

## **CABINET MEMBER DECISION**

### **Decision:**

Petitions

**(i) Details of decision**

That the response, attached to this decision sheet as Appendix 1, be approved.

**(ii) Reasons for decision**

To respond to the petition.

**(iii) Details of any alternative options considered and rejected**

None

**(iv) Details of any consultation and representations received not included in the published report**

None

### **Conflicts of Interest and any Dispensations Granted**

**(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded and any dispensations granted by the Audit and Governance Committee)**

None

### **Decision taken by:**

**(i) Name:** Clare Curran

**(ii) Portfolio:** Cabinet Member for Children

**Date of Decision:** 03 July 2018

**Date of Publication of Record of Decision:** 03 July 2018

**Date decision effective (this decision cannot be called in):** 03 July 2018

**Cabinet Member for Children Decisions**

3 July 2018

**RESPONSE TO PETITION REGARDING CHILDREN'S CENTRES:**

'From pregnancy to primary schools, Sure Start Children's Centres support children and their parents and carers. They offer services for all, but especially for families at times when life is a struggle. Surrey County Council proposes to cut £2.2m from these vital support services when families need them most. They are safe, welcoming, supportive environments for parents with young children who need help. These centres are essential to making sure everyone gets a fair start in life. They are efficiently run, providing centralised resources in local communities, and making effective use of shared locations (such as school premises), shared time (such as allowing other groups to use the centres) and trained volunteers (such as Peer Supporters at the breast-feeding support service). More cuts be matched by efficiency savings; the only outcome will be that vital support to families will have to be discontinued, increasing demand on the already struggling NHS'.

Submitted by: Katy King

Signatures: 1874

**Response:**

This petition describes the valuable work of Children's Centres and how they enhance the lives of families within local communities. This is not in doubt and their value is well recognised and appreciated, however, the council believes that the available resources could be used more effectively through developing a borough/district wide response which is less reliant upon existing buildings and focuses on the availability of services within a local area. The aim of the Children's Centre change programme is to retain the core offer that focuses on readiness for learning and narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged, including the Healthy Child Programme. At present the change programme is in the first stage of current provider engagement, which it is planned to follow in September 2018 by a public consultation and a Cabinet decision in January 2019. Changes are not planned to be implemented before September 2019. As part of its medium-term financial plan, Surrey County Council has had to implement a 20% reduction in its spending on Sure Start Children's Centres.

There are some underpinning principles within the change programme that aim to prevent loss of local provision for children and families in the areas of greatest needs while mitigating the potential loss of buildings in other localities through effective outreach. These principles include:

- The new model will contribute to a more flexible, coordinated and holistic local 0 – 19 (25) early help and universal offer for families
- Strong partnerships with schools and private, voluntary and independent organisations managing children's centres, health and other partners will be maintained wherever possible
- The expertise and skills of existing staff is retained whenever possible
- Existing strengths and relationships will be built upon within local communities

- Opportunities will be provided throughout the process for local creativity and innovation in creating a sustainable model
- Surrey County Council's available resource will be allocated in response to local levels of need to tackle inequalities and disadvantage

Whilst these changes may prove challenging, the well-being and resilience of Surrey families lies at the heart of the new proposals. Through re-shaping our children's centre contracts we believe we can better meet the needs of children and families.

**Clare Curran**  
**Cabinet Member for Children**  
**3 July 2018**