

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 19 December 2023.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr D L Brazier, Mrs B Bruneau (Substitute for Mr O Richardson), Mr M Dendor (Substitute for Mrs L Game), Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Rich Lehmann, Mrs S Prendergast, Dr L Sullivan and Mr S Webb (Substitute for Mr N J Collor)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr A Brady, Mrs S Chandler, Ms M Dawkins, Mr R W Gough, Jenni Hawkins, Mr A R Hills, Mr P J Oakford and Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms H Birdi (Assistant Director, Adolescent and Open Access, East, Integrated Children's Services), Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Dr A Ghosh (Director of Public Health), Mrs S Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Ms James (Interim Director of Children's Operational Services), Ms W Jeffreys (Consultant in Public Health), Mr B Sherreard (Programme Manager), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **33. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting** *(Item A3)*

Dr Sullivan declared an interest in item 2, Commissioned Youth Service Contracts. Her husband was a Council appointee on one of the commissioned Youth Service groups and her son had used some of the Commissioned Services – this was not the case currently.

#### **34. Call-in of Decision 23/00092 - Kent Family Hub Model - Implementation** *(Item B1)*

1. The Chairman introduced the item and invited Mr Brady and Mr Streatfeild to provide an overview of the reasons for the call-in.
2. Mr Brady provided the following reasons for the call-in of the decision:
  - a. The decision was disproportionate to the desired outcomes agreed with Government:
    - i. The Family Hubs model did not provide effective integrated youth services as it appeared to be heavily weighted towards the provision of early years services at the expense of youth activities. Youth services should be given more priority because 87% of the consultation responders said that they thought this age group would use family hub services the most.

- ii. It had not been made clear how the Family Hubs model would meet the requirements to deliver additional services.
      - iii. Services should be universally available across the County; however, this could not be correct because some rural areas would not have a hub in the local vicinity.
    - b. Due consideration and taking of advice:
      - i. 90% of consultation responders indicated that face to face services were their preferred format. There was no desire for face to face services to be replaced with digital offers.
    - c. Clarity of aims and desired outcomes:
      - i. There was no information about dedicated spaces for young people. These spaces should not be shared with other family hub services.
    - d. Financial pressures:
      - i. There was concern that in future, there would be increased reliance upon digital and online services because they were cheaper to provide. Members needed to be confident that the proposals were financially sustainable and that there would not be significant changes to services in the future.
    - e. The views of young people:
      - i. Statutory guidance indicated that Councils must consult and consider the views of young people when redesigning a service. Young people were not involved in the decision to move to the Family Hub model as the decision, made in October 2022, was taken as an urgent decision before any consultation with young people had taken place.
    - f. Family hubs were not in line with the Council's Policy Framework:
      - i. Family hubs were not mentioned in 'Framing Kent's Future'.
      - ii. Resident's opinions were not reflected in the decision and there had been no Member involvement. This was contrary to the principles of openness and transparency.
    - g. The decision conflicted with Government guidance and statute:
      - i. The Education Act was updated during September 2023. The consultation period was already live at this time therefore the consultation could not take these updates into account.
      - ii. Local authorities (LA) had a duty to provide young people with access to a sufficient quantity of youth services and activities. However, there were no details about the activities that would be offered to young people.
3. Mr Streatfeild noted that Mr Brady had comprehensively outlined out the reasons for the call-in. He added that in Sevenoaks, the Library would become the hub. The majority of people who used the services lived more than 1.5 miles away, and the youth outreach worker role would be redundant from April 2024. The Town Council and District Council were concerned that the withdrawal of the youth services would lead to an increase in antisocial behaviour. The Town Council was looking to temporally fund the youth services, and the District Council was looking to establish a public spaces protection order to address antisocial behaviour concerns. This was an example of how the Family Hubs decision was

disproportionate to the desired outcomes and how other organisations were attempting to mitigate against its potential negative impact.

4. The Chairman invited Mr Gough, Leader of the Council, to speak. Mr Gough noted that the Council had been selected by Government to take a leading role in the development of family hubs as part of a national initiative. He added the following points in response to Mr Brady and Mr Streatfeild's comments:
  - a. The hubs were intended to deliver a universal model of service.
  - b. The digital offer was just one element of the provision, there would still be a significant face to face service and a community outreach service.
  - c. There were a number of significant national mandates that would need to be met over the three-year grant period.
  - d. The Family Hubs model proposed many new offers of youth services, for example supporting families of adolescents.
  - e. The offer was consistent with existing patterns of provision in many Local Authorities (LAs).
  
