

County Council Business Plan 2014/15

Comments from Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Business Plan proposals for services relating to children and young people 3rd December 2013.
- 1.2 The following attended to answer the Committee's questions:
- Councillor D Brown, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
 - Councillor Harty, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
 - Adrian Loades, Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults
 - Niki Clemo, Service Director: Children's Social Care
 - Sarah Ferguson, Service Director: Enhanced and Preventative Services
 - Keith Grimwade, Service Director: Learning
 - Meredith Teasdale, Service Director: Strategy and Commissioning.
- 1.3 Members agreed to submit a report to Cabinet highlighting the concerns outlined below. In doing so, members recognised that the budget strategy had been developed to respond to exceptionally prolonged requirements for savings at a time when demographic demand was increasing.

2. Overarching concerns

- 2.1 Members were very concerned that the proposed budget cuts to children and young people's services would directly affect the youngest and most vulnerable of the County's residents.
- 2.2 The Committee considered that the Council should therefore be less acquiescent and campaign more actively for sufficient funding to support its services, in both the short term and the long term, especially as it is likely that the Council will have to make reductions in statutory children's services in future years if the funding situation continues.
- 2.3 Members agreed that the Committee should make representations to Central Government stating that the cap on Council tax was preventing local authorities from raising adequate funding locally.

3. Specific issues

Enhanced and Preventative Services

- 3.1 Members were very concerned by the proposed reductions in early years and preventative services, in particular the children's centres and locality teams, as spending on early years support has a positive impact on children in the long term.

They considered that these reductions were a false economy, as they would lead to greater difficulties later in children's lives, which would result in increased cost to the Council.

- 3.2 Members suggested that Town and Parish Councils were given costings of specific activities, so that they could consider whether to provide funding to retain a service.
- 3.3 The Committee also expressed concern at the impact of proposed cuts to the budget of the Youth Offending Service

Children's Social Care

- 3.4 Members suggested that greater savings could be made from the supervised contact budget by ensuring that staff time was used to best effect, for example by ensuring that the contact arrangements were at the right level of frequency.

Learning

- 3.5 Members were concerned that the withdrawal of the school clothing allowance would directly affect the County's most vulnerable children, emotionally as well as practically. They suggested that local charities were made aware that the Council was ending this allowance.
- 3.6 Members noted the significant challenge of improving school performance in Cambridgeshire, particularly in relation to the gap in attainment between children in vulnerable groups and their peers. They were concerned that there could be difficulties in implementing the new arrangements for school to school support, in which good and outstanding schools assisted those needing to improve, as collaborative and competitive drives could come into conflict.

The minutes of the meeting provide a full record of the discussion. They can be found on <http://tinyurl.com/cc-cyp-031213>