

Children and Young People Committee – 14 January 2025 - Business Plan and Budget 2025-26-2029-30

Members scrutinised the report and sought clarity on the following points:

1. Proposal A/R 4.011: Resourcing within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and the reasoning for the investment. Clarity was provided that this was to make the current increased capacity arrangements permanent. Clarity was also provided on funding from partners within this approach.
2. There was a check on how officers had assessed the Home to School Transport 2025/26 Mainstream budget and special educational needs for adequacy of the budget. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families confirmed the forecast was due to a fall in demand for mainstream transport and more work was being undertaken on opportunities for efficiencies. Forecasting used in pupil place planning contributes to this.
3. Children Centre provision – questions were asked about the ability to scale back on centres. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that the proposals are not a scaling back but a review of structures and efficiencies within the budget.
4. Clarity was sought on what difference the SEND investment A/R.4.010 would make. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that this would increase the statutory service capacity, the speed of reviews, and wider support. Members requested that officers review communications with parents and children as they navigate through the system. The Executive Director confirmed that concurrently there was work looking at the current ways of working including the effectiveness of communication and dealing with enquiries and complaints.
5. How was the Council proactively working with district partners and local developers to identify opportunities for new capacity around Residential Strategy investment A/R.5.002? The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that there had been no conversations with developers, but officers were working with Department for Education in this area. Clarity was also sought on how the authority was working with other partners in this area. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families explained that officers were working with local providers and Ofsted and looking at small unit provision.
6. Clarity was sought on the Residential care provision proposal and had the authority purchased the 2 properties referred to. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that it was a reconfiguration of assets the authority already held not a purchase. An update on two schemes was requested. The Executive Director for Children, Education and Families clarified that the schemes were still in progress but the opening was expected in late 2025/26 with cost avoidance expected in 2026/27.

Following scrutiny no amendments or changes were proposed.