

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE** held on Monday, 20 May 2024 at Council Chamber, County Hall, Matlock.

PRESENT

Councillor K S Athwal (in the Chair)

Councillors D Allen, J Dixon, N Gourlay, R Iliffe, P Smith, P Rose, and J Wharmby.

Also in attendance was Councillor S Burfoot, C Dale, R George.

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor T Kemp.

16/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17/24 CALL IN: EARLY HELP AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES IN DERBYSHIRE

At its meeting on 29 April 2024 Cabinet considered and approved a report relating to early help and children's centres in Derbyshire. The report sought approval to disestablish the Council's existing Early Help teams and Children's Centres, confirm that further funding for the Early Help Development Service should not be provided. As well as approve the implementation of a new service model for Family Help in Derbyshire, the retention of 12 Children's Centre buildings, and the closure of 10 Children's Centre buildings.

In accordance with the provisions of the County Council's Constitution, Councillors S Burfoot, C Dale, E Fordham, and R George had asked that the decision be called-in. It was their opinion that that the decision breached Articles:

- 7.2 (a) due regard to all relevant and material considerations and without regard to any irrelevant considerations;
- 7.2 (c) proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome);
- 7.2 (g) clarity of aims and desired outcomes.

The principal objections, as given in the call-in notice, were stated as follows:

"The purpose of the report is to ensure the Council saves money and reduces ongoing revenue expenditure in response to the dire financial position of the Authority by:

- seeking permission for the disestablishment of the current Early Help Service, including Children's Centres, and
- implementing a new service model whilst attempting to maintain an early help offer which supports children of all ages and which improves family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse and which prevents children and families requiring crisis intervention services.

The actions are disproportionate to the desired outcomes and there is a lack clarity of aims and desired outcomes because:

1. The nett savings of the decision are not sufficiently detailed in the report and take no account of any increase in expenditure resulting from the decision.
2. The decision will have a detrimental effect on some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Derbyshire, risking an increase in use of crisis intervention services and in children getting no service, but fails to adequately demonstrate that it sufficiently mitigates against any adverse impact it will have for children and young people.
3. The decision fails to adequately demonstrate how it complies with the Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance 2013."

Information had been provided in support of their request and an explanation why they had called-in the decision. Councillor J Patten presented information in support of the decision taken. The Executive Director for Children's Services Carol Cammiss, Director Early Help and Safeguarding Alison Noble, and Head of Service Early Help Chris Caley also attended the meeting to comment on the issues raised and respond to Councillors' questions.

The Committee considered the information that had been put before them and considered whether the decision had been made in accordance with the decision-making principles, as set out in the Constitution. The Chairman asked the Committee to vote on the officer's recommendation and Members voted 5 to 3 in favour that the principles of decision-making had not been breached.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered the call-in of the decision made by Cabinet on 29 April 2024 and determined that the decision-making principles set out in Article 7.2 (a), (c) and (g) had not been breached.