

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEMBER SIGNING
THURSDAY, 16 JUNE 2011

Present: Councillor Lorna Reith (Cabinet Member for Children)

Also

Present: Councillors Reece and Wilson

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTION BY
1.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1): Councillor Reece in respect of item 2 – Decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2011 regarding Children’s Centres in Haringey.	HLDMS
2.	DECISION OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 8 JUNE 2011 REGARDING CHILDREN’S CENTRES IN HARINGEY (Report of the Director of the Children’s and Young People’s Service - Agenda Item 2): Councillor Reece declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter by virtue of being a Governor of Highgate Primary School. The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services reported that she had fully reviewed her earlier decision of 18 May having taken into account the issues raised and representations made at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 June. She expressed her gratitude to the Committee and to all those who had attended it and contributed to the debate. It was clear that Children’s Centres were highly valued and everyone involved, parents, governors, heads, staff and Council Members all shared a common desire to build on the good work done to date. With regard to the Highgate, Northbank and Rokesley Children’s Centres she indicated that she had considered carefully her decision to withdraw funding from these centres but that, unfortunately, with the overall reduction in funding and the need to target resources to areas of greatest need she could not change that decision. However, she indicated that she was mindful of the concerns expressed about the need to identify vulnerable families and the key role played by health services in doing this. She also expressed awareness of how often the importance of the continuation of health services was raised during the consultation process. She confirmed that she had been able to identify monies to cover the accommodation costs in each of the three centres that would ensure that health services could continue from those sites. It was her belief that the combination of these and other universal services would assist in identifying families that were particularly vulnerable. The model included family support staff employed by the Council on a central basis, covering the whole borough, who could provide services to such families as necessary. She was also able to confirm that the Council could provide a limited amount of ‘pump-priming’ money on a one-off basis to enable these three	

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	centres to see if it was possible to develop a business model that would allow the continuation of some services on a paid-for self-sustaining basis. She indicated that she was aware that the centres had done some work on this already and feedback from the consultation indicated that there were parents willing and able to pay. With regard to the Tower Gardens link site she had reviewed her decision to withdraw funding but, again, budgetary constraints prevented a change in the decision. However, she confirmed that a range of services for families in the Tower Gardens area would be available from Rowland Hill Children's Centre, which was also in the White Hart Lane ward. It was her intention to build into the agreements the Council had in place with its centres that outreach work was done to particularly target families in this part of the ward. With regard to the structures, management and governance elements she reported that she had reviewed the proposals contained in the Cabinet report relating to the structure, management and governance of the Children's Centres and having listened carefully to the concerns expressed by head teachers, governors and others she did not propose to proceed with the model at this point but had asked officers to do further work with heads and governors in order to address their concerns. A positive meeting had already taken place with the Children's Centre Alliance and further discussions were scheduled. They were now starting work on developing an alternative model but it would be premature to set out yet how this would work. Staff consultation was also being carried out and this must be allowed to complete its course as it was important that the views of Children's Centre staff were fully taken into account. An update report would be submitted to the Council's Cabinet in due course once consultation with staff had concluded and the development work being done by the Centres had been completed. Councillor Reece while expressing disappointment at the Cabinet Member's intention to re-affirm her earlier decision to withdraw funding from a number of centres welcomed the provision of funding of accommodation costs for health services and for pump priming to see if alternative business models could be developed by the Highgate, Northbank and Rokesley Children's Centres. With regard to future governance arrangements Councillor Reece stressed the importance of developing an integrated, multi disciplinary approach and, having indicated that she would be willing to serve on the working group established by the Children's Centre Alliance, she also sought clarification of whether the current staff consultations should continue given that the original structures, management and governance elements were not now going ahead. The Cabinet Member responded and emphasised that the decision to withdraw funding from certain centres was necessitated by the Council's financial position. The working group established by the Alliance did not currently include politicians although its membership was a matter for them.	
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	It was reported that it was hoped that the staff consultation carried out to date was not lost and the views of the interested parties were being sought as to whether there would be a need to start again. Reference having been made to a 'hit squad' approach, the Cabinet Member dismissed the idea that this had ever been a proposal and she emphasised that all of the concepts favoured by the Council involved working in a multi disciplinary way. At this juncture, Councillor Reece having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest withdrew from the room. RESOLVED 1. That the decision taken at the Cabinet Member Signing on 18 May 2011 not to provide direct financial support for the Highgate, Rokesly and Northbank (Fortis Green) sites but to encourage partnerships which might enable services to continue at these sites be re-affirmed. 2. That the decision taken at the Cabinet Member Signing on 18 May 2011 to cease to support the Tower Gardens site also be re-affirmed. 3. That the proposals for the management and organisation of Children's Centres approved at the Cabinet Member Signing on 18 May 2011 should not be progressed for the time being to enable officers to do further work with heads and governors in order to address their concerns and that a further report be submitted to the Council's Cabinet in due course once consultation with staff had concluded and the development work being done by the Centres had been completed.	DCYPS DCYPS DCYPS
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The meeting ended at 13.25 hours.

LORNA REITH
Cabinet Member for Children