

COUNTY COUNCIL – 17TH OCTOBER 2017**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question
1.	Antony Carpen	Councillor Josh Schumann	With the county council making considerations to move out of Shire Hall and leasing the building to a private organisation such as a hotel firm, please can I ask the county council and councillors to commission exploratory work to convert part of the site into an expansion for the Museum of Cambridge.
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2.	Colin McGerty	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>This council's deeply flawed and ill-timed online consultation opened with the extremely leading question "Do you think that children's services should be concentrated on those who need them the most?" Could councillors please explain to me how the closure of almost 50% of Children's Centres can possibly achieve this aim, leading as it will to fewer centres based in the communities they serve and much greater distances to travel to the nearest centre, journeys which "those who need them the most" are least likely to have means to make.</p> <p>I am a parent of two young children. We benefited enormously from having a Children's Centre nearby when our children were young. From individual support services to breastfeeding drop-in, coffee mornings, play sessions even first aid in the home.</p> <p>Having the Children's Centre in our local community makes it so much easier to have the courage to seek help and advice. Many parents simply would not be able to longer journeys with babies and toddlers in tow and knowing they are unlikely to see a familiar face on arrival mean far fewer will feel confident enough to try.</p>

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3.	Dan Greef	Councillor Steve Count/ Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>Why are councillors accepting a payrise when they are cutting children's centres funding?</p> <p>(I'm speaking as a parent and Labour activist. I am a stay at home dad to my two year old daughter, we have used Romsey Mill and Bassingbourn children's centre on a number of occasions and have seen first hand the positive impact they have on the families that use them.)</p>
4.	Felicity Higginson	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>I work as a teacher in a Children's Centre, and have been a teacher for all the time Cambridgeshire has had Childrens Centres in 3 different Centres. I stand as a Representative of the National Education Union (NUT) Early Years Sector.</p> <p>My question is...</p> <p>Given that the state maintained Nursery Schools in Children's Centres in the county have Outstanding Ofsted rating, how will the new proposals ensure that this will continue to be the case with sufficient funding, as we are already experiencing financial cutbacks due to the introduction of new funding, 30 hours funding and years of austerity?</p> <p>Draft comment.</p> <p>Teachers are trained and specialists in Early Education and by multi-agency working with other specialists in Children's Centres e.g. Family Support Workers, Speech and Language Therapists, ESOL teachers, universal group providers etc, we are able to work closely, efficiently and relationally to support children's education, remove barriers to their learning, increase social mobility and support the complex needs of many families within the one Centre. By being in the same building professionals can be reciprocal in their work with families. Targeted families can be supported intensively within a safe environment</p>

			reducing alienation and enriching local communities. Individual children's educational outcomes are improved at an early age with appropriate multi-agency interventions, reducing costs at a later date.
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5.	Peter Wilson	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>In the absence, within this Consultation process, of any performance information or any evaluation of the quality, scope and outcomes of service provision by Children's Centres, what steps are proposed by the Council to measure, understand and mitigate against any negative impact of reducing the number of Children's Centres from 38 to 10 specifically in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) hard-to-reach families whose resilience and quality of parenting might be impaired by the reduction in discrete, local, dedicated family support services - to the extent that their children are more likely to be assessed by social care as being 'in need' [within the meaning of the Children Act 1989] or whose welfare has to be safeguarded through statutory intervention by social care- with all the attendant costs of medium to long term social care involvement; and b) the 3 priority groups referred to in the public consultation document (page 8) : 0-3 year olds; children with a disability; and children with " identified support needs".
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6.	Katie Olliffe	Councillor Simon Bywater	I became an antenatal and postnatal educator and birth and postnatal support worker in 2012/13 and since then have gradually seen children's centre services cut back and opportunities for new families reduced, every year. I volunteered at my local children's centres in Bottisham and Soham in 2013-2015 and saw the many woman coming to the postnatal support groups and breastfeeding support groups and have seen first hand how these postnatal sessions supported woman in the early weeks and transition to parenting.

			<p>The gradual withdrawal of many of these services will, without a doubt, have a devastating impact and knock on effect to so many other services. Withdrawing services for new and young families is short sighted, ignores evidence and rarely looks at the way we can reduce financial impact in the long term in many areas, instead opting to make short term savings in 1 area - ignoring the impact this will have on many other areas. When we don't fund these services adequately we will inevitably see an increase in postnatal depression, mental health issues and attachment issues.</p> <p>The biggest impact I've seen in the past 5 years is the reduction in breastfeeding and postnatal support.</p> <p>With continued low rates of breastfeeding reported locally, and families having to travel so they can access help (and now potentially with closures of various children centres) can you tell me what provisions are being put in place to offer feeding support to new and overwhelmed families so they are not having to travel miles to access feeding support in the early weeks and during their feeding relationship.</p>
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7.	Karen Stanton, Headteacher, Caldecote Primary School	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>How is Cambridgeshire County Council going to ensure it fulfils its statutory obligation under The Childcare Act of 2006 that places a duty on the Local Authority to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and to support schools to offer and expand out-of-hours care. At Caldecote we have built up excellent school and holiday time wrap-around care that services in excess of 120 working families, looking after up to 44 children daily. I am asking, on behalf of parents, governors and staff, how you are going to ensure Caldecote Children's Centre will continue to be available for the school to provide this vital service?</p> <p>The wrap-around care is run and managed by the school.</p>

