

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 21st October 2014

Time: 2.00pm to 4:00pm

Present: Councillors K Bourke (substituting for Cllr Downes), D Brown (Vice-Chairman), P Brown, S Bywater, P Clapp, D Divine, D Harty, N Kavanagh (substituting for Cllr Onasanya), M Leeke, M Rouse, A Taylor (substituting for Cllr Nethsingha), S van de Kerkhove, J Whitehead (Chairwoman), J Wisson and F Yeulett

Apologies: Councillors P Downes, M Loynes, L Nethsingha and F Onasanya; Mr P Rossi

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

37. MINUTES – 16th SEPTEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services advised that since the meeting on 16th September, the Brooke Weston Trust had advised that they would no longer be progressing the Free School application for the new Wisbech Primary School. As a result, population projections would be estimated and shared with the existing Primary Schools in Wisbech, and a way forward determined.

38. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

39. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2015/16 TO 2019/20

The Committee received a report detailing the Business Planning proposals for Children's Social Care, Strategy and Commissioning, Enhanced and Preventative Services and Learning. The Executive Director: Children, Families and Adult Services gave a presentation providing an overview of the 2015/16 financial position. Whilst noting that the proposed budget for 2015/16 for Children and Young People's Services was £118M, representing only a £1.8M reduction in core funding on the previous year, this did not reflect the additional challenges facing Children and Young People's services posed by demographic, inflationary and legislative pressures. It was noted that these challenges were common to both Children's and Adult Services. Whilst

£7.5M savings had been identified so far, a further £5.9M needed to be identified. As significant parts of the budget could not be reduced (e.g. due to statutory obligations), this placed a greater pressure on a smaller number of service areas.

Further evidence of the challenges facing the Children and Young People's Services budget were presented in the form of a graph detailing the demographic changes within Cambridgeshire, showing an increasing number of children and young people due to increasing fertility rates, net migration and immigration. Coupled with this was an increased acuity of need: around 20% of the child population had special educational needs or a disability, and there were increasing levels of mental health issues. In addition, having remained relatively stable for a number of years, the number of Looked After Children was also increasing. There were also a range of new statutory responsibilities and entitlements, and increased expectations, due in part to changing policies on education nationally.

The key themes of the Financial Strategy set out in the presentation were around preventative measures, targeting those with the greatest needs, building capacity for families and communities. In addition services should continue to be outcome focused and services should work holistically to maximise outcomes for families.

Key proposals across all Services were highlighted, and these included:

- re-commissioning of Early Help, including a significant reduction in the youth offer;
- reviewing Home to School Transport routes, and also policies including the discretionary post-16 policy;
- stopping or reducing non-statutory support for Early Years;
- streamlining management of the three support services in Children's Social Care;
- delivery of Children's Placement Strategy for Looked After Children.

Looking ahead to future years (2016/17 and beyond), it was noted that the scope for traditional 'efficiencies' was almost exhausted, so a more fundamental reconsideration of service delivery was required.

Whilst commenting that the report made for discouraging reading in terms of the challenges faced, the report author, Rebecca Hudson, was praised by the Committee for producing such a good, thorough report. It was noted that Appendix C (Community Impact Assessments) set out the impact on vulnerable groups i.e. whether they would be disproportionately affected by savings proposals.

In discussion, Members raised the following points:

Redundancy/staffing

Some Members observed that the Council had already lost many good officers through redundancy and retirement, and expressed concern that in addition to services being eroded, valuable expertise and experience was being lost. Officers were urged to consider redeployment within the Council whenever possible. Officers confirmed that the value of staff experience was valued, and redeployment and retraining was always investigated in preference to compulsory redundancies, which were minimised wherever possible.

A Member also observed that when layers of management were removed, this put an additional burden on the remaining staff, and the impact of this needed to be recognised.

Localism

A Member asked how Localism may reflect on future planning, and asked if it was possible to have a report on the future of Localism e.g. with respect to Youth Services, to a future meeting. The Executive Director agreed that Localism had a valuable role, but cautioned that different communities have different capacities and it could never be assumed that they could pick up any shortfall.

