

1.4 Question Time

- (b) Lesley Archer, an employee at the Little Elm's Pre-School raised a number of issues relating to their relocation to Spring Lodge (agenda item 2.1). Mrs Archer referred to the increasing costs and inadequate facilities. She also drew attention to the distance that parents, toddlers and staff had to travel with poor/limited parking, difficult access to the building and the fact that toilets are located outside due to the current building works. Mrs Archer emphasised that the Pre-School is a small non profit making organisation and if things continued as they are, then there would be a strong likelihood that it would be forced to close. Pauline Merritt, a parent at the Pre-School reiterated the issues raised by Mrs Archer and in particular how the inadequate infrastructure had resulted in people parking on Chipping Hill causing accident black spots. No refurbishments had been undertaken in the North Witham area, which is now severely lacking in facilities for young children. Parents and staff felt that by far the best solution would be for the Council to carry out urgent repairs to the Pavilion and allow the Pre-school to return here as soon as possible.

2 Local Decisions

2.1 Rickstones Pavilion/Forest Road Community Hall

The Chairman welcomed the representatives from the Little Elm's Pre-School and thanked them for their contributions during question time. Part B of this item was to receive the Petition sent by the Pre-School to the Leader of the Council. Members also noted that a separate petition had been sent to the Local Member of Parliament and both petitions expressed a number of the concerns raised during question time. Members noted that the Pre-School had been forced to relocate to Spring Lodge following closure of the Rickstones Pavilion on the advice of the Fire Service.

Councillor Beavis, Cabinet Member, advised representatives from the Pre School that, due to a change in responsibilities, Councillor Wendy Schmitt would be taking over responsibility for Community Halls with immediate effect. Councillor Beavis went on to refer to previous discussions that had taken place with representatives of the Pre-School. She explained that the planned review of all community facilities in the district was due to be completed by March 2009 and that this review would include the facilities provided at the Rickstones Pavilion.

Representatives from Little Elms Pre-School voiced strong concern over the time that it had taken to come to a decision on the future of the Pavilion and why had temporary measures not been put in place or investment been made in the Pavilion/ why should local organisations be made to suffer for what they felt was the Council's lack of foresight?

Parents wanted the Rickstones Pavilion to be temporarily repaired and maintained so that like the football club, the Pre-School could remain at the premises until the Council decides on its long term future.

Cllr Evans requested that this issue be raised at Cabinet to request that works be undertaken making the pavilion safe so that the Pre-School could return and use the facilities as quickly as possible.

Decision: That it be recommended to Cabinet: That urgent works be carried out to make the Pavilion safe and enable the Little Elms Pre-School to return to the premises until the long term future of the building is determined by the Council.