5. The Chairman asked Mrs Chandler, as Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, to respond to the comments made by Mr Brady and Mr Streatfeild. She began by providing some back ground information, noting that the called in decision was about how and what was to be delivered. It was not intended to specify hub locations or go into specific detail at this stage. Mrs Chandler proceeded to make the following points:
  - a. A significant proportion of the delivery of the Start for Life concept and the Family Hubs model, was dictated by Government policy.
  - b. An emergency decision was needed in October 2022 to allow the Council to accept Government funding to become a pathfinder for the Start for Life concept and the Family Hubs model. The emergency decision was considered at a previous Scrutiny Committee meeting and there had been a number of subsequent decisions that had gone through the normal decision process.
  - c. The Family Hubs model would provide a more consistent service for children and families throughout the age range. This would be provided predominantly through face to face interactions, including outreach services, with support from a digital offer.
  - d. It was welcome that the Children's Young People and Education Cabinet Committee expressed support for the Start for Life concept and much of the Family Hubs model. However, it was recognised that some Members had concern about the provision of youth services.
  - e. The provision of in-house youth services would continue within Family Hubs model.
  - f. The Family Hubs model was intended to provide additionality of services. For example, there would be better integration of services with partner organisations and enhanced services for parents and carers of young people.
  - g. It would not be possible to have a hub in every village, however the Family Hubs model would consider the access needs of service users.

- h. Services for young children would not take precedence over youth services, and the youth services budget was to be maintained despite the Council's financial challenges.
6. Ms Dawkins was invited to address the Committee and made the following points:
  - a. She was concerned that those currently providing services did not know what was going to happen as no details had been made available to them. There needed to be a clear period of transition.
  - b. It was unclear how services would continue once the transition funding ceased.
  - c. While it was good that KCC had been identified for the pathfinder, Government backed initiatives were not always successful.
  - d. There was concern that rural residents would receive less services, and those services would be based online which could increase isolation and loneliness.
7. The Chairman gave Mr Brady the opportunity to respond to Mrs Chandlers points. Mr Brady asked the following questions that he felt required clarity:
  - a. What face to face and outreach services would be offered to young people, and how would they be delivered? They needed to provide additionality, but no details had been shared about them.
  - b. What details could be shared about universal outreach services?
  - c. How had young people been involved in designing the Family Hubs model?
  - d. How much of the funding would be spent on services for young people?
  - e. How did the services compare to those provided by other LAs?
8. Committee Members made comments on the decision and asked a range of questions. The key points raised and responded to by the Cabinet Member and officers present included the following:
  - a. Mrs Chandler responded to questions raised as follows:
    - i. While it would not be possible to have Family Hub in every village, partnership working would allow residents to access more services locally from non-KCC buildings such as schools, village halls and other community buildings. It was likely that residents in some small isolated rural communities would need to travel to reach services or make use of a digital offer. The provision of a digital offer could be a valuable alternative method of accessing services for some people.
    - ii. The three-year programme of transition was designed to offer sustainability of the services at the end of the programme. A detailed delivery plan would be available.
    - iii. Mrs Chandler provided an example of an existing face to face in-house youth service. She noted it was an example of how the outreach model would continue to work as part of the Family Hub model.
  - b. Ms James highlighted that family hubs would be open to all and they would be universally accessible across Kent. She added that work would take

place with young people to co-design and identify appropriate spaces for young people that were accessible, comfortable and welcoming.

