

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

28th February 2017

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:

Connecting Communities Phase 2 Proposals – Petitions (Children’s Centres and Youth Services)

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

Connecting Communities is an ambitious approach to redesigning services through collaboration with local communities. This is in the context of an estimated 55% grant reduction to Coventry City Council from Central Government between 2010/11 and 2020.

A public consultation took place from 12th September 2016 to 12th December 2016 on a set of proposals across Children’s Centres, nurseries, youth service and libraries with an associated Phase 2 savings target of £3.8m. This included proposals to develop integrated Family Hubs for 0 – 19 year olds, located in areas of highest need (turning 8 Children’s Centres into Family Hubs and retaining Council delivery of a targeted and specialist youth offer focused on young people who are hardest to reach and most vulnerable as part of the Family Hub model).

This report identifies the petitions received and makes recommendations about their consideration. During the consultation, 2 e-petitions and 3 written petitions were received in relation to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s portfolio.

In accordance with the City Council’s procedure for dealing with petitions, the petitions relating to the ‘Family Hubs’ proposal are submitted for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at the meeting on 28th February 2017. Furthermore, 1 of the written petitions relates to Youth Services, Children’s Centres and Public Libraries. This petition will be considered by both the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People on 28th February 2017 and also by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on 6th March 2017.

Final decisions on all of the proposals detailed in the “Connecting Communities Phase 2” report will be made by the Cabinet at their meeting on 7th March 2017.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is requested to hear and consider the petitions submitted as part of the Connecting Communities consultation on the 'Family Hubs' proposal and forward any recommendations in relation to those petitions to the Cabinet for them to take into account at their meeting on 7th March 2017 when they consider the Connecting Communities report.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

Connecting Communities Phase 2 – Cabinet Report, 30th August 2016

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:

Connecting Communities Phase 2 Proposals – Petitions (Children’s Centres and Youth Services)

1. Background

1.1 Connecting Communities is an ambitious approach to redesigning services through collaboration with local communities in the context of an estimated 55% grant reduction to Coventry City Council from Central Government between 2010/11 and 2020.

1.2 A public consultation took place from 12th September 2016 to 12th December 2016 on a set of proposals across Children’s Centres, nurseries, youth service and libraries with an associated Phase 2 savings target of £3.8m. This included proposals to develop integrated Family Hubs for 0 – 19 year olds, located in areas of highest need.

1.3 The Council received a valid e-petition to ‘Save our Children’s Centres’ on 13th December 2016. This has 6 signatures as at 25th January 2017. The petition states:

“We believe that the proposal to close 9 Children’s Centres and convert 8 Children Centres into ‘family hubs’ is wilful neglect of the most important asset this city has for future prosperity and security – Coventry’s children. Removing nursery provision from all Children Centres will place children at greater disadvantage and will increase inequality and social immobility. There is no guarantee that private providers will take over nursery provision in Children’s Centres. Ofsted has found the provision at these Children’s Centres to be outstanding. We are not assured that privatisation of these public services will offer the same quality of nurturing for children and parents. Children Centres provide access to multiple support services for parents and children. The proposal gives little detail over what services the ‘family hubs’ will deliver, where they will be delivered, who will deliver them and how services delivered by the Council, NHS and the private sector will be integrated. The provision of services for areas of highest need will leave gaps in service provision, contrary to the Council’s early intervention strategy.

We call on the Council to abandon these proposals, use its considerable financial reserves to continue to support these services and actively campaign with the citizens of Coventry to demand full funding of these public services from Central Government.”

1.4 The Council received a valid e-petition to ‘Save our Youth Services’ on 13th December 2016. This has 11 signatures as at 25th January 2017. The petition states:

“We reject the Council’s proposal to close youth services at 16 locations. The services provided by 8 new family hubs will only be available to the ‘most vulnerable’. Youngsters who are not ‘most vulnerable’ will not have their needs met, reducing their future opportunities and creating additional demands on services at a later date. Youth club activities will cease. Removing these activities will reduce the opportunities for the children to approach youth workers for help. Will there be enough volunteers to run a reliable and effective alternative. Our children need places to go and things to do. They also need trained staff that can provide a positive role model for the future. We call on Coventry City Council to connect our communities to find the funding for our current services and fight with the people of Coventry for a better deal for public services from central Government.”

1.5 A written petition ‘Save Jardine Youth Centre and Tile Hill Children’s Centre’ was submitted to the Council on 12th December 2016. This has 382 signatures as at 25th January 2017. The petition states:

“We, the undersigned protest at the cuts planned by Coventry City Council including closing virtually every library, children and family centre, adult education and community

centre, making cuts in transport for the disabled and sacking all lollipop men and women, reducing street cleaning and road maintenance, and axing another 1000 jobs that will then never be available to the young people of our city.

