



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Cabinet

Supplementary Agenda

MONDAY
18 APRIL 2011
7.00 pm

COURTYARD ROOM
HAMMERSMITH
TOWN HALL
KING STREET
LONDON W6 9JU

Membership

Councillor Stephen Greenhalgh, Leader
Councillor Nicholas Botterill, Deputy Leader (+Environment and Asset Management)
Councillor Mark Loveday, Cabinet Member for Strategy
Councillor Helen Binmore, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Joe Carlebach, Cabinet Member for Community Care
Councillor Harry Phibbs, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement
Councillor Lucy Ivimy, Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Greg Smith, Cabinet Member for Residents Services

Date Issued
08 April 2011

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020 8753 2063 or email: David.Viles@lbhf.gov.uk

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A loop system for hearing impairment is provided, together with disabled access to the building

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Item

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4. PETITIONS : H&F CHILDREN'S CENTRES

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18 APRIL 2011

**CABINET MEMBER
FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

*Councillor Helen
Binmore*

PETITIONS: CHILDREN'S CENTRE

The Council has received a petition from some parents and carers of children who attend children centres opposing the "Spoke and Hub" model and the restructuring of Early Intervention Services.

WARDS

ALL

CONTRIBUTORS

Petitions Officer
ADLDS

RECOMMENDATION:

That officers write to the petition organiser setting out its views about the request in the petition.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Between 22 January to 28 February 2011, the Council consulted with residents, service users and professional agencies prior to proposing changes to children's centre. The consultation was on the Council's website and advertised. Hard copies of the consultation were also placed in every Children's Centre and staff actively encouraged parents, carers and childminders to fill them in. 667 full and partial responses were received out of 7,168 registered users of Children's Centres. A series of focus groups were held with a particular emphasis on young parents and fathers. The Cabinet Member visited all the Children's Centres prior to the consultation starting and also held 2 focus groups for parents. Officers also met with two resident led local action groups.

1.2 A petition containing over 2000 signatures was received opposing the "Spoke and Hub" model and the restructuring of Early Intervention Services in Hammersmith & Fulham.

1.3 The Petition stated that:-

"The parents and carers of the children who attend Wendell Park Children's Centre are opposed to the proposed cuts outlined by the council. We are concerned about the future of this important community service.

The proposed new budgets of just £19,000 for 'Spoke' centres does not even cover the heating, lighting or repair costs for these buildings. There would be no money for play equipment and supplies.

Most importantly, £19,000 leaves no funding for Staff salaries. Regular staffing is crucial for maintaining contact with families and offering support. If support only comes via Hubs, this will not facilitate vulnerable families asking for help in London, and the large number of users from all other backgrounds".

The full petition statement is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

1.4 Under the Council's Petitions Scheme, a petition attracting a minimum of 250 valid signatures (of people who live, work or study in the borough) triggers consideration of the petition by Cabinet. This petition meets this criterion.

1.5 A report on the reconfiguration of Sure Start Children's Centres Network is included on this agenda.

2. COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE PETITION

2.1 In accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme, the petition organiser (or someone he/she nominates) may address the Council for up to 5 minutes on the subject of the petition. The Council may then decide to take one or more of the following courses of action:

- a) take the action requested in the petition
- b) considering the petition at a Council meeting
- c) hold an inquiry into the matter
- d) undertake research into the matter
- e) hold a public meeting
- f) hold further consultation
- g) hold a meeting with petitioners
- h) refer the petition for consideration by the relevant Select Committee
- i) write to the petition organiser setting out its views about the request in the petition.

3. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES

3.1 There are no financial implications to this report.

4. COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)

4.1 The petition is valid under the Council's statutory Petition Scheme under Part 1 of the Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and falls to be considered by Cabinet.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	Petition relating to Children's Centre.	Kayode Adewumi ext. 2499	Finance and Corporate Services, Room 133a, 1 st floor, Town Hall.
CONTACT OFFICER		NAME: Kayode Adewumi EXT. 2499	

Petition to Hammersmith & Fulham Council “The Petition, dated 9 Feb 11”

Re: Consultation about Children’s Centres

The parents and carers of the children who attend Wendell Park Children’s Centre are opposed to the proposed cuts outlined by the council. We are concerned about the future of this important community service.

The proposed new budgets of just £19,000 for ‘Spoke’ centres does not even cover the heating, lighting or repair costs for these buildings. There would be no money for play equipment and supplies.

Most importantly, £19,000 leaves no funding for Staff salaries. Regular staffing is crucial for maintaining contact with families and offering support. If support only comes via Hubs, this will not facilitate vulnerable families asking for help.

Why not let the Managers of each centre provide you with proposals for a percentage cut, eg 12%, to their services. This would be equitable, auditable and achievable.

The Children’s centres need to provide ongoing planning to meet the needs of the children & families who are referred to, and use, the centre. Children’s Centres are important meeting places between staff, families, carers and children in the local area. They have in themselves become part of the community in which they serve.

The regular weekly play sessions designed to involved parents/carers and children in play and other activities are vitally important as parents have contact with other parents/carers of all ages. This chance to socialise with other families brings a unique sense of community which would otherwise be missing. And these are truly multicultural activities, at times bringing individuals together from across cultures, engaging *within* the community, for the first time.

They also provide a unique experience of English for children (and parents/carers) for whom this is a second language, in a safe environment.

All Children’s Centres offer training of the Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P), giving behavioural guidance and best practice to parents of pre-school children. At ‘spoke’ centres they are easily accessed by local families who might otherwise struggle with behaviours in the children until school age. What affect on the community of this loss?

And Wendell Park in particular offers Outreach Work & Childminder Auditing and Advice. The Outreach Worker takes referrals from Health Visitors, Social Workers & Family Services, providing a central contact for all these services. The OW becomes involved on a close basis with the referred family be they of high, or lower, need. If this service is moved to the ‘Hub’, the caseload would by nature become impersonal and community rapport would be lost. And they would have neither the time, nor the forum, to detect any early issues within the community.

The Childminder Co-ordinator registers all the local childminders, co-ordinates their training, and provides confidential support. She is also responsible for the local Childminder Accreditation Scheme, which provides a benchmark, and confidence in service, for parents and Childminders alike. All Childminders have local access to the services within the Children’s Centre, again involving them in the wider community.

Petition to Hammersmith & Fulham Council “The Petition. dated 9 Feb 11”

We do not believe that other public facilities are suitable as replacement, or even part replacement, of our ‘Spoke’ Children’s Centres. The Children’s Centre staff ARE the Children’s Centre – they provide a safe, welcoming, encouraging environment for children and adults alike. They are trusted, and this trust has been earned, and built over time. Without the Children Centre staff, the Centres would be empty. Volunteers cannot possibly fill this gap.

And what would be the child safety issues of the Council’s proposals?

The monies allocated for the Early Intervention Scheme need to continue to be ring-fenced for Our ‘Spoke’ Children’s Centres. These Children’s Centres are a good, and vital, model of community support and provision should not fail because funds have been used in other ways.

Our ‘Spoke’ Children’s Centres are a true example of what the Government calls The Big Society working for the benefit of the community, in the community. They are used by parents, carers, grandparents, nannies, child minders and, of course, our children.

The children *are* our future. We must provide for their developmental needs and provide easily accessible support for the adults caring for them.