

**CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY
RESPONSE TO ASHTEAD KIDS CLUB PETITION****The Petition**

Surrey County Council have written to Ashtead Kids club to terminate their contract to use the Ashtead Youth Centre by the end of 2012. This petition strongly requests the contract is renewed. This club covers all local schools caring for children from 7.45am before school, and to 6pm after and provides childcare in the holidays enabling parents to work. A necessary service that works perfectly in the existing premises due to location, size, layout, facilities, proximity to trains, security and safety. It is unique, irreplaceable, reliable, affordable childcare used by 200 families. Other school clubs do not cater for the early start or later finish and none cater for full working days covering all term time and school holidays. Parents, employers in and near Ashtead and those that commute see this facility as an essential service for the area. If Kids club were to close (likely without suitable premises) users will have to reconsider childcare options possibly resulting in enforced decisions to stop working without adequate childcare. We now ask the council to take into consideration working families, the children and the wishes of the community and renew the contract.

Response:

Thank you for the petition. I am pleased to confirm that Surrey County Council has extended the notice date from 31 December 2012 to at least 31 March 2013. Further, I want to reassure the community as set out in a recent joint statement between the Council and Ashtead Kids Club that the provision of Ashtead Kids Club will continue at Ashtead youth centre until suitable alternative premises are found.

In December 2011, Surrey County Council agreed a policy to maximise the use of its youth centres by young people in line with the council's legal duties. Additionally the Government has recently changed the law, requiring young people to participate in education and training up to age 18. This means that the council will need the space at Ashtead Youth Centre to support, educate and train 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.

Whilst Surrey County Council is increasing support for young people through the use of youth centres, this does present a policy tension and is necessarily balanced with other duties, such as the duty to secure sufficient childcare to meet local need. The County Council will not therefore act in a way which reduces childcare in Ashtead.

Ashtead Kids Club will continue to operate at the youth centre until a suitable new location has been found. The value that the club provides to the community is recognised and I stress that we will continue to work collaboratively to explore options and to find a solution.

Kay Hammond
Cabinet Member for Community Safety
13 December 2012

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