

North Tyneside Council Report to Council Date: 4 February 2016

ITEM 3

Title: Childcare Review
Petition

Portfolio(s): Children, Young people and Learning

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Ian Grayson

Report from Service Area: Law and Governance

Responsible Officer: Vivienne Geary, Head of Law and Governance

Tel: (0191) 643 5339

Wards affected: All

PART 1

Executive Summary:

On 19 January 2016 the Authority received a petition opposed to the Childcare Review proposals. The petition comprised handwritten and electronic submissions, with a total of 3,149 valid signatures. The petition is required to be considered by full Council in accordance with the provisions of the Authority's Petition Scheme contained in the Constitution.

The petition's stated purpose is to 'capture parent and public concerns regarding North Tyneside Council's proposals to cease direct delivery of childcare at Wallsend, Shiremoor, Riverside and Oaktrees childcare/nursery settings by September 2017'.

It also seeks to 'address concerns raised should North Tyneside Council fail to transfer Battle Hill and Denbigh childcare to the proposed schools'.

It also states that 'further concern has been raised if North Tyneside Council fail to transfer both Battle Hill and Denbigh childcare/nurseries to the respective schools by September 2016'.

The petitioners' covering letter states that:

- they 'dispute the Council's current argument that there is sufficient, accessible high quality childcare within the borough';
- 'there is a significant disparity between the quality of care and education offered by childminders and structured nursery based provision'; and
- 'other local authorities with similar staffing and pension costs have not released budget proposals regarding the future of their childcare provision in 2016/17, therefore there must be an efficient way of operating provision without Council subsidy'.

The petition calls on North Tyneside Council to 'end their plans to close down all six of their nurseries and to continue their direct delivery of affordable childcare for local families, including fee paying and funded provision for 2 and 3 year olds across the Borough after September 2017'.

Procedure

The petition has been formally acknowledged, in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Petition Scheme.

At the meeting, the petition organiser may address Full Council for five minutes to present the petition. Members may then debate the petition for a maximum of 15 minutes.

Under the Authority's Petition Scheme the Council may decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. Full Council may:

- decide to take the action the petition requests (should this be within their powers to do so);
- not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee; and
- where the decision is one on which the Authority's Elected Mayor and Cabinet are required to make a final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.

A further report will be produced for the Council meeting to address the issues contained in the petition, and taking account of the Elected Mayor and Cabinet's final budget proposals which will be considered at the Extraordinary Cabinet meeting on 27 January 2016.