2016.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is requested to hear and consider the play centre petitions submitted as part of the Connecting Communities consultation and forward any recommendations in relation to those petitions to the Cabinet for them to take into account at their meeting on 23rd February 2016 when they consider the Connecting Communities report.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

Connecting Communities Cabinet Report, 24th November 2015

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:
Play Centre Petitions

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council received a valid e-petition, "To save the closure of Edgewick and Eagle Street Play Centres" on 8th January 2016. The e-petition was organised by a Foleshill Ward resident and has 12 signatures as at 2nd February 2016. The petition states:

"This petition is to save the closure of Edgewick and Eagle Street Play Centres. These centres are the last of the play centres within Coventry, and provide a safe place for our children to play. They are a place where multi-cultured children play together, and is one only a few things which are still running which bring the community together. The council want to replace these for nurseries for the under 2's, but then there will be nothing for the older children left within Coventry where the children to play together safely. It is also where parents can report any misbehaviour's within and around the park, e.g. drug users, needles being found, which unfortunately is not as uncommon as some may think. Generations of families have used the play centres, and parents whom I have spoken to who used the centres themselves say it is where some of their fondest memories lay, so it would be a real shame to take this opportunity away from this and future generations."

- 1.2 A written petition was submitted to the Council on 17th December 2015. This was organised by a Foleshill Ward resident and has 72 signatures as at 2nd February 2016. The petition states:

"We the undersigned, request the mayor and Councillors of Coventry City Council to immediately stop and remove any plans to close the usage of Eagle Street Play centre for children's play activities. The Eagle Street Play Centre has been operating for many years and has provided children of all cultures and backgrounds an opportunity to play together in a safe, warm and friendly environment. This has been instrumental in allowing children to have fun and at the same time learn to integrate successfully within a multicultural society. The Play Centre provides activities year round such as arts and crafts, sports and games, organised trips and much more."

- 1.3 A written petition was submitted to the Council on 23rd December 2015. This was organised by a Foleshill Ward resident and has 153 signatures as at 2nd February 2016. The petition states:

"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."

- 1.4 A written petition was submitted to the Council on 23rd December 2015. This was organised by a Foleshill Ward resident and has gathered 145 signatures as at 2nd February 2016. The petition states:

"Petition to save our centres Edgewick and Eagle Street."

- 1.5 A written petition was submitted to the Council on 30th January 2016. This has gathered 311 signatures as at 2nd February 2016. The petition states:

“Change their stance on public service cuts for free childcare! With new cuts from the council, free after school and holiday centres risk being cut. However, this can cause problems for the children that rely upon these centres. These cuts could see children playing by dangerous roads or getting caught up in gangs. The petition’s aim is to make the council aware of the effect their decisions will have. We will not have them turn a blind eye to our children.”

- 1.6 The Edgewick and Eagle Street play centres provide play activities for children from 5 to 12 year olds after school and in the school holidays and are open-access and non-regulated. Activities enable children to explore, develop and enjoy their play in a safe, friendly environment and include: arts and crafts, organised trips, sports and games, drama and music, cookery, cultural celebrations, special events, sewing, local and family trips and outdoor play (in adjoining outdoor play space). In addition, the Positive Youth Foundation use Edgewick Play Centre on Saturdays.
- 1.7 There is no charge – the activities are free. The Council fully funds the play centres through core resources.
- 1.8 A total of 173 children aged 5-12 years old are registered at the two play centres as at 31 August 2015. A total of 80 children attend five or more sessions per week.
- 1.9 Conversations with voluntary sector providers have enabled an improved understanding about the potential for the buildings to be used to:
- Increase the number of nursery places in the Foleshill area for two, three and four year olds;
 - Improve the chances of children to be ready for school; and
 - Provide a potential rental income for the Council.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 A report is scheduled to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 23 February 2016 at which the results of the recent consultation exercise on the proposals contained in the Connecting Communities report will be detailed. Cabinet will be asked to make a decision on the various proposals and the point made by the petitioners and the wider consultation will be taken into account at part of this decision making process.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 A full public consultation has been undertaken from 7 December 2015 to 1 February 2016, the results of which are being carefully considered. They will be considered in full at the Cabinet meeting referred to above.

4. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

4.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

4.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

5. Timetable for implementing this decision

Not applicable for this report

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Not applicable for this report

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Not applicable for this report

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Not applicable for this report

6.4 Equalities / EIA

Not applicable for this report

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

Not applicable for this report

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Not applicable for this report

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