

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 JULY 2013

PETITION – SURE START NURSERY AND PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES

Report from: Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults

Author: Rosie Gunstone, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

This report advises Members of a petition which has been referred to this Committee by the petition organiser who is not satisfied with the reasons for the answer given by the Director. The petition relates to the Council's consultation on cuts to Sure Start Nursery and pre-school facilities.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The constitution provides that petitions received by the council relating to matters within the remit of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be referred immediately to the relevant Director for consideration at officer level.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Director is asked to respond to the petition request within 10 working days. The petition organiser may request to refer the matter to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee if s/he is not satisfied with the answer and has given reasons for their dissatisfaction.
- 2.2 If the petition contains at least the number of signatures equating to 5% of Medway's population (currently 12,675 signatures) it will be debated by Full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting.
- 2.3 If the petition contains at least the number of signatures equating to 2% of Medway's population (currently 5,070 signatures) the relevant senior officer may give evidence at a public meeting of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee.
- 2.4 A petition may also be submitted through the e-petition facility on the council's website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper

petitions. A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information.

- 2.5 A summary of the response to all petitions will also be published on the council's website.

3 Petitions referred to this committee

- 3.1. The following e-petition has been referred to the Committee for consideration as the lead petitioner has indicated that they are dissatisfied with the responses received.

- 3.2. This petition was on the Council's website from 23 May 2013 to 13 June 2013 and received 69 signatures:

"Stop the current proposals to cut the Sure Start Nursery & Pre-school facilities at Magpie Hall Road and Luton High Street as these are much loved and valued by the local community".

- 3.3. The Director of Children and Adults responded to the petition and the letter is attached at Appendix A.

- 3.4. The e-mail requesting referral to the Committee is attached at Appendix B.

- 3.5. Director's comments

- 3.5.1. *Director's comments are to follow.*

4 Risk Management

- 4.1 The Council has a clear scheme for handling petitions set out in its Constitution. This ensures consistency and clarity of process, minimising the risk of complaints about the administration of petitions.

5 Financial and Legal Implications

- 5.1 Any financial and/or legal implications arising from the issues raised by the petitions are set out in the comments on the petitions.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1 Members are requested to consider the petition referred to this Committee.

Background papers

None.

Contact for further details:

Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer

Tel. No: 01634 332104 Email: teri.reynolds@medway.gov.uk

Please contact: Barbara Peacock

Your ref:

Our ref: BP/SB

Date: 27th June 2013

Ms Louise Taylor
163 Castle Road
Chatham
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ME4 5HZ

Children and Adults – learning and caring directorate

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ME4 4TR

Telephone: 01634 306000

Direct line: 01634 331011

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e-mail: rose.collinson@medway.gov.uk

Director: Barbara Peacock

Dear Ms Taylor,

I am writing in response to the petition you sent in "save our Sure Start".

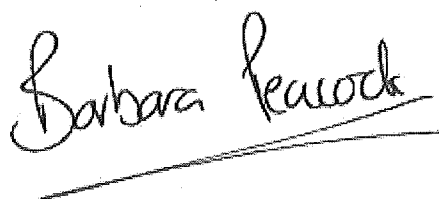
I am pleased to hear that you and other members of the community love and value the pre-school and nursery provision provided at Magpie Hall Road and Luton High Street.

Medway is committed to ensuring the expansion of early education for two year olds. There is significant new additional investment going into these sites to provide additional places for two year olds. We estimated that 80% of the local population will be eligible to take up the offer of free early education once their child becomes two years old.

Under the changes proposed more children will be using the pre-school and nursery provision at Magpie Hall Road and Luton High Street and further funding will be invested.

Medway Council will be increasing spending on early education by over £3.5 million per year by 2015.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Peacock". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Barbara Peacock
Director of Children and Adults Services

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Referral request

Thank you for the response to the petition. As we are not happy with the decision made or with the way the decision was made, the petitioners would like this matter reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny committee. We believe Medway Council have a moral obligation to allow children to remain at All Saints nursery, in full daycare, under the current hours, until they start school.

We are pleased to hear that a large number of 2 year olds in the area will benefit from free nursery education, but those of us who signed the petition, do not want the existing daycare service to be stopped.

We believe the existing daycare service at the nursery should remain and can compliment the expansion of early education in Medway. The daycare service currently provided by the centre has been assessed by Ofsted as outstanding. It is also unique, in the fact that it provides different sessions, that can span across the whole day, so parents can tailor the childcare to their specific working hours. This means the All Saints nursery is more affordable than alternative private daycare nurseries in the area, making returning to work a viable option.

People signed the petition because the nursery sessions, to be offered from September, are not compatible with the working day. Parents will be required to collect their children at lunch time and then take them back to the nursery for the afternoon. Also, the nursery will only be open during term times. At worst parents are being forced to give up work because of these changes! At best children will be upset by having to transfer to a new childcare setting.