We particularly object to the plan to close Jardine youth centre and Tile Hill Children's Centre (Sure Start) both on Jardine Crescent which are used by young people, children and families in our area. These are both essential safe spaces, open new doors and horizons to the young people, children and families that are central to healthy local communities."

- 1.6 A written petition 'Please stop all cuts to Youth Services' was submitted to the Council on 12th December 2016. This has 209 signatures as at 25th January 2017. The petition states:

"Stop Coventry youth centres from being closed down and turned into family hubs.

The closure of youth centres in and around Coventry City will leave kids without places to go to have fun, make friends and socialise with the community. As a child myself who attends the Xcel leisure centre which is one of the centres rumoured to close I am utterly devastated and I will do everything and anything I can to prevent it. In the Xcel leisure centre I attend Canley youth theatre a group which has inspired hope, laughter and tears. In the centre there lies so many memories and I consider it as a home it is our centre and the Coventry City Council cannot close it down. Coventry City Council should research the great work Canley youth theatre has done and all the other groups which are in the centre to realise what an amazing effect it has on young people like myself. Not only would you be taking down a building you would be taking down a museum of living memories. People need to realise that not all kids are reckless juveniles and our centre proves that. We have kids of all different backgrounds, races, religions and sexualities however we are all one big family and we all enjoy where we are and what we do. We don't want this great sense of unity, friendship, family taking away or the transferable skills we learn every time we attend. It will take away young people's spirit and it will diminish the strong community we share together. Think about the domino effect which could occur if we were to lose such vital provisions."

- 1.7 A written petition 'Stop the Cuts' was submitted to the Council on 12th December 2016. This has 327 signatures as at 25th January 2017. The petition states:

"We the undersigned, protest at the £3.8m cuts planned by Coventry City Council affecting public libraries, youth work and nursery provision, children's and youth centres. We believe those essential services should be provided by properly paid staff, not replaced by volunteers working for free.

We object to the Council's current 'consultation process', supposedly listening to people's views on whether these cuts should go ahead, when at the very same time the Council has set up a fund of over £1/2m to give grants to those who want to take over services under threat.

We believe the Council should use some of the £84m it has in reserves to stop these cuts, and buy time for a serious campaign in the city involving the Council, trade unions, and all those affected by these cuts to demand proper national funding from the Government of essential local services."

This petition will also be considered by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on 6th March 2017.

- 1.8 The City Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare for working parents, as far as is practicable, and sufficient Children's Centres to promote integrated health, early education and childcare. It is for the Council to determine sufficiency levels for Coventry, whilst having regard to the relevant legislation and guidance and the needs of the city.
- 1.9 There are currently 17 Children's Centres located across the city. Children's Centres in Coventry provide activities as part of the core offer for children aged 0 – 5 years old, 5 days a week (Monday to Friday) at a gross cost of £3.5m per year including property. As at December 2016, a total of 13,264 children were registered.
- 1.10 Nurseries in Coventry Children's Centres provide 284 places for 2, 3 and 4 year old funded children, 5 days a week (Monday to Friday) at a gross cost of £0.9m per year. As at October 2016, a total of 189 children were registered at these nurseries.
- 1.11 The Youth Service provides youth work support in a number of ways and locations to young people, 6 days a week with universal (open access) provision generally in the evenings and more targeted support during the day at a gross cost £1.4m including property. As at July 2016, circa. 2,700 young people were registered at the 16 youth centres and community venues and around 30 to 100 young people attend each session. In addition, detached youth work is carried out in other locations.
- 1.12 A number of the petitions feature concerns regarding the closure of some of the Children's Centres in the city and the ending of universal youth service provision. During the consultation, extensive interest was received from the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector and schools regarding alternative use of Children's Centre space, in addition to a high level of interest from voluntary and community sector in the delivery of future universal youth services. There has also been a willingness from partner organisations including Police and Health to collaborate and share resources to better meet the needs of young people aged 0 – 19 years.
- 1.13 The City Council values the contribution that Children's Services make to local communities and is working to ensure that the impact on service users and children in the city will be minimised through the willingness from the PVI sector to collaborate in mitigation and by working in partnership.
- 1.14 Subject to the agreement of Cabinet on 7th March, the Council will continue to develop integrated Family Hubs for 0 – 19 year olds, located in areas of highest need.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 A report is scheduled to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 7th March 2017 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 revised proposals and the points 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 12th September 2016 to 12th December 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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