



CABINET

Monday 15 April 2019 at 5.00 pm

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Matthew
Bennett

Councillor Jennifer
Brathwaite

Councillor Edward Davie

Councillor Jim Dickson

Councillor Jacqui Dyer

Councillor Paul Gadsby

Councillor Claire Holland

Councillor Mohammed
Seedat

Councillor Sonia Winifred

Apologies for absence

Also present:

Portfolio:

Cabinet Member for Planning, Investment & New
Homes

Deputy Leader of the Council (Children and Young
People)

Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (job
share)

Cabinet Member for the Voluntary Sector, Partnerships
and Community Safety (job share)

Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (job
share)

Cabinet Member for Housing

Cabinet Member for Environment and Clean Air

Cabinet Member for the Voluntary Sector, Partnerships
and Community Safety (job share)

Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture

Councillor Jack Hopkins and Councillor Andy Wilson

Councillor Anna Birley, Councillor Tim Briggs,
Councillor Pete Elliott, Councillor Nicole Griffiths,
Councillor Marianna Masters and Councillor Jackie
Meldrum

1. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were none.

2. PROPOSED REMODELLING OF LAMBETH CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Councillor Brathwaite, Deputy Leader of the Council (Children and Young People), introduced the proposal and outlined the following:

- The proposed redesign of the children's centre services was a result of the way in which the Department for Education had placed restrictions on the way in which the Council could use the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- The restrictions on use of the grant resulted in a budget shortfall of £1.4 million per year for the children's centres services.
- It was not sustainable to use the Council's reserves to fund the overspend, particularly in the context of an overspend of £4 million in the children's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) budget.
- Lambeth Council was not alone in facing an overspend in their SEND service – with 32 out of 33 London boroughs also overspent in this area.
- The decision to remodel the children's centres services by closing 5 out of 23 Centres was a difficult one, but with 18 remaining Centres Lambeth would have the third highest number of children's centres of any London borough.
- A thorough consultation had taken place in order to guide the proposals, and amendments to the proposals in the Streatham area were being re-consulted on as a result of the feedback gained from the consultation.

Tony Parker, Director of Children's Commissioning and Community Safety, was invited to present the outcome of the consultation and the proposed model to Cabinet. Cabinet noted that:

- The consultation had generated a high amount of interest and a high response rate from users of the children's centre services.
- It was clear that residents valued the services provided by the borough's children's centres.
- Many respondents stated that the Council should find alternative funding to maintain the service in its current format. However there were no sustainable alternative funding arrangements available to maintain the service in its current format.
- The proposed model would integrate the children's centres with other key health and early help services to provide better outcomes for children who used the centres.
- The proposed model was organised into six cluster areas of the borough, with a lead provider and a multi-agency board for each area. It was anticipated that parents and carers would play an active role in working with these boards to co-produce the services required in their areas.
- Changes were made to the proposals in the Streatham area due to

feedback received in the consultation. Woodmansterne Primary School had decided that it would no longer be viable to provide a children's centre services at their location due to the expansion of the school. Therefore the proposal had been amended to instead retain a children's centre at Sunnyhill Children's Centre. This amended element of the proposals required re-consultation before a separate Cabinet Member Decision.

- If agreed, the new service was due to go live in September.

Nick Acton, Alix Roberts and Temujin Gill made a representation to Cabinet on this item. Nick Acton acted as a spokesperson for the group and his representation focussed on the following key areas:

- A decision had been taken to close the Cherry Tree Children's Centre, despite information contained in the Lambeth Children's Centre Service consultation stating that this site would remain open as a facility that provided childcare.
- It appeared that the closure of Cherry Tree had not been consulted on properly and therefore the consultation was invalid and the decision needed to be revisited.

Councillor Brathwaite thanked Nick Acton for making his representation and confirmed that the decision to close the Cherry Tree Children's Centre had been made by the Great North Wood Educational Trust and not the Council. However she committed to raising the parents' concerns with the Trust and to review overall childcare provision in the area as a result of the closure of this facility.

Officers clarified that the Cherry Tree Children's Centre had ceased to be a registered children's centre in 2015 and therefore did not form part of the proposals that had been consulted on. The reference made to Cherry Trees Children's Centre remaining open as a childcare facility in the consultation documentation was provided as background information only and was accurate at the time of the consultation.

