

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE** held on Thursday, 11 April 2024 at Council Chamber, County Hall, Matlock, DE4 3AG.

PRESENT

Councillor K S Athwal (in the Chair)

Councillors R Iliffe, T Kemp, C Dale, R George, N Gourlay, P Rose and J Wharmby.

Also in attendance was Councillor J Patten, A Noble, C Caley, D Rachford (union representative).

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor S Burfoot.

07/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

08/24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 04 February 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

09/24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (30 MINUTE MAXIMUM IN TOTAL)

There were no public questions.

10/24 REVIEW OF EARLY HELP AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICES

Alison Noble, Director Early Help and Safeguarding and Chris Caley, Head of Service Early Help gave a presentation to the Committee on the Review of Early Help and Children's Centre services.

The Council were forecasting an overspend of almost £34m by 31 March 2024. This led officers to have to review the delivery of Children's Centre operations, the Early Help Service, and the cessation of the Early Help Development Team.

Due to the significant financial challenges faced by the council, it was proposed that the new service would offer a combination of responses to statutory expectations combined with some practical family support within the new financial window plus an additional £1m from Public Health.

The public consultation ran from 12 February to 24 March, and received 2,027 responses from users of the service, members of the public and

partner agencies. The top 5 themes coming out of the feedback from the public consultation and professional engagement were:

- Impact of vulnerable children and families
- Disagreement with the proposed savings proposals
- Importance of early help services
- Pressure on Social Care and other services
- Long term consequences for vulnerable families – and additional cost to the Council

The report to Cabinet on 29 April will seek approval to:

a) Disestablish the Council's existing Early Help teams and Children's Centres – and the Early Help Development Team (which provided support to partner agencies).

b) Implement a new service model for Family Help in Derbyshire, and to the retention of 12 Children's Centre buildings – and the closure of 10 Children's Centres.

Committee Members acknowledged the officers difficulties but having thoroughly examined the proposals presented by officers, at the meeting, they remained concerned with the increased level of risk to children and families. It was encouraged that officers continued to work with Children's Services to mitigate risk.