



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 6 MARCH 2017 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :  
Councillor Dr Moore (Chair)

Councillor Chohan

Councillor Malik

Councillor Senior

Co-opted Members:

Mohammed Alauddin Al-Azad, Parent Governor Representative (Primary/Special  
Needs)

Gerry Hirst, Roman Catholic Diocesan

In Attendance:

Councillor Russell – Assistant City Mayor, Children Young People & Schools

Standing Invitees (non-voting)  
Peter Flack, Teaching Unions

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**71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Willmott, Anu Kapur, Carolyn Lewis and Rabiha Hannan.

**72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**73. EARLY HELP REMODELLING - OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

Councillor Russell, Assistant City Mayor for Children, Young People and Schools introduced the report and gave credit to the team for the work and detail that had gone in to this particular consultation on Early Help Remodelling, noting that the service would not be looking to make changes were it not for the severe level of cuts imposed by the government.

With regard to the original proposal concerning Adventure Playgrounds it was noted that scrutiny had challenged the proposed budget reduction. Through the equality impact assessment, it was deemed that there was insufficient information provided to enable an accurate assessment of any budget reduction therefore the decision to reduce funding has been postponed until further analysis work has been completed. The council's Service Analysis Team would commence work with the Adventure Playgrounds to analyse service outputs to inform future proposals.

The Head of Services, Early Help – Targeted Services, led a presentation and gave an overview of the report together with key headlines which included:

- Background as to the budgetary pressures and links to Ofsted improvement;
- The work that had been undertaken to inform the proposals and comparisons to other local authorities to provide a clear benchmark;
- The connection to other services and potential impacts e.g. with the Public Health agenda;
- The statutory requirements in terms of children centres and early years officers;
- Evidence through case studies and cost calculation of the impact of service provision;
- Details of the consultation process, the methods applied and numbers engaged together with responses and tags to common themes;
- Details of the proposed model, risks and mitigation to go forward for implementation.

The Chair commented that although the report was a lengthy document the subject warranted it and the analysis was very thorough and commission members agreed the methodology used in the report was very good.

Commission members discussed the report which included the following comments:

- Concern about the number of posts being cut and whether there would be effects on the quality of work being done by the service,
- Whether the commission were convinced that with the reduction of staff suggested that an adequate service could still operate,
- The effect of claw back and what that meant if a group took on responsibility for a building.

Councillor Russell responded that the service had explored other local authorities to identify risks, few authorities had had anything clawed back and the key was to ensure that the buildings remained in use for early help/childhood services. The Head of Service indicated that there were variations across the local authorities and capital clawback was set by 5 statutory restrictions.

In relation to the sustainability of the proposed model with the reduction of staff outlined the Head of Service replied that the service had looked at where it could make an actual difference based on evidence, during the consultation it

was found that some of the factors affecting this was that the service was too large which had contributed to inefficiencies and ineffective work. There were areas of duplication between this service and external partners that were taking away some of the focus on frontline services. The Head of Service was confident that the proposal was a workable model that would help the service to see more of the right families that needed early help services to prevent issues from escalating. It was also highlighted that some risks were unknown but with mitigation in place and subject to regular review, this would minimise impact with changes being made if required.

Concerns were voiced about external pressures on the service such as the growth of the population through migration, improved mortality and higher birth rates, the rising costs of services and the future management of that situation. Councillor Russell responded that growing population demands such as birth rates had stabilised but there were more families moving into the City and there would be ongoing risk assessments of those points.

Concerns were expressed that there would be adverse consequences upon the children of the city if the proposals were implemented. It was suggested that cutting £3.5 million would have a dreadful effect especially since Leicester City had one of the highest levels of child poverty. There were also concerns that there would be less provision and that in turn could lead to more children experiencing difficulties.

The Chair commented that it was important to look at the situation pragmatically, to rationalise and where possible support the service to find the best solution.

Councillor Russell responded that whilst the proposal was for higher cuts than anyone wanted, the service had fully considered the various effects of the proposals such as buildings and ensuring those that remained would be within “pram pushing” distance and in the areas of highest need. The reduction in front line staff had also been kept down to 20% by shifting the balance from universal targeting. It was recognised that the most vulnerable children and those at point of need should be protected.

It was queried how many of the proposals were based on parent views and how much was evidence based, Councillor Russell replied that construction of the proposals had been completely evidence based with the majority of respondents being from members of the community who use these services, though a couple of points in particular were parent linked e.g. parental engagement, so whilst proposals were based on evidence where there were impacts on people their views were also taken into account as part of the consultation responses process.

Commission members noted that there had been a very high response level to the consultation with 1224 responses being received and it was clear there had been changes to the original proposals as a result of considering those responses. Officers had worked very hard to fully engage with people including helping complete forms, talking to groups and addressing language barriers to

ensure everyone was able to be involved in the consultation process.

Referring again to the issue of capital clawback and how it might affect the council, Councillor Russell indicated that clawback would not impact further on cuts across the service as it would either be taken from capital or council reserves as a one off payment and it would not be an ongoing revenue impact.

During discussion para 5.2 (pg 11 of the report) was referred to and it was suggested that the cuts would amount to 40% of the Early Help Targeted Services budget which was a huge and worrying amount.

Commission members commented that whilst there was a cut of £3.5 million which scrutiny had considered the report provided the best choices in the circumstances although scrutiny would want to review the situation and the effect of proposals on services at a future meeting.

The Chair referred to Appendix E suggesting that would be a good framework to be used by the service to report back to the commission on a future date.

It was also agreed that precise data and appropriate quantitative measures would be provided and some of the additional data for early help would be incorporated into the quarterly quality assurance report that the commission received.

The Chair thanked all officers involved in the preparation and presentation of the report and their work involved in the consultation process.

**AGREED:**

1. That Early Help Remodelling be brought to a future scrutiny meeting to review the implementation of the proposals and their impact on service,(Approx. April 2018),
2. That the executive note the concerns expressed by commission members about the impact of the proposals on the service and upon children,
3. That the contents of the report be noted.

**74. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There being no other business the meeting closed at 6.51pm.

