

Statement by Councillor Tim Ball to Cabinet on 14th January 2009

Nursery Provision in Twerton.

I could say that we have been lucky in Twerton to have been blessed with three excellent Nurseries over the past ten years that have all served the community well.

But when I say Lucky I feel that I am not giving due credit to the hard work of all of the individuals that have contributed to make these Nurseries the success story that we have in Twerton today.

The School based Nursery at Twerton Infant School is an excellent facility that is used by many families with children over three and a half years of age.

First Steps Nursery which opened its doors at Dominion Road in 1995 for the first time has led the way in Nursery provision on a national and local level every since its inception and provides an excellent service that matches all of the governments Criteria.

The Crèche at The Hut has been around for many years and provides a small local based Nursery that suites many parents who want their children in a smaller based unit away from the perceived levels of the establishment.

I believe that there is a need in Twerton for all of the Nurseries to be able to survive with Council support but I will now only concentrate on our two non School based Nurseries and their value to the community that I feel is equal in the services that they provide.

What has concerned me is the withdraw of funding from one Nursery and giving it to another of which I feel is a regressive step by the council and let me explain why.

First Steps can of course use the funding to provide additional services at their establishments but the loss of the Twenty Thousand Pounds in Funding to the Crèche at the Hut would ultimately mean its closure and a loss of provision in the community of Twerton.

I have spoken to the heads of both Twerton Schools and they are both supportive of the Crèche remaining as they both have staff who send their Children there and the head of The Junior School tells me that he had planned for his young child to also attend the Crèche at the Hut.

There is also an economic argument for the provision at the Crèche at the Hut to remain and that is that the cost to local parents using this facility is about half of what they would pay at using any other Nursery in Twerton.

The Other is about value for money and the councils figures show that it pays First Steps Nursery over four Hundred Thousand Pounds a year for an intake of around 400 children. It however contributes only Twenty Thousand Pounds to the Crèche at

the Hut for providing services for over 100 children I am sure that you can see value for money is being provided here.

I am also informed that there is a limit to the very young children that can be accommodated at just one Nursery and if the Crèche at the Hut closes there will be young children who will not be able to gain a placement that their parents require.

There is an argument that has not I feel been considered and that is, I the closure of the crèche at The Hut would be disempowering to the community.

There has been much talk about the need for community empowerment by the government and the Council lately.

The PACT meetings that are running throughout the area and the work of the RE:generate trust at Whiteway are examples of how there is a recognised needs to empower a community to support itself and I would hope that the Cabinet in its deliberations would recognise this when looking at funding criteria.

At The Hut there is already degree of community empowerment because the workers are local people and are accepted by locals as one of them.

This leads to some sense of ownership of the crèche by the community at Twerton.

So by withdrawing funding for the Crèche at the Hut and it ultimately closing down would be disempowering the community and taking away its sense of ownership of nursery level childcare.

I am sure that Cabinet members will agree with me that all of the Nurseries in Twerton offer exceptional services to the local community and I would hope that they would also agree that all should be able to continue to be partially funded by the local authority.

I would also hope that Cabinet members would take up the invitation by The Crèche at The Hut to visit them and see the service that they provide I am aware that the Cabinet member for Children's services has already been to the other two.