

Item No: 1.	Classification: Open	Date: March 9 2009	Meeting Name: Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:		Call-in: Fees and charges relating to Children's Services 2009-10 (Executive Member for Children's Services February 6 2009)	
Ward(s) or Group affected:		All	
From:		Head of Overview & Scrutiny	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. On February 6 2009 the Executive Member for Children's Services considered a report on the fees and charges relating to children's services 2009-10. The papers, including the executive member's decision, are attached.

REASONS FOR CALL-IN

2. On February 17 2009 the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Councillor Fiona Colley - and three members of the Committee (Councillors John Friary, Barrie Hargrove and Veronica Ward) requested call-in of the decisions on the following grounds:

"We believe the decision to raise the maximum charge for attendance at Early Years Centres by more than 29%, After School Club fees by 17.5% and Holiday Club fees of up to 34% this year and 24% next year is not proportionate (reason 20.2 a), particularly considering the current economic climate and that inflation is 0.9%, that Southwark Council plans a council tax freeze and that the proposals go beyond the requirements of the MTRS.

Furthermore the decision does not maintain the link between the council's strategy and implementation (reason 20.2 f), indeed the decisions seems in many ways to contradict Council strategy. The Young Southwark Strategy sets out as a vision:

We want Southwark to be a place where every child and young person can have high expectations and the best opportunities. We will work together with children, young people and their families so that they can grow up in good health, feeling safe and secure, and realise their full potential.

This vision is underpinned by the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes and specific aims including:

Achieve economic well-being

- * live in households free from low income
- * parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active

Southwark's Children & Young People's plan identified as an area of further need to achieve these outcomes

- * income maximisation, access to childcare and anti-poverty strategies

It is our view that raising fees for children's services to the extent proposed and the new fee structure runs contrary to the aims and needs set out in the Young Southwark Strategy and Children & Young People's plan.

Finally we believe that the decision has not be subject to due consultation (reason 20.2 b). Indeed the report makes clear that these proposals will instead be included in a future consultation with parents and other stakeholders – after the decision has been taken!

Alternative course of action

To be discussed at the meeting, options include:

- * not increasing fees or increasing by a smaller, more proportionate amount
- * a different charging structure which supports parents, carers and families to be economically active
- * carrying out a proper consultation prior to taking a decision

We do not believe the decision is outside the budget or policy framework."

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held at	Contact
Executive – Agenda & minutes	Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB	Richard Blakely Constitutional Team 020 7525 7232

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny	
Report Author		
Version	Final	
Dated	27 February 2009	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director, Legal & Democratic Services	No	-
Executive Member	No	-