- c. Ms James said that online safety awareness would be incorporated into the youth offer. This was an example of additionality that had been highlighted through discussions with young people, parents and carers.
- d. Ms Birdi provided the Committee with some examples of the kind of services that would be available for young people. The services at each hub would be developed to meet the needs of the local area.
- e. Mrs Hammond provided some wider context around those who came into care. Young children under the age of one were most likely to come into care. The Start for Life concept provided preventive support services for vulnerable families that would help mitigate against the need for children to come into care. Young people aged between 14 and 17 were the second most likely group to come into care. The Council worked with young people and their parents to identify the challenges in caring for and keeping young people safe.
- f. Some Members were concerned that the Family Hubs model may not support the Council's statutory duties to young people. Mrs Chandler advised that assessments had been carried out and she was confident that the Family Hubs model would help the Council meet its statutory duties. Assessment of youth services would continue take place every six months, and the findings would help to shape the Family Hubs model. Ms James added that the statutory duties were met through an umbrella of services and support, offered by KCC and other organisations. The Family Hubs model would be one part of the umbrella and would help to strengthen the network. Mrs Hammond highlighted that the statutory duties applied to all LAs.
- g. Mr Watts confirmed that he had taken detailed legal advice and did not feel there was a need to issue a Section 5 report at this stage. He did not consider that the decision would breach the Council's statutory duties.
- h. A Member asked if the decision was mainly necessary due to budgetary constraints; Mrs Chandler clarified that while that was not the case, the receipt of £11,000,000 to transform and improve the services was an important opportunity.
- i. A Member wished to see how the number of proposed hubs compared to other local authorities. Ms James advised that during a discussion with a Government representative, they had noted that Kent proposed to have significantly more hubs than most other LAs.
- j. A Member wished for the decision to be postponed while a review was carried out into the rationale for the hub locations. Mrs Chandler responded that the memorandum of understanding with Government included strict time frames for the progression of the project that could be breached if there were significant delays.
- k. Mrs Hammond advised that she did not think the existing offer for young families engaged enough young families. She noted that, with the exception of three districts, less than 10% of families with children aged between 0 and 5 made use of the existing children's centres.
- l. Mrs Chandler responded to two questions raise by Members as follows:

- i. The offer of £11,000,000 transformation funding was very important however, the main driver behind the project was to provide better access to support and information for children and young people.
    - ii. A lot of work had already gone into joining services with the NHS and Public Health England.
9. The Chairman invited Mrs Chandler, Ms James and Ms Birdi to respond to the additional comments and questions raised by Ms Dawkins, Mr Streatfeild and Ms Hawkins, the responses were as follows:
- a. The Council wished to access the transformation funding. In order to access this funding, the Council agreed to the Government's timeline for the project.
  - b. The type of out-reach service would be dependent on the local need, and this could change over time.
  - c. Decisions about which buildings would be used were the subject of a future decision.
  - d. The partnership approach would help to reinforce the sustainability of the initiative.
  - e. It was recognised that some isolated rural locations had limited internet access. The out-reach services in these areas would have equipment available to allow people to access services digitally.
  - f. There was a small amount of funding set aside to adapt buildings.
  - g. The Council would work with young people to provide safe spaces that were suitable to their needs.
  - h. It was important to reach out to young people who do not make use of the services. The Family Hubs model would help to engage with and support more young people who otherwise would be unknown to the Council.
  - i. A significant amount of work had been carried out to establish the availability and suitability of community spaces. There would be enough suitable venues for the delivery of services.
10. The Chairman invited Mr Brady and Mr Streatfield to make their closing comments following the Committee's questions and debate.
- a. Mr Brady felt that the offer for young people was unclear. The decision should be postponed because he believed that it breached the Education Act and the Delivery Plan for the following reasons:
    - i. There were no details about providing additional recreational provision for young people.
    - ii. The out-reach services would not be universally delivered.
    - iii. There was not enough information regarding the youth offer.
    - iv. There needed to be a needs assessment and design plan for young people's services.
    - v. Young people had not been included in the re-design of services.
  - b. Mr Streatfield said that the principal of co-locating services was good; however, he felt that proposal was unbalanced and did not meet the statutory obligation to provide adequate youth services. He was also concerned about financial sustainability once the transformation funding ceased in three years.

11. The Chairman invited Mrs Chandler to respond to the closing comments from Mr Brady and Mr Streatfeild. She responded with the following points:
- a. The Family Hubs concept would provide services for all children and young people.
  - b. Members had heard how the Council would meet its statutory responsibilities.
  - c. There had been a needs assessment, and this would be reviewed on a regular basis to shape the services offered.
  - d. The outreach services were universal as they were open to all.
  - e. Young people participated in shaping the services and would continue to have a say.
  - f. It was impossible to predict exactly what the financial situation would be in three years however, this was a valuable opportunity to improve services in a sustainable way for families, young people and children.

