

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

31st January, 2013

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Galletley, L. Hughes, Hutchinson, Kelley, E.A. Richmond, C. Taylor, J. Vasey and Wright.
(10)

APOLOGIES – Councillors J. Lyonette and Mr. T. Fisher. (2)

STATUTORY CO-OPTees –

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – Mr. R Egan and Mr. D. Moyes.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors C. Hughes, Cabinet Member with Children and Young People Portfolio, Lawton, Long and McNab.

OFFICERS – Murray Rose, Director of People, Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director, Children, Families and Learning, Yvonne Coates, Head of Family Support, Brett Nielsen, Finance Manager and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

CYP23. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS – Councillor L. Hughes declared a personal non prejudicial interest as a non-Darlington member of UNISON.

CYP24. KIDS AND CO NURSERIES – Consideration was given to a ‘call-in’ from the Cabinet held on 8th January, 2013 (Minute C104(1)/Jan/13) in relation to its decision in respect of Kids and Co Nurseries. The ‘call-in’ was taken in accordance with the Council’s Constitution and had been signed by three Members of this Council.

A report (previously circulated) of the Member who had requested that the decision be ‘called-in’ outlined the reasons for that decision and requested further information from the Officers on the reasoning behind the decisions made to ensure a more detailed understanding of the issues.

A report (previously circulated) of the Director of People which was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8th January, 2013, gave the background to the proposal to close the Kids & Co Nurseries at Borough Road and Northwood and the Flexi Childcare Service.

Councillor Kelley outlined the reasons behind why the decision has been taken to call in the proposed closure of Kids & Co Nurseries. The call in was requested as the relevant Members felt that the decision to close the service was disproportionate because of the failure to undertake a thorough options appraisal and full consideration of the costs to implement the recommendations. Concerns were also expressed that incomplete and inadequate information was submitted to Cabinet especially regarding an audit of nursery places and an Equality Impact Assessment. Officers responded to the comments and concerns raised.

Ms Nicola Bales, a representative of parents who had children attending Kids and Co, addressed the Scrutiny Committee and requested that further consideration be given to

the proposals by parents which indicated that the Nurseries could be operated without a Council subsidy. References were also made to the conflicting financial figures surrounding Kids and Co, the amount of grant funding received, the current fees of Kids and Co and the current rental of Northwood.

Ms. G. Toward, representing UNISON, also addressed the Committee and stated that it was felt that Cabinet did not have enough detailed information to make its decision to close the Nursery, Kids, it was believed that neither Northwood or Borough Road wanted Kids and Co on its site, a full audit of child places available in the Borough had not been undertaken and that a complete review of the Service had not been undertaken prior to making the decision to close.

RESOLVED – That Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has thoroughly scrutinised the ‘call in’ and acknowledges the concerns put forward in respect of the closure of Kids and Co but feel assured by Officers that Cabinet had enough information to make the decision to close Kids and Co and therefore agree that no further action should be taken