

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

21 OCTOBER 2019

QUESTION 1 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor White to ask the Chair of the Committee:

Sun Street Children's Centre Temporary Closure

Please can the Lead Councillor update me on plans to continue to deliver services in East Reading while the Sun Street children centre is temporarily closed for refurbishment works ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee:

I invite Councillor Terry, the Lead Councillor for Children to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Terry, Lead Councillor for Children:

The Sun Street building will close from November 2019 for approximately six months for refurbishment.

The works will result in additional community space and a more comprehensive range of Children's Centre services delivered by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC). The extensive internal alterations will create rooms for health visiting, maternity services seven days a week, a new office and extra children's play areas. Other improvements will include a new play garden, refurbished toilets, new storage areas, better heating and improved kitchen facilities. Improvements will also be made to the car park and an outdoor tap will be installed for the community garden.

The report to Policy Committee in October 2018 made it clear that the centre would need to close for approximately 6 months to undertake these works. In July this year a press release was issued to the public and hirers were informed of the plan to close the centre from November 2019 to commence the improvement works.

All hirers were issued with a list of alternatives venues in July to allow enough of a lead-in time to work together to find suitable alternative premises for the duration of the works/period of closure.

There are information notices in the centre and all parents have been informed during their group sessions over the last few months of the temporary arrangements.

Children's Centre services will be delivered from Central Library for the duration of the works. This will enable parents from across the East Reading to have a consistent venue and access to services including new parents support groups, universal and targeted services. The 1-1 family

support will continue to be part of the core service and workers will mainly carry out these in the family home.

The Children's Centre team are planning to provide activity sessions for under 5s in The warehouse and Wycliffe church including paediatric first aid courses, language and communication groups and family activity sessions.

Information notices have been placed in Sun Street centre and this will also be publicised on the Children's Centre Facebook pages, Brighter Futures for Children website and Reading Services guide.

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ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

21 OCTOBER 2019

QUESTION 2 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor White to ask the Chair of the Committee:

Youth Clubs in Reading

Please can the Lead Councillor update me on the current state of youth clubs in Reading following the Council's decision to cut 27 youth work sessions, which were accessed by more than 360 young people ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee:

I invite Councillor Terry, the Lead Councillor for Children to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Terry, Lead Councillor for Children:

Regrettably, the significant savings the Council has had to make over the past 10 years has impacted on services for young people. Reading was not alone in that. A new analysis from the Labour Party has revealed that public spending on youth services in England has been reduced by £1bn - or 73% - since 2010. The study also found that the cuts have led to hundreds of youth centres closing. Over 750 youth centres have closed their doors since 2012 & 14,500 youth & community work jobs have been lost since 2008, the party's analysis found. The Council had to reduce the youth service budget by £750,000 over a two year period, and to approximately 60% of our original budget.

The Voluntary Community Sector have continued to deliver some centre based youth support. This has included, for example, a weekly youth club on a Friday in Hexham Road, Whitley. There are also current and future initiatives aimed at enabling communities to deliver youth provision in local areas within Reading. For example, the Whitley Wood Community Centre and the South Reading Community Hub who are hoping to get a Youth Café established. This is being coordinated by the Council Neighbourhoods Initiative Team.

Brighter Futures for Children continue to employ 10 FTE Targeted Youth Workers who provide targeted 1-1 support and 3.2 FTE Specialist Youth Workers who provide specialist 1-1 support for young people with substance misuse and/or exploitation concerns. These workers visit schools and support Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) sessions around substance misuse, keep safe and relationship education etc. We continue to deliver some targeted youth clubs including a weekly LGBTQ club, and young carers groups.

With new funding from the Housing Revenue Grant, we have recruited 2 x Detached Youth Workers who will work three evenings per week within Southcote, Whitley and Tilehurst. They will focus on building relationships with young people, ensuring they are safe, giving them information and advice if needed and will refer to other services if appropriate.

Other providers have secured new funding through the Thames Valley Early Intervention Fund (EIF). This is supporting youth initiatives within Reading mainly delivered by the voluntary sector including Berkshire Youth and Adviza. Support covers universal provision eg theatre production in schools re knife crime and training for staff, outreach youth work, and 1-1 support for young people in school, targeted at young people at risk of crime & exploitation etc. Reading Voluntary Action delivered a number of summer activities in south and west Reading funded by the EIF. They have also recently put in a bid to the Big Lottery to develop youth provision within the voluntary sector in Reading.

There is some new 'Surge Funding' which Thames Valley Police are currently coordinating - this is in response to escalating concerns regarding serious violence and resources will be targeted in Reading.

So despite Tory and Coalition cuts the Council has continued to provide youth services supported by the many community run initiatives across the town. Services have been targeted to ensure services are meeting local need. A Labour Government will introduce a new national 'Youth Service Guarantee ensuring every young person has access to high quality youth work in their community.