12. Mr Booth proposed and Mrs Binks seconded the following recommendation:

*(b) Express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision*

13. Members voted on the motion, the motion was carried by majority.

*Dr Sullivan and Rich Lehmann asked for it to be noted in the minutes that they voted against option (b).*

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision.

### **35. Call-in of Decision 23/00100 - Commissioned Youth Service Contracts** *(Item B2)*

1. The Chairman introduced the item and invited Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins to provide an overview of the reasons for the call-in.
2. Mr Brady provided the reasons for the call-in of the decision which were set out in the paperwork accompanying the item on the Scrutiny Committee agenda. This included, that the decision:
  - a. Was not in line with the Council's Policy Framework and conflicted with Government guidance and statute.
  - b. Did not have a presumption in favour of openness, in that the legal advice had not been shared with Members of the CYPE Cabinet Committee or Members of the Scrutiny Committee.
  - c. Was not fully consulted on and young people had not been involved in the consultation.
  - d. Was not an action proportionate to the desired outcome and was a short-term saving which would lead to longer-term costs.
3. Ms Hawkins stated that the decision to withdraw funding from Commissioned Youth Services was a breach of the Council's Statutory Duty in relation to the Education Act. She also explained why the alternative services being offered

were not a suitable replacement as they often met specific interests and ideologies and most had long waiting lists. These already existed so were not additional.

4. The Chairman asked Mrs Chandler, as Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, to respond to the comments made by Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins. She explained that the decision paperwork acknowledged that this was not a welcome decision for those using the services and was a particularly difficult decision to take. Mrs Chandler went on to make the following points:
  - a. With regards to the statutory obligations of the Council, this was not restricted to the Council's Services and did include other groups such as sports clubs, faith groups and uniformed services.
  - b. Framing Kent's Future had been superseded by Securing Kent's Future which was adopted by the Council in October 2023.
  - c. A directory of Youth Services would be updated and provided on a regular basis.
5. Committee Members made comments on the decision and asked a range of questions. The key points raised and responded to by the Cabinet Member and officers present included the following:
  - a. A Member requested that the Youth Needs Assessment be shared before the Scrutiny Committee agreed on its resolution.
  - b. A Member asked whether there was any risk to the authority in relation to TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment) Regulations.
  - c. Mrs Chandler explained that whilst the inhouse Youth Provision contributed to the overall statutory requirement it was not a like for like replacement of the Commissioned Services included within this decision.
  - d. Mrs Chandler explained that the in-house provision formed a significant part of the Council's statutory obligations alongside other groups previously mentioned but was not a like for like replacement of the services covered within the decision.
  - e. Did the decision take into account additional funding some of the Commissioned Services had managed to leverage into youth work? It was considered that this was a complicated situation, and it was not considered reasonable, whilst accepting the value this brought, to include this when making this decision. Ms James explained that through the Family Hub model the Council would be working with partners to enable any opportunities for funding.
  - f. In relation to the consultation responses, were the Police directly consulted? Ms James explained that all professionals were approached to respond to the consultation.
6. Following some questions from Ms Dawkins the Chairman asked that Mrs Chandler respond outside of the meeting.
7. The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member and guests to respond to the additional comments and questions raised by Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins, the responses were as follows:



- a. In relation to young people and the transition into new services, KCC would work closely with children and young people and where there were existing relationships having conversations around the offers for young people with the existing providers.
- b. In relation to EqIA there were two groups of activities highlighted and the Council would work specifically with the impacted young people to identify which service was right for those young people.
- c. Mrs Hammond stated that all the Commissioned providers were written to on 4 July 2023 with confirmation of the end of the contract ahead of this taking place in March 2024.
- d. In response to a question about the numbers of young people currently using the Commissioned Youth Services Ms Birdi explained that in 2023 the Commissioned Youth Services reached 9,280 young people.

POST MEETING NOTE: An email confirming the figures was sent to Members on 20 December. It confirmed the following:

“In 2022, there were 270,000 Young People (YP) aged 10-24 in Kent. [2022 Mid-year population estimates: Age and Sex profile \(kent.gov.uk\)](https://www.kent.gov.uk/2022-mid-year-population-estimates-age-and-sex-profile) – 2023 figures were not yet available.

In 2022 we have a record of 5366 YP attending KCC youth settings during the same time period.

This equates to 2.1% of the overall relevant population.”

