

By: Anna Taylor, Scrutiny Research Officer

To: Cabinet - 4 March 2025

Subject: **Cabinet reconsideration of Decision 24/00093 - Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs**

Summary: Following the Scrutiny Committee's referral of this decision to Full Council for review as part of the call-in process, Cabinet must reconsider the decision, taking account of comments expressed by the Scrutiny Committee on 29 January 2025.

Cabinet may confirm, amend or rescind the decision.

Introduction

1. The power of call-in was established under the Local Government Act 2000, which provides for overview and scrutiny committees to review or scrutinise executive decisions.
2. At KCC any two members from more than one political group may give notice of their wish to call-in a decision. The Constitution sets out the criteria, at section 17.67 for calling-in a decision. Call-in delays the implementation of decisions and allows for members of the Scrutiny Committee to require that decisions are reconsidered by the decision-maker in light of the Committee's comments or to be reviewed by full Council (s17.72).
3. In accordance with s17.74 of the Constitution, prior to consideration by Council of a referred decision, Cabinet must first consider the comments of the Scrutiny Committee and determine whether the decision should be confirmed, amended (both resulting the decision still progressing to Council for review) or rescinded. In the latter case, the decision implementation is cancelled indefinitely, and the call-in process ends immediately, with the matter not progressing to Full Council.

Background

4. On 29 January 2025, the Scrutiny Committee considered a call-in made by Mrs Jackie Meade and Mr Barry Lewis of decision 24/00093 (Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs). The decision maker was Mrs Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.
5. The Scrutiny Committee considered the call-in reasoning, with explanations provided by both Members responsible for the call-in. Members debated the issues, including usage figures of the Family Hubs, gaps in information provided and further clarification on the potential use of the Year 4 Family Hub funding and the materiality of the legal or procurement risks of alternative options.
6. Following the debate, the Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed the following motion:

- a. That implementation of Decision 24/00093 be postponed pending review by the full Council.
7. Comments expressed during the debate are summarised below (these represent the views put forward by Members of the Committee):
- a. Members claimed that the decision was inconsistent with the Council's Policy Framework in relation to Best Value Duty, in so far as it was argued that the high footfall and positive support for the Commissioned Hubs indicated they offered good and popular services, making them best value when compared with the less popular alternative Hub facilities.
 - b. Members considered that Seashells and Millmead provided the best value and served the community effectively, particularly vulnerable families, and it was important to consider community impact when decisions were made.
 - c. Members raised concerns about the financial analysis, including the lack of funding plans and lack of detailed costings for alternative service provisions.
 - d. Clarification was sought over differing usage figures available for the Family Hub buildings and the data on which this decision was based on, with queries arising based on information collected and shared by an individual member of the Committee.
 - e. Concerns raised about the lack of detail surrounding the savings made by not renewing the contracts.
 - f. Further information sought about existing contracts and contract extension requirements – confirmation was requested around legality of a contract extension.
 - g. Further information sought about what the Year 4 additional family hub funding from central government could be used for.
 - h. Clarification over whether the family hub funding could be used for 0-25years, not only early years.
 - i. Concerns over accuracy of the EqIA
 - j. Differing accounts of engagement with Swale Borough Council over the potential move of Family Hub services to the Sheppey Gateway.
8. After the debate, the Committee resolved, with a unanimous vote, to refer the matter to full Council for review.

Process – Review by Cabinet

9. As a consequence of the Scrutiny Committee's decision, section 17.73 of the Constitution applies:

"If the Scrutiny Committee refers a decision to the full Council, it shall be considered at the next meeting of the Council when the Council may either:

- (a) Agree the decision be implemented
- (b) Express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision, or

(c) Require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the Cabinet, taking into account the Council's comments."

10. Section 17.74 of the Constitution requires that before a decision is reviewed by full Council, it must be formally reconsidered by Cabinet, in light of the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee. That provides an opportunity for the Executive to confirm, amend or rescind the decision before it is subject to any further debate by the wider Council membership.

11. The outcomes of Cabinet's reconsideration will be published and sent to all Members of the Council.

12. In the event of Cabinet confirming or amending the decision this will be further reviewed by full Council on 13 March 2025.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet is asked to consider the comments of the Scrutiny Committee and confirm, amend or rescind decision 24/00093.

Attached documents

- a) [24-00093 - Decision Report](#)
- b) [24-00093 - Record of Decision](#)
- c) [Appendix 1 Service Offer Comparison](#)
- d) [Appendix 2 Commissioned Family Hub Contracts Consultation Report](#)
- e) [Appendix 3 Draft Responses to Consultation Feedback](#)
- f) [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](#)
- c) [Agenda for Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 29th January, 2025, 10.00 am](#)

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