

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING**

4.00pm 11 OCTOBER 2010

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Brown (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Hawkes (Opposition Spokesperson) and Deane (Opposition Spokesperson)

Other Members present: Councillors Rufus, Kemble and Older

PART ONE

28. BRIGHT START NURSERY CONSULTATION

- 28.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Acting Director of Children's Services concerning the beginning of consultation with Bright Start nursery staff and parents of children who use it on the closure of the nursery by April 2011.
- 28.2 Councillor Hawkes informed the meeting of her disapproval of the consultation of closure. Although there were a lot of nursery places now available across the city, this did not mean that Bright Start should be closed. In her opinion the quality of care at the nursery was of the highest standard and moves should be made to increase attendance at the nursery rather than begin a consultation to close. Should the consultation lead to a decision to close the nursery, she had great concern for the emotional impact upon the children of the nursery. In addition, Councillor Hawkes did not believe that the report accompanying the agenda had made a viable financial argument on the potential reasons for closure.
- 28.3 Councillor Deane said she agreed with the points raised by Councillor Hawkes. Councillor Deane suggested that there were options for a higher uptake in attendance to the nursery including more flexible session times. Councillor Deane did not believe a case for the financial implications had been made. She understood that a refurbishment of the nursery would cost £5,000 which in her opinion would make more sense than consulting on closure and lead to a higher uptake at the nursery. Councillor Deane added that the birth rate in Brighton was rising which would necessitate the need for more nursery places, that a transfer of nursery provision would be disruptive for a young child and that she felt sympathetic for the staff who she believed were so highly qualified that they had become too expensive to employ. In addition, Councillor Deane queried the legal implications of closing a staff nursery.

- 28.4 The Chairman noted the comments and stated that evidence suggested that flexible session times very often led to empty sessions. She also noted that the report indicated an increase in fees would still not cover the financial losses at the nursery. She recognised that this was an extremely sensitive issue for everyone involved and that the nursery was rightly held in high regard by the community. However, this did not detract from the matter that the restrictions of the present financial climate necessitated that the option of closure should be considered and consulted on.
- 28.5 **RESOLVED-** That the Children and Young People Cabinet Member agrees to a consultation with Bright Start nursery staff and parents of children who use the nursery on the closure of the nursery by April 2011.