8. The Chairman moved and it was RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of this item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### EXEMPT SESSION

(Open minute of exempt session)

9. Mr Watts provided Members with a summary of the main public law risks associated with proceeding with a decision to cease to commissioned youth services.
10. Dr Sullivan left the room at 1.55pm.
11. Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins left the room at 2pm.

#### OPEN ITEM

12. The Chairman welcomed everyone back to the open part of the meeting and invited Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins to make their closing comments following the Committee's questions and debate.
  - a. Mr Brady remained of the view that the decision was not in line with the Council's Policy Framework and he remained concerned about the

possibility of challenge over this decision. He was not confident that that Council would signpost or help vulnerable children and young people following this decision and considered the decision was a direct breach of the Education Act which would not achieve the stated savings.

- b. Ms Hawkins remained unconvinced that the needs of young people would be met, many of whom had additional needs and she considered this was the wrong time to make this decision.

13. The Chairman invited Mrs Chandler to respond to the closing comments from Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins. She responded with the following points:

- a. The decision would have an impact and was a difficult decision to make. It was in line with Council Policy and was reflected in Securing Kent's Future which put different priorities on KCC particularly in relation to finance.
- b. There would be extensive consultation with the current providers and in relation to the Family Hubs Model.
- c. The Cabinet Member understood the points that had been made but reassured Members that everything practically and reasonably possible would be done to address the concerns.

14. Dr Sullivan proposed and Rich Lehmann seconded the following recommendation:

*(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*

15. Members voted on the motion, the motion was lost.

16. Mr Booth proposed and Mr Brazier seconded the following recommendation:

*(b) Express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision*

17. Members voted on the motion, the motion was carried by majority.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision.

*Dr Sullivan and Rich Lehmann asked for it to be noted in the minutes that they voted for option (c) and against option (b).*

### **36. Call-in of Decision 23/00101 - Kent Communities Programme**

*(Item B3)*

1. The Chairman introduced the item and invited Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins to provide an overview of the reasons for the call-in.
2. Dr Sullivan provided the reasons for the call-in of the decision which were set out in the paperwork accompanying the item on the Scrutiny Committee agenda. This included the following:

- a. Dr Sullivan set out the cost of the consultation as £1.9million, this was clarified later in the meeting as £1.9million being the cost of the project to date. The cost of the consultation was £40,000. It was understood that the Government had directed the Council to close buildings in line with the Family Hubs Model and clarity on these points was sought.
3. Ms Hawkins quoted Statutory guidance from the Education Act 1996 which referred to the consultation of young people on existing provision. She considered that the proposed savings through this decision had been overestimated.
  - a. The Chairman asked Mr Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to respond to the comments made by Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins. He explained that the Kent Communities Programme project had begun before the Family Hub project. The Council had been looking for a method of redefining and better utilising its buildings. The financial challenges of KCC could not be ignored and the Communities Programme sought to rationalise the Council's physical estate and proposed a greater mix of alternative methods of service across the county. KCC had over 400 buildings with a maintenance budget permitting £6000 per building per year which was not feasible. The project was slowed down to work alongside the Family Hub project, but it would have gone ahead without the Family Hub Project or the Youth Commissioning Decision. In response to the cost of the project Mr Oakford did consider this good value for money, it was spending to create reoccurring savings over a longer period of time to ensure the Council was sustainable.
4. Mrs Chandler confirmed that the DfE did not ask the Council to close buildings. The DfE commented on the proposals in the consultation paper in terms of the (in their view high) number of buildings that were identified to continue.
5. Committee Members made comments on the decision and asked a range of questions. The key points raised and responded to by the Cabinet Member and officers present included the following:
  - a. This was another difficult decision that the Council had no choice but to make given the financial situation, the Council was considering alternative options, i.e. could buildings be leased, rented, did they have to be sold.
  - b. A Member asked that KCC continue its effort to keep communicating with people currently using the buildings to support them where possible. Local Members also had a role in talking to their community about any changes.
  - c. In relation to the earlier comment about the £1.9m cost – Mrs Spore confirmed that this was not the cost of the consultation, the consultation cost £40,000. £1.9m was the total cost of the project to date.
  - d. A Member queried the level of detail contained within the report and the lack of any timescale within the paperwork.

