Agenda Item No: 2

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 16 December 2019

Time: 2.00pm – 3.35pm

Venue: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), A Bradnam, D Connor, P Downes, M Howell (from 2.05pm), J Whitehead and J Wisson

Co-opted Member: A Read, Church of England Diocese of Ely

Apologies: Councillors D Ambrose Smith, L Every (substituted by D Connor), A Hay (substituted by M Howell) and S Taylor

Co-opted Member: F Vettese, Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

268. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were noted as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest.

269. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 12 NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting on 12 November 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

270. ACTION LOG

The action log was reviewed and noted.

271. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

272. CHANGE TO THE PUBLISHED ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman had been advised that some Members might need to leave the meeting early. To ensure enough time to discuss the draft revenue and capital business planning proposals for 2020/21 to 2024/25 he had advised the Committee in advance that he proposed to take this report as the next item of business. A notice to this effect had also been posted on the meeting page of the Council website. No objections were made.

DECISION

273. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS 2020/21 TO 2024/25

The Chairman asked whether any Members wished to discuss the information contained in the exempt appendix to the report. One Member wished to do so. The public report was discussed first.

Since the Committee first reviewed the draft business planning proposals in October 2019 the level of unidentified savings had reduced by £8.7m to £3.9m. This was based on an assumption of a 2% increase in council tax in 2020/21 through levying the Adult Social Care precept. However, the position was currently showing some deterioration and if it continued this would need to be taken into account in the final proposals. The outcome of the Wave 14 free school round was not yet known and would also need to be reflected, but currently there were no significant changes to the capital programme from the position reported in October 2019.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Commented that the reference to an assumption of a 2% increase in council tax was confusing, and that it should be made clear that the assumption assumed no increase in council tax, but a 2% increase in the adult social care precept.

- Described the use of the term ‘pressure’ in relation to costs as potentially misleading and requested that it should be made clear where savings were proposed or overspends existed. The Chairman stated that the term was used across all council reports and that it was not within the remit of the Children and Young People Committee to change this.

- Expressed disappointment that no changes had been made to sections 5.4 to 5.10 of the report in the light of the comments made when the draft business planning proposals were discussed previously.

- A Member objected to the proposed £30k reduction to the youth justice and youth support budget which they considered to be short-sighted and unacceptable. They further commented that it was important to ensure that sufficient resources were available to work with first time offenders. The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that managers within the Youth Justice Service judged that this was a saving which could be made. However, if the proposed research into preventing and addressing adolescent risk was approved (minute 276 below refers) and recommended that additional resources should be targeted at youth justice services this could be revisited.

- A Member objected to the proposal not to re-invest a proportion of the savings achieved through ending the contract for the provision of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) into early help services as agreed at the time that decision was made. They noted the proposal to achieve further savings on early help by reducing the number of management roles and commented that they would want to see the evidence supporting this.

The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that the provision of early help services went beyond those provided by the Council. Support was also available from partner organisations such as schools and the health service and the council's offer should be seen in that context. A proposal would be considered later in the meeting to endorse a Transformation Bid proposal to develop a joint approach to preventing and addressing adolescent risk (minute 276 below refers) which would review how the whole system could work together to provide a more joined up approach. Some staff had moved from the early help team to work in the school-facing attendance and inclusion service which meant that some managers in early help services now had much smaller teams. If the proposals were agreed none of the management posts which would be retained would have more than eight staff reporting to them so the workload would remain reasonable. There had been no rise in demand for support services following the ending of the MST contract.

- Asked whether the number of children in care in Cambridgeshire was comparable with the county's statistical neighbours. Officers stated that recent figures indicated that the numbers of children in care amongst the county's statistical neighbours had increased, but that numbers in Cambridgeshire still remained higher despite some overall reductions. The trend in Cambridgeshire remained towards a reduction in numbers of children in care as the impact of the restructure of children's services continued to take effect. This was designed to move children through the social care system more quickly which was both better for the child and more cost efficient.

- Asked when officers expected to see the numbers of children in care in Cambridgeshire reducing as a result of the service restructure. The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that he hoped to be within 10% of the average number for the county's statistical neighbours by the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

- Asked about the proposed finance officer role within the corporate parenting service. Officers stated that this had already been put in place. The Corporate Parenting service was responsible for managing significant sums of money and this provided an additional level of assurance.

