NOTICE OF MOTION

GREEN GROUP

EXTEND THE CONSULTATION ON BRIGHT START NURSERY AND EFFECT ITS FUTURE VIABILITY

"This council notes Bright Start is a vibrant city nursery, located in the heart of Brighton. It caters for the children of council employees and those living in the surrounding area. As such, it is a valuable local resource that benefits the wider community.

The nursery is staffed by excellent and loyal professionals who have worked there for many years, offering a steadfast and continuous service that the children enjoy, and their parents and carers implicitly trust.

Bright Start has never been allocated a marketing or advertising budget. As a result many local parents are either not aware of the nursery's existence or believe that it is for council staff only, and thereby not available to them.

It has suffered from cutbacks in the past, and currently receives just £87,000 per year from the Council, as opposed to £200,000+ per year in the past.

The city's birth rate is currently rising. It has been doing so for some years and the 2011 figure for 0-4 year olds is projected to be almost double that of 2001.[1]

The Deputy Prime Minister has pledged to provide nursery places for all vulnerable 2-year-olds.

The council further notes the Conservative administration intends to withdraw funding and close the nursery in April 2011. At a Cabinet meeting on 11 October, and in the presence of a large number of parents and supporters who all called for the nursery to stay open, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People effected a consultation process which is perceived to be the first step towards closure.

This council believes previous efforts to maximise take-up of Bright Start places have been ineffectual and the consultation proposed is totally inadequate. It therefore calls on the Cabinet to recognise that:

- Bright Start nursery is a highly valued local resource available to all pre-school children in the vicinity.

- With effective marketing, Bright Start could attract many more users and be a viable concern.

- Projected figures will place more and more demand on nursery places in future years.

- Failure to consult the wider community on the loss of Bright Start renders the consultation process fundamentally flawed.

Furthermore council calls on the Cabinet, as part of its consultation process, to consider:

- Identifying all parents of pre-school children within a 500m radius of Bright Start and including them in the consultation.

- Ensuring, before any decision is taken on the nursery's future, that all those who are eligible to use the nursery are aware a) of its existence and b) their eligibility to use it.

- Ensuring that consultation on the future of Bright Start and the possible withdrawal of a staff benefit is extended to all Brighton and Hove City Council employees, not just those who use the nursery.

- Undertaking to take the results of the consultation into account and especially, if a majority of those consulted express a desire for Bright Start to remain open."

Proposed by: Cllr Lizzie Deane Seconded by: Cllr Pete West

Supported by: Cllrs Kennedy, Randall, Wrighton, Wakefield-Jarrett, Steedman, Duncan, Kitcat, Fryer, Davey, Rufus and Phillips.

[1] Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, 2009, pp 45-46