

Response to the Statutory Notice received from Deborah Taylor CC

As the local member for Maplewell Hall Special School I have spent a large amount of time looking into the proposed closure of the residential facilities at the school. The petition presented to Full Council was a very clear message from the public that this is the wrong way forward and we need to listen to our residents and not ignore their responses.

I have visited the school and spent time looking at the facilities and speaking to staff to understand further the outstanding work this school does for our special children. I have spoken on this matter at the Children and Families Scrutiny meeting and at the Cabinet meeting to get my important points across and support the families who will be affected by this proposed closure.

Without the support of the residential facilities at Maplewell Hall, helping these children with moderate learning difficulties become independent adults, these children and their families will be assessing services that they do not need at the moment, greatly affecting the stated savings from this budget and passing on the costs to different budgets. This makes no sense at all. I understand that we have limited budgets, we face tough times, we have to make difficult decisions and we have 3,600 children to consider and all their complex needs. These children are our most vulnerable residents and we should be looking at supporting them more not less. If we do not support these children to achieve and become independent adults they will become a drain on the Adult Social Care Budget in the future and we will not be making any real savings.

In regard to funding, if a child has mild learning difficulties they can be supported in mainstream schools. Children with severe learning difficulties are supported in specialist schools. Children with moderate learning difficulties are left in the middle of this and seem to lack the much needed funding and fall into a bit of a grey area. We are looking at proposals to reduce funding from this grey area and this is the wrong decision.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 Part 3 of the SEND reforms the Local Authority has a duty to support the child and his or her parent in order to facilitate the development of the child and to help him or her achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

This is exactly what Maplewell Hall is doing and in their last OFSTED report completed in autumn 2017 in all areas the school was considered outstanding. The first sentence of the OFSTED report from September 2016 states 'Young people make exceptional progress academically, socially and emotionally because of the residential experience' It is clear throughout the OFSTED report that the residential facilities offered to pupils enhances their learning and produces their excellent

results. They show this school, including the residential facilities is providing the most excellent care for our vulnerable children.

There is information in the reports published stating that the evening activities will continue if the residential experience is closed. We have no information of the breakdown in costs of these activities and how the costings are split between the two. The link between the evening activities and the residential experience are so closely intertwined that I have great concerns that if you lose one the other will not have the desired effect or be funded. These children, with moderate learning difficulties can learn important life skills, enabling them to go into paid employment and live independently with minimal support in the future.

Since being in local politics for the last 2 and a half years I have been working on many committees that look at prevention rather than cure. Being proactive rather than reactive. Councils all over the country are working on preventing falls in the home by investing money in prevention education and equipment. This saves money by not having people admitted to hospital and care homes. The residential facilities at Maplewell Hall are also using prevention rather than cure. They are preventing these children from leaving the school and transferring to the Adult Social Care budget, saving huge amounts of future spending for a small investment now.

In the Council's Strategic Plan for 2018-22, the plan includes the principles which will shape the Council's approach and vision for the future. One of the principles is called INFORMED. This states 'We make good decisions, based on evidence' I have not seen an evidence that the impact on these families with children attending the school has been costed and we run a huge risk that we will actually spend more than we save, just from a different budget.

I have been working closely with the school and they have a desire to look at continuing to provide the after school club and residential experience even if the funding is withdrawn. I am waiting for some further information regarding the legal aspect of issuing the Statutory Notice Decision and I would like the Statutory Notice Decision suspended to allow the school to carry out some further work to look at funding streams and for further information to become available. I urge the cabinet to delay this decision for 6 months.