A Member asked if there was any information available on all the third sector organisations the Council worked with, in relation to the proposal to further develop community capacity within the county. Officers explained that the Council worked with a wide range of third sector bodies, but there was currently no one comprehensive, universal list

Funding and City Deal

It was observed that in recent years, the Council had borrowed more to fund major capital projects, and one option would be to borrow less which would reduce revenue costs.

One Member observed that there was increased pressure on school places, especially in Cambridge, and asked if there was scope for this to be factored into the City Deal i.e. as schools would be providing a suitably skilled workforce the further development of the Greater Cambridge area, some funding should be awarded to recognise this extra pressure. Officers acknowledged that children and young people benefitted from the growing economy in Cambridge, especially the most challenging and challenged young people, but there was a corresponding cost to that, and the Council had suffered from low level of funding over the years.

Youth Work

Members discussed the proposals regarding youth work. The Service Director outlined the services currently offered and how was this funded through a combination of core funding and external funding. A suite of interventions were currently provided and it was suggested that these should be prioritised for those young people who would experience the greatest impact e.g. against NEETS. The example of the *Fusion* project in Huntingdon was given, which had been started by the Huntingdon Locality team – the County Council would still be involved, but would not have the resources to support such schemes financially in the future.

Noting the proposals for the Community House and The Spinney in Wisbech, a Member sought assurance that youth work would continue in Wisbech. Officers advised that the proposal had always been to move The Spinney to some type of sustainable community led future, and that the County Council remained committed to this project.

It was clarified that whilst there would be a significant reduction in the County Council's youth offer, with a proposed reduction in Central Youth Support Service budget by 60%, this did not mean there would be a 60% reduction in the youth offer – some of the responsibility for aspects of work with YOS clients would be assumed by Locality Teams.

Services to Schools

Members stressed the need to enter into dialogue with schools on traded services, particularly Academies. Officers confirmed that there was a strong relationship with Academies, with at least an annual meeting with every Academy.

It was noted that the opportunity to trade specialist SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) services to schools were likely to increase, and there were also opportunities to provide training to other local authorities.

Special Educational Needs

Members noted with concern that 20% of children and young people had a special educational need or disability. Officers confirmed that this covered a significant spectrum of need, and this figure was rising, particularly for mental health needs, and the Council's more specialist support services were under considerable pressure. There had been increases in national funding arrangements for Statemented children with a Statement of SEN, so the resources were available for schools.

A Member observed that it was taking some children up to a year to get a Statement of SEN. Another Member noted that Special Educational Needs and Disability commissioning involved a wide range of partners, including health, social care, educational settings, families and the voluntary and community sector, which appeared to be a complex process, and he asked how it worked in practice. Officers explained that one of changes with the introduction of the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) in place of the Statement of SEN was to ensure that partners worked together for the best outcome was in place. Members also noted that there were useful organisations outside the Council which provided valuable local support, including Pinpoint.

Education Transport

A Member queried how realistic the proposed savings from the Safer Routes to School programme were. Officers explained that this was a well developed process which had been rolled out over a number of years. Across the county, school transport was provided in some instances on the grounds of safety e.g. because the route between a particular village to the catchment school had been judged unsafe. These routes were being re-examined, and where feasible, safety improvements were being made so that it was no longer necessary to transport children to school, i.e. the routes became safe enough to walk or cycle. There was an appeal process for this, with an appeal panel of three elected Members hearing the appeals. A number of appeals had taken place and in the majority of cases, the Member panel had concluded that the route was safe. These reviews had a potentially significant impact on the Education Transport budget. It was confirmed that the additional post proposed for the Route Reviews would be employed on standard County Council terms and conditions. It was confirmed that the

criteria on which the safety of routes was judged was set out in the County Council's Home to School Transport policy, and the route assessment was undertaken by a specialist officer in Economy, Transport & Environment. More information on the programme could be provided to Members on request.

Members were advised that support for education transport for post-16 students was discretionary and that the County Council did award support when certain criteria were met e.g. young people who met the Free School Meals designation. However, there had been changes to funding nationally, with bursaries available through post-16 establishments (the bursaries being held by the colleges, not the Local Authority) for support with expenses, and consequently many authorities were withdrawing transport support for post-16 students, although the proposal was not to withdraw support completely in Cambridgeshire. Members also pointed out that in many communities there were educational charities, which young people could be signposted to for additional support. It was agreed that more information would be made available on this issue in the report that was presented to the next Committee.

