

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 SEPTEMBER 2016

PETITIONS

Report from: Ian Sutherland, Interim Director of Children and Adults Services

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Summary

To advise the Committee of any petitions received by the Council which fall within the remit of this Committee including a summary of the response sent to the lead petitioners by officers.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 In summary, the Council's Petition Scheme requires the relevant Director to respond to the lead petitioner usually within 10 working days of the receipt of the petition by the Council. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are always advised of any petitions falling within their terms of reference together with the officer response. There is a right of referral of a petition for consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the petitioners if they consider the Director's response to be inadequate. Should the Committee determine that the petition has not been dealt with adequately it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Council.
- 1.2 The petition scheme is set out in full in the Council's Constitution at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/4.01%20-Council%20rules.pdf>
- 1.3 Any budget framework implications will be set out in the specific petition response.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's 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.

- 2.2 Where the Director is able to fully meet the request of the petitioners a response is sent setting out the proposed action and timescales for implementation.
- 2.3 For petitions where the petitioner organiser is not satisfied with the response provided by the Director there is provision for the petition organiser to request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps the Council has taken, or is proposing to take, in response to the petition. No petitions have been referred to this Committee at this time.

3 Completed petitions

- 3.1 A summary of the responses to petitions relevant to this Committee that have been accepted by the petition organisers is set out below.

Subject of petition	Response
<p>Petition against cuts to Sure Start Children's Centre Services</p>	<p>The Council's Cabinet has decided that all of Medway's 19 Sure Start children's centres will remain open, providing services for families with babies and young children. We are not changing or reducing the offer of free nursery education for all three and four year olds, and for many two year-olds; we are maintaining the funding provided to the 100 pre-schools and nurseries in Medway that provide the free nursery education places; and we want to keep our very successful Sure Start children's centres that are used by thousands of local families, and receive tens of thousands of visits every month.</p> <p>To make the necessary financial savings to keep all of the children's centres open, we are reorganising and reducing staff from across the Council's early years services – so that every part of our available resource focuses on frontline support for families.</p> <p>Our new service will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding and early help - to protect children and prevent escalation into social care; • school readiness – the good foundation for children's learning; and • alignment with child health services – providing support for all parents and prospective parents. <p>We are formally consulting with affected staff, and trades unions, which is the approach agreed with our workforce and their representatives.</p> <p>Midwives, health visitors and other public health professionals will continue to work in the Council's 19 children's centres, alongside teachers and family support workers to provide the local one-stop experience that is at the heart</p>

Subject of petition	Response
	of Sure Start. Parents, carers, and professional partners will continue to help shape the future Sure Start services, through Advisory Boards that link to each children's centre.
Petition to urge Medway Council to reinstate MAGIC play scheme provision to Children 11+	Following discussions between the Council and MAGIC, proposals for a range of sport and holiday based activities is under consideration. With regard to play schemes for children aged 11 and over that are not directly funded by the Council, the Council is willing to meet with the petitioners to discuss the issues and seek a way forward.

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 implications arising from the issues raised by the petitions are set out in the comments on the petitions.
- 5.2 Overview and Scrutiny Rule 21.1 (xiv) in the Council's Constitution provides that the terms of reference of this Committee include the power to deal with petitions referred to the Committee under and in accordance with the Council's petition scheme.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is requested to note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 3 of the report.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices:

None

Background papers:

None