

Madam Chairman, councillors, ladies and gentlemen

Welcome to the public and thank you for everything you have said.

Thank you to Nicki for presenting the petition: 4,000 signatures.

As Colin said, people from all over the county have signed to defend children's centres,:

from Roman Bank to Duxford

from Kimbolton to Woodditton.

There are hundreds from some places: Trumpington, Queen Edith's, Cherry Hinton, Romsey, Shelford and Sawston.

The beauty of the centres is that they are local. Local means accessible

because when you have small children

it takes longer to get places

It may be impossible if you use public transport.

In the consultation all the districts reported people who talked of the difficulty of travelling with small children.

Buses – if there are any. Buggies. Accessibility. Traffic. Cost.

I have been hearing from so many people how children's centres have helped them –

- teenagers from Romsey Mill who are taught how to care for their babies
- a mother who got through depression thanks to a support package;
- a family with adopted children whose children's centre was there for them when things got tough.
- And many other families who told me about how the staff and the other parents they met made them more effective and happier parents.

These were good outcomes. Think about the scenario without children's centres:

- Teenage parents can't cope and the baby goes into care.
- Mother's depression becomes unbearable; she has to go into hospital and her child goes into care
- Children's learning problems are not spotted and get worse, so they fall behind at school
- An adoption breaks down

These may sound alarmist but these things happen. And every one of them is a tragedy.

Closing 19 children's centres is brutal and will cause immense human cost. But even in financial terms, the cost of these outcomes far outweighs the million pound saving you are seeking

If you vote for these closures today

- it will mean more children in care
- it will mean more medical need and higher cost to the NHS
- it will mean a bigger attainment gap between the well off and the less well off

I don't know why you came into politics, but when I first stood to be a councillor it was to make things better, not to make things worse.

These closures will harm those least able to speak up for themselves and cause irreparable damage.

I call on you to join us in voting against them.

If you care about Cambridgeshire and if you care about its children

Please, do not do this