6. The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member and guests to respond to the additional comments and questions raised by Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins, the responses were as follows:
  - a. KCC listened to the consultation and made adjustments, the project was essential for the sustainability of KCC.
  - b. In relation to buildings on school grounds, the Council was looking at options which could include the school, the Council or a third-party utilising buildings and it could also include disposal of buildings. The Council was keen to talk to local communities and schools where buildings were on school sites.
  - c. In relation to the cost of outreach the Council was very keen to codesign the outreach offer with partners to work together to shape the offer in a particular area.
7. The Chairman invited Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins to make their closing comments following the Committee's questions and debate.
  - a. This was a cost saving measure.
  - b. Dr Sullivan asked that a 'tracker' identifying savings was made available and used to monitor progress of this and other decisions.
8. Mr Booth proposed and Mr Webb seconded the following recommendation:

*(b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision*
9. Members voted on the motion, the motion was carried by majority.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision.

*Dr Sullivan and Rich Lehmann asked that it be noted in the minutes that they voted against option (b).*

#### **1. Call-in of Decision 23/00101 - Kent Communities Programme**

*B3*

10. The Chairman introduced the item and invited Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins to provide an overview of the reasons for the call-in.
11. Dr Sullivan provided the reasons for the call-in of the decision which were set out in the paperwork accompanying the item on the Scrutiny Committee agenda. This included the following:
  - a. Dr Sullivan set out the cost of the consultation as £1.9million, this was clarified later in the meeting as £1.9million being the cost of the project to date. The cost of the consultation was £40,000. It was understood that the Government had directed the Council to close buildings in line with the Family Hubs Model and clarity on these points was sought.
12. Ms Hawkins quoted Statutory guidance from the Education Act 1996 which referred to the consultation of young people on existing provision. She

considered that the proposed savings through this decision had been overestimated.

- a. The Chairman asked Mr Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to respond to the comments made by Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins. He explained that the Kent Communities Programme project had begun before the Family Hub project. The Council had been looking for a method of redefining and better utilising its buildings. The financial challenges of KCC could not be ignored and the Communities Programme sought to rationalise the Council's physical estate and proposed a greater mix of alternative methods of service across the county. KCC had over 400 buildings with a maintenance budget permitting £6000 per building per year which was not feasible. The project was slowed down to work alongside the Family Hub project, but it would have gone ahead without the Family Hub Project or the Youth Commissioning Decision. In response to the cost of the project Mr Oakford did consider this good value for money, it was spending to create reoccurring savings over a longer period of time to ensure the Council was sustainable.

13. Mrs Chandler confirmed that the DfE did not ask the Council to close buildings. The DfE commented on the proposals in the consultation paper in terms of the (in their view high) number of buildings that were identified to continue.

14. Committee Members made comments on the decision and asked a range of questions. The key points raised and responded to by the Cabinet Member and officers present included the following:

- a. This was another difficult decision that the Council had no choice but to make given the financial situation, the Council was considering alternative options, i.e. could buildings be leased, rented, did they have to be sold.
- b. A Member asked that KCC continue its effort to keep communicating with people currently using the buildings to support them where possible. Local Members also had a role in talking to their community about any changes.
- c. In relation to the earlier comment about the £1.9m cost – Mrs Spore confirmed that this was not the cost of the consultation, the consultation cost £40,000. £1.9m was the total cost of the project to date.
- d. A Member queried the level of detail contained within the report and the lack of any timescale within the paperwork.

15. The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member and guests to respond to the additional comments and questions raised by Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins, the responses were as follows:

- a. KCC listened to the consultation and made adjustments, the project was essential for the sustainability of KCC.
- b. In relation to buildings on school grounds, the Council was looking at options which could include the school, the Council or a third-party utilising buildings and it could also include disposal of buildings. The Council was keen to talk to local communities and schools where buildings were on school sites.

- c. In relation to the cost of outreach the Council was very keen to codesign the outreach offer with partners to work together to shape the offer in a particular area.

16. The Chairman invited Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins to make their closing comments following the Committee's questions and debate.

- a. This was a cost saving measure.
- b. Dr Sullivan asked that a 'tracker' identifying savings was made available and used to monitor progress of this and other decisions.

17. Mr Booth proposed and Mr Webb seconded the following recommendation:

*(b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision*

18. Members voted on the motion, the motion was carried by majority.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision.

*Dr Sullivan and Rich Lehmann asked that it be noted in the minutes that they voted against option (b).*