

COUNCILLOR STUART KELLY

## **Minority Report - Public Health Outcomes Fund (Healthy Homes & Forest Schools)**

This 'Minority Report' seeks Council approval to disagree with the conclusions of the Co-ordinating Committee of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and asks Cabinet to reconsider its decisions in relation to the Public Health Outcomes Fund reductions.

### **Background**

The Public Health Outcomes Fund is a ring-fenced grant and is required to be spent on public health-related activity.

Assurance is required that spend contributes to indicators from the Department of Health's Public Health Outcomes Framework 2013-16.

Cabinet, at its meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013, approved a number of projects to be funded from a projected underspend in a Government Grant known as the Public Health Outcomes Fund

Cabinet resolved to:-

- *approve the reinvestment of the public health grant funding as outlined in Appendix 1.*
- *note that progress and spend will be monitored by Public Health on a regular basis.*
- *note that the proposals will be evaluated against their Public Health outcomes in May/June 2015.*

Link to report - Public Health Outcomes Fund – agreed at Cabinet 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50014535/Public%20Health%20Outcomes%20Funding%20Report.pdf>

Link to Public Health Outcomes Fund appendix projects agreed at Cabinet 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50014536/Appendix%201%20-%20Public%20Health%20Outcomes.pdf>

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014, Cabinet considered a budget monitoring report (month two) and resolved (inter alia)

*(v) Cabinet notes the mitigation actions being undertaken, including capitalisation, reprofiling and use of public health budgets as per paragraph 3.5 (of Appendix A.*

This decision was called in and considered by the Co-ordinating Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

### **Reasons for Call In**

To disagree with paragraph (5) of minute 27 (Cabinet 7th July 2014) - changes to Public Health grant funded projects identified in Annex 4 of Appendix A listed as "Health Outcomes Fund - Efficiencies and Stopping" Having regard to Cabinet's decision of 10th October 2013, which noted that progress and spend would be monitored by The Public Health Department on a regular basis, no information on the impact on the previously agreed outcomes for each project that it is proposed to curtail or stop was placed before Cabinet on the 7th July prior to making the decision. Particular areas of concern

- a. Forest Schools - The Forest Schools project has had 727 children from 14 schools attending so far with plans for 6 schools to take part from September. This decision will mean a reduction of participation of 50% of early years children able to take part and a reduction in

children able to attend from schools from 30 to 15 per class. This results in schools being treated differently part way through the programme.

- b. Healthy Homes - Fewer homes will be able to benefit from grant assistance in bringing houses up to acceptable healthy standards. The decision will mean, based on the average cost of cosyhomes grants processed to date of £2,564 a reduction in help for 21 households Cabinet should not therefore approve the changes to the projects identified in Annex 4 of Appendix A until Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee has had an opportunity to scrutinise in full the impact on the agreed outcomes for each project affected.

Monitoring information by the Public Health Department should be made available to the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee to enable them to properly advise Cabinet, in due course, of the impact of the proposed reductions, to enable a fully informed decision to be taken about each project.

With regard to the funding for the Forest Schools and Healthy Homes projects, Cabinet is urged to reconsider its decisions and restore the original level of grant funding so that the projects can build on the levels of participation and uptake as originally envisaged.

### **Report**

The outstanding success of both projects is not called into question, however impact of the reductions on participants in the projects remain valid namely:

- that the removal of the funding for Forest Schools would result in a reduction of participation of 50% of early years children able to take part and a reduction in children able to attend from schools from 30 to 15 per class.
- that the removal of the funding for Healthy Homes would result in a reduction in help for up to 21 households able to benefit from grant assistance in bringing houses up to acceptable healthy standards.

The argument was put that as the original targets set had been met early, then a reduction in funding was justified. It is this argument that the minority report seeks to challenge.

### **Conclusion**

It was the view of The Liberal Democrat Group that:

1. the fact that targets had been met was no basis for discontinuing the excellent work of both projects; it was apparent that the targets set were, at best, 'guesstimates' of what might be achievable and the fact that they had been exceeded simply meant that more children and homes were able to benefit from the work.
2. there was an inherent unfairness in the reduction in funding to Forest Schools as schools that had participated earlier in the scheme were able to send more pupils than schools participating later who were asked to choose.
3. as the PHO Fund was part of a ring-fenced grant and could only be spent supporting public health outcomes, it was not clear where the money removed from these projects had gone to meet the aims of the ring-fenced grant.

Given these conclusions, the Movers of this Minority Report ask Council to refer the matter back to Cabinet for them to reconsider the issues involved and further asks the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee to scrutinise the expenditure and outcomes of the Public Health Outcomes Fund.

**SK / 02.10.14**