

By: Anna Taylor, Scrutiny Research Officer
To: Scrutiny Committee, 29 January 2025
Subject: **Call-in of Decision 24/00093 - Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs**

Summary: This decision, taken on 17 January 2025, has been called-in to the Scrutiny Committee by Ms Mel Dawkins and Mr Barry Lewis.

Background

1. Decision 24/00093 – Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs was, prior to formal progression, debated at Full Council via a Petition Debate on 7 November 2024. Council resolved the following:

Council recognises that this petition represents significant local opinion regarding the proposed decision to not recommission Family Hub Services at Seashells and asks the Cabinet Member to take that into consideration in addition to the consultation report, and detailed financial analysis, before taking the decision.

2. The decision was later presented as a proposal to the CYPE Cabinet Committee on 21 November. The Cabinet Committee resolved to make a specific recommendation to the Cabinet Member as follows:

The committee recommends that the decision be delayed until the new government funding is confirmed and that there be a temporary extension of contract, subject to it being legally viable;

That a valuation of the buildings be undertaken;

And, that an update be brought to the next meeting.

3. The Cabinet Member reported on the proposed decision during their Cabinet Member updates at the CYPE Cabinet Committee meeting on 16 January 2025 and the decision was taken by the Cabinet Member on 17 January 2025.
4. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Ms Mel Dawkins (Labour Group) and Mr Barry Lewis (Green & Independent Group), thus meeting the requirement for any call-in to be requested by two Members from different political groups.
5. The reasons of the call-in were duly assessed by Democratic Services, including a review of the reasons given by those Members calling in the decision and an investigation into whether any issues raised in the call-in were adequately addressed by the decision paperwork, committee reports, responses to written

questions or committee debate. The results of this review were considered by the Democratic Services Manager and the call-in was determined to be valid under the call-in arrangements set out in the Constitution. Call-in reasons must be clear, correct and align to one or more of the following criteria under s17.67 of the Constitution:

Members can call-in a decision for one or more of the following reasons:

- (a) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework,
- (b) The decision is not in accordance with the Council's Budget,
- (c) The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in 8.5, and/or
- (d) The decision was not taken in accordance with the arrangements set out in Section 12.

6. The full call-in request is set out in the attached document (a), submitted by Ms Mel Dawkins and Mr Barry Lewis. While not all aspects of the call-in were considered valid, particular points set out within the call-in that meet the relevant criteria are highlighted below:

'Reason one: Best Value Duty' as it is set out in the call-in document, highlights the requirement for decisions to evidence consideration of best value. This is addressed to a significant degree as the reports explore detailed consideration of various options and financial implications along with considering needs assessment comparisons across other Wards. However, recognising the significant public interest in the community value aspect for this particular decision, more explicit explanations relating to how Community Value was considered would provide clarity.

'Reason five: Explanation of the options considered and giving reasons for decisions', as it is set out in the call-in document, highlights a range of arguable information gaps and technical queries. While the majority of these do not necessarily meet the call-in criteria, the assertion that further clarification is needed on the consideration around potential use of Year 4 Family Hub funding and the materiality of the legal or procurement risks on alternative options are best explored by the Scrutiny Committee, recognising the prior Cabinet Committee recommendation.

Process

7. As set out in the call-in procedure, Democratic Services must consider all call-in requests against the criteria detailed in the constitution, which are themselves based on the legal requirements under the Local Government Act 2000 to have an appropriate mechanism to allow Executive decisions to be scrutinised. In determining the validity of any call-in, no judgement is made by Democratic Services as to whether the decision itself is flawed, inappropriate or invalid. Similarly, where some individual reasons submitted for an overall valid call-in are not assessed as valid, this does not mean they merit no consideration as part of any subsequent call-in meeting. Paragraph 6 of this report does not indicate endorsement or agreement with the challenges made in the call-in – this report

only confirms that the relevant valid points set out in the call-in are not all completely addressed through the available documentation and previous debate. It should be highlighted that the decision documentation is detailed, thorough and extensive on a range of the key considerations relating to the decision. However, the call-in identified elements that merit further consideration or clarification. In accordance with the call-in arrangements, it is therefore for Members, via the Scrutiny Committee, to determine whether any reconsideration of the decision is necessary and appropriate.

8. The Cabinet Member and relevant Officers will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
9. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation already available and the response from the Executive given at the meeting, giving due regard to the information made available during questioning and discussion on this item.
10. The decision papers remain available online but are republished in the agenda pack as appendices for ease of reference.

Recommendation – Options for the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee may:

- a) make no comments
- b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision
- c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the decision-maker in light of the Committee's comments; or
- d) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.

Attached documents

- a) Scrutiny call-in reasons submitted by Ms Mel Dawkins and Mr Barry Lewis.
- b) [24-00093 - Decision Report](#)
- c) [24-00093 - Record of Decision](#)
- d) [Appendix 1 Service Offer Comparison](#)
- e) [Appendix 2 Commissioned Family Hub Contracts Consultation Report](#)
- f) [Appendix 3 Draft Responses to Consultation Feedback](#)
- g) [Appendix 4 Commissioned Family Hub Contracts Decision EqIA](#)

Background documents

- a) [Agenda for County Council on Thursday, 7th November, 2024, 10.00 am](#)
- b) [Agenda for Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on Thursday, 21st November, 2024, 2.00 pm](#)

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