Early Years

Members noted that the proposed withdrawal or reduction for non-statutory functions for Early Years and Place Planning Services related to items such as discretionary grants for Early Years placements. It was agreed that it would be useful to have further detail on this in the report that was to be presented to the November Committee.

Children's Centres

The anticipated savings from the plans to reconfigure Children's Centres in 2015/16 were estimated at £259K. It was noted that a recent Ofsted report was critical of level of resourcing to Children's Centres, so there was no plans to reduce services further in 2015/16.

Schools Funding

A Member highlighted the key role played by the Schools Forum in funding, e.g. in assessing the suitability of the funding formula. There had been a significant uplift in Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £23M or 8% on current levels, but this could not be topsliced to local authority services.

A Member asked about those schools who historically carried high levels of reserves. It was confirmed that whilst there were relatively few schools with high levels of reserves, there tended to be special circumstances, and all schools with high levels of reserves were challenged. It was also confirmed that there was no requirement or compulsion to "spend the budget by year end", nor had there been for many years.

A Member commented that in a Scrutiny review, some schools were unwilling to disclose how Pupil Premiums were spent. Officers advised that this information had to be disclosed, as Ofsted always looked at the spend and impact of Pupil Premiums. It was also noted that the Audit & Accounts Committee was requesting an audit of schools' use of Pupil Premiums this financial year.

Other points raised during discussions included:

- noted that the savings from re-commissioning of contracts was estimated at £100K, although this meant that some controls would stop;
- a suggestion that integrating CYP and Adult Service further was an action that needed further consideration;
- a Member observed that at the Adults Committee on 7th October, the option of an alternative inflation option of 0.5% had been put forward e.g. for independent care providers. It was agreed that this was a sensible option to consider;
- discussed the risk of raising thresholds, noting officers' comments that there were potentially huge risks if e.g. early help and preventative services were withdrawn;
- noted that all areas of potential savings had been brought forward to 2015/16 – identifying further savings in future years would be a considerable challenge;
- discussed the difficulties inherent in trying to make cuts on non-statutory services. A Member suggested that a more helpful way of looking at the issue was “what can we stop doing” and “what should we stop doing”, and it was suggested that this could be explored further at the next meeting.

The Chairwoman concluded by thanking the Committee and officers for their input, in a meeting that enabled Members to focus on the very serious cuts would needed to be made. She urged Members to come forward with any suggestions they had about painless savings, and the Executive Director echoed these comments, adding that the local knowledge was vital in the Business Planning process e.g. where voluntary or community organisations could provide some capacity. A Member quoted the example of Lifeworks, which was an example of where a preventative service would be very beneficial.

The Chairwoman suggested that the report to the November Committee should indicate those savings which could be made safely, as opposed to those which would cause considerable problems.

Councillor Bourke asked if there was scope to explore the possibility of securing funding from the City Deal/Local Enterprise Partnership. He proposed the following amendment, which was put to the vote and carried: *“e) that the Chairwoman and Vice-Chairman explore whether the City Deal or the Local Enterprise Partnership might be willing to contribute to addressing concerns around school places in Greater Cambridge.”*

It was resolved to:

- a) to note the overview and context provided for the 2015/16 to 2019/20 Business Plan revenue proposals for the CFA Service;

- b) to comment on those draft revenue savings proposals that are within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee for 2015/16 to 2019/20 and provide a steer on their further development;
- c) to comment on the proposed approach to inflation within the CFA Service for 2015/16 and provide a steer on the options set out in the paper;
- d) that Officers work with Members of the Children and Young People's Committee to develop further detailed proposals for presentation to the Children and Young People's Committee on the 18th November;
- e) that the Chairwoman and Vice-Chairman explore whether the City Deal or the Local Enterprise Partnership might be willing to contribute to addressing concerns around school places in Greater Cambridge.

40. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members received the agenda plan for the Children and Young People Committee, and noted changes that had been made since publication.

It was resolved to:

Note the agenda plan, including the updates reported orally at the meeting.

Chairwoman