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8.	Andrew Baxter, Chair of the Governing Body of the Trumpington Federation	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>I am the Chair of the Governing Body of the Trumpington Federation; one of our schools, Fawcett Primary School, works with Homerton Early Years Centre to manage one of the Children's Centres as currently organised.</p> <p>Question put on behalf of Homerton Early Years Centre and the Trumpington Federation of primary schools which includes Fawcett Primary School. Together we operate the South Cambridge Children's Centre on behalf of the County Council.</p> <p>We acknowledge the very challenging financial context in which the County Council is required to operate and are willing to co-operate with initiatives to respond to this. Indeed, the Children's Centre which we operate for you at the moment was forged out of two separate centres whose management was merged to contribute to savings.</p> <p>Our question relates to the engagement between children's centre services as now envisaged and schools.</p> <p>One of the purposes of children's centres has been to contribute to educational attainment. But neither the consultation document nor the response give serious consideration to arrangements for collaboration between children's centres and schools. Although the consultation document states that the County Council does not believe that there should be a "one size fits all" model for service delivery, Members are now being asked to approve a single approach to management, which excludes the possibility of delegation to schools and other providers with a proven track record. That a County Council which was a world leader in the delegation of responsibility to schools and in the outsourcing of a wide range of services should now embrace such a centralised and bureaucratic approach is, to say the least, disappointing and, I suggest, a backward step.</p>

			<p>We have had some discussions with your officers about ways in which the impact of this change could be mitigated in the circumstances of the South Cambridge Children's Centre. There has been some recognition that it would be wasteful in the extreme to abandon the use of our purpose built children's centre facilities and a mistake to erode communications links between school and children's centre staff. But as the response document acknowledges, these are discussions and have not reached a secure conclusion.</p> <p>My question, then, is this: Can the Chair of the Committee undertake to ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. where these changes put at risk well established collaborative arrangements with schools, every effort will be made to protect and build on these; and 2. where such arrangements are not currently in place, every effort will be made to develop them, so that children's centres and schools work effectively together?
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9.	John Oakes, Spokesman, Cherry Hinton's Liberal Democrat members	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>Name of Organisation: Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats.</p> <p>Question: Which of the professionally-recognised studies concerning Early Years/Surestart provision, and the probable results of its withdrawal, were Cambridgeshire Officers aware of when undertaking this Cuts proposal, and how did the conclusions affect their findings?</p> <p>Local connection: I am a resident of Cherry Hinton and, since I have 3 grandsons living elsewhere, I am conscious of the need to ensure the welfare of young children. I am also a spokesman for Cherry Hinton's Liberal Democratmembers.</p>

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10.	Alice Honey Thompson, Representing Romsey Mill	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>Romsey Mill has years of experience operating as a highly effective Child and Family centre, but the proposal is to close delivery of Children's Centre services at Romsey Mill Centre in favour of a new site at Brookfields – less than a quarter of a mile away. No explanation has been provided for this in the consultation document. Romsey Mill Centre is a friendly, accessible, community-based hub from which you can receive brilliant support and be sign-posted to other services if needed. Why are you proposing to close Romsey Mill Children's Centre when families do not want this?</p> <p>I have been a user of the Romsey Mill Young Parents Programme, the Children's Centre and the Pre School all based at Romsey Mill. I am a young mother aged 21.</p>
11.	Neil Perry, CEO Romsey Mill Trust	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>My question relates to the consultation process and the consultation documents which lacked vital information. For example the district level consultation documents are very misleading in not mentioning <i>at all</i> the cuts in funding that the proposals are predicated on.</p> <p>The Response to Consultation document has been made available with almost no time for members of the public to read and respond with a request for questions to the Council. This undermines meaningful consultation and civic engagement in democratic processes.</p> <p>I also want to ask about decisions made relating to the Brookfields site prior to the launch of the consultation.</p> <p>This subject relates to me both as Chief Executive of Romsey Mill Trust and as a resident of Cambridgeshire.</p>

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12.	Neil Turner (<i>Questioner not attending Council</i>)	Councillor Simon Bywater	<p>I am a parent of a child attending Careclubs wrap-around and holiday childcare located in the Caldecote Children's Centre building. As I will not be able to attend the Full Council meeting on 17th October 2017, I would like to submit the written question below for written response by the Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee.</p> <p>To ask Cambridgeshire County Council to set out, if Caldecote Children's Centre is to be redesignated, how it will ensure future usage of the building for Careclubs wrap-around and holiday childcare to ensure the council meets its statutory obligations?</p>