Alison McKane, Director of Legal and Governance, confirmed that the information in the consultation document relating to Cherry Tree Children's Centre, and the subsequent change in circumstances, did not mean the proposals needed to be re-consulted on.

Helen Hayes, MP for Dulwich and West Norwood, Councillor Jackie Meldrum and Councillor Anna Birley gave the following representations on the proposals:

- Concerns had been raised by parents about the sufficiency of childcare provision in the area served by the Cherry Tree Children's Centre, if it closed.
- It was important that the Families Information Service was improved as part of the proposals to ensure that parents could find it easy to locate convenient childcare that suited their needs.
- Concerns were raised on the ability for the Council to maintain the provision of maintained Nursery Schools as these were linked closely to children's centre provision.

Tony Parker responded to the representations to confirm that the Council would carry out a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment once Cherry Tree

Children's Centre had closed. He also confirmed that the Families Information Service was also being updated, with a new website due to go live in September at the same time as the proposed changes to children's centres. The Council had been proactive in its management of Maintained Nurseries so that resources were shared providing the service with increased resilience.

Councillor Tim Briggs, Councillor Pete Elliott, Councillor Nicole Griffiths and Councillor Marianna Masters made the following representations on this item:

- According to figures produced by London Councils, Lambeth was due to receive an increase in funding for the Early Years proportion of the Dedicated Schools Grant, therefore the cuts to the service were unnecessary.
- The closure of Cherry Tree Children's Centre changed the nature of childcare provision in the Norwood area and therefore the consultation needed to be re-run – parents of children at Cherry Tree Children's Centre may have been more engaged with the consultation had they known it was due to be closed.
- Reassurance was sought that the services in Streatham would remain open in their current form until September.
- The £1.4 million needed should be found elsewhere in budgets as closing children's centres will increase inequality in the borough.

Councillor Brathwaite responded to the points raised by clarifying that despite the Early Years element of the Dedicated Schools Grant increasing between 2017/18 and 2018/19, before 2017/18 there was more discretion for Councils to allocate the Dedicated Schools Grant as they saw fit rather than to a rigid formula. As a result, the cost of the directly provided services that were funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant exceeded the allocations allowed by the Department for Education since 2017.

Tony Parker provided assurance that all services would remain in their current form until September when the new model was due to be implemented.

Cabinet debated the proposal, and noted the following:

- The Council had done all it could to prevent the closure of children's centres, but the legacy of 9 years of austerity meant a difficult decision had to be made to close some of the children's centres.
- The overspend in the service last year was funded from reserves, however it was not sustainable to keep funding overspends from reserves, particularly as the Council had the second lowest level of reserves of all London Boroughs.
- Even though there was a marginal increase in funding for Children's Services from central government, the increase had to be viewed in the context of rising inflationary pressures and increased demand for services. Therefore the marginal increase in spending was in fact a cut in funding per child accessing the Council's services.
- The Council had worked hard to minimise the impact of cuts to children's centres, and this had been reflected in positive

responses provided by key stakeholders on the work to integrate services at children's centres. Additionally, the Council had managed to leverage funding in from other sources to provide help to the most vulnerable in the borough. An example of this was the Lambeth Early Action Partnership which had secured lottery funding.

In response to a question from Cabinet, Tony Parker confirmed that the effect of the changes to the service would continue to be monitored on service users across Lambeth. The data would be gathered through the Early Years Foundation Stage programme, as well as direct feedback sought from parents and other service users.

RESOLVED:

1. Subject to further consultation at Woodmansterne and Sunnyhill and the wider Streatham area, that Cabinet approves proposals to implement new commissioning arrangements for children's centres, entering into contractual arrangements with six lead providers for a three year period September 2019-August 2022.
2. Subject to further consultation at Woodmansterne and Sunnyhill and the wider Streatham area, that Cabinet approve proposals to implement new arrangements for the delivery of children's centre services across 11 core and 7 link sites, with direct funding of children's centre delivery ceasing at 5 sites. The new arrangements will provide Lambeth with 18 children centres, the third highest in London. See appendix A.
3. That Cabinet delegates consideration of the outcome of further consultation at Woodmansterne and Sunnyhill and the wider Streatham area, to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the decision as to the final configuration of provision in the Streatham area.

The meeting ended at 6.46 pm

CHAIR
CABINET
Monday 13 May 2019

Date of Despatch: Friday 18 April 2019

Call-in Date: Tuesday 30 April 2019

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