- Sought an assurance that it was not proposed to remove home to school transport in areas where no public transport alternative existed. Officers stated that there was no suggestion of this and that to do so would be in breach of the Council's statutory duty. The proposal related to offering travel training support where appropriate to those with special educational needs and disabilities as an alternative to taxi transfers. This model had been introduced in Essex and, although initially controversial, was now recognised as positively supporting the development of important life skills.

- Asked what was meant by increasing operational efficiencies and reducing the duplication of cost experienced through 'being in business twice'. Officers stated that this referred to looking into whether there were any appropriate synergies between adults' and children's social care provision.

- Asked whether making savings in relation to early help support might further increase pressure on the high needs block. The Service Director for Education stated that early help support services were not currently closely aligned with educational provision. By addressing this, it was hoped to provide greater support to those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and so reduce the pressure on the High Needs Block.

- A Member commented that they believed that the Council should increase council tax to help address the funding pressures it faced. For that reason they could not support the recommendations before the Committee. The Chairman stated that, whilst respecting this view, decisions on council tax were a matter for Council and not for individual service committees.

The Chairman stated that the Committee would be facing one of its most difficult decisions to date in January 2020 in relation to the approval of the Schools Funding Formula. Members would consider the outcome of the consultation with schools, the recommendations of the Schools Forum and officer recommendations to inform their decision.

The Chairman, seconded by Councillor Connor, proposed that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for discussion of those projects included in the exempt appendix to the report on the grounds that this contained exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, in that it would not be in the public interest for this information to be disclosed (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The Committee discussed a number of questions in private session.

It was resolved by a majority to:

a) note the overview and context provided for the 2020/21 to 2024/25 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service, updated since the last report to the Committee in October 2019;

b) comment on the draft budget and savings proposals that are within the remit of the Children & Young People Committee for 2020/21 to 2024/25, and endorse them to the General Purposes Committee as part of consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan;

c) comment on the changes to the capital programme that are within the remit of the Children & Young People Committee and endorse them to the General Purposes Committee as part of consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan.

KEY DECISION

274. APPROVAL TO RE-TENDER SOUTH FENLAND CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE SERVICES (KD2019/061)

The Committee had approved the award of a contract to Ormiston Families Trust for the delivery of child and family centre services from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020 in October 2019. At that time Members asked that the subsequent report relating to the proposed re-tendering of the service should include details of what services were

provided internally by the Council and which would be delivered by external providers. This information was contained in the current report. The report had been circulated to all Members with Divisions in Fenland and no comments had been received.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Why the Ormiston Families Trust provided services in Fenland. Officers stated that this reflected an historic position and that services in South Fenland had always been externally commissioned.

- Why there was a need to re-tender and whether the current contract with the Ormiston Families Trust could not be further extended. Officers stated that the contract had been extended previously in October 2019 with the Committee's approval, but that the Council was obliged to go out to tender at regular intervals to ensure that best value for money was achieved. This was standard practice and did not suggest any dissatisfaction with the current service provider.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) Agree to the tender of the South Fenland Child and Family Centre Services, as part of a joint tender exercise with Peterborough City Council;

b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for People and Communities to commit funding at the time of the award of contract.

275. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT: DECEMBER 2019

The Committee reviewed the position as of October 2019. Key changes included an increase in the forecast overspend on home to school transport (special) of £500k, an increase of £200k over the previous month. This reflected a continuing increase in the number of pupils with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) who required transport to school. Some savings were being seen on the children in care transport budget which would off-set this somewhat.

In response to questions from Members, officers stated that, if approved, the proposal would release places at Granta School which could be offered to local children with additional needs. This would be better for the children as they would no longer need to travel to special schools in other parts of the county and it would also lead to savings on home to school transport costs. The £335k proposed for the acquisition was a capital cost so there would also be a revenue cost. The cost of places in a maintained special school setting were approximately one third of the cost of a place in the independent special school sector.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) review and comment on the report;

b) recommend to the General Purposes Committee (GPC) a £335k increase in the overall capital programme for the acquisition of Abington Wood SEND buildings to be funded by prudential borrowing as outlined in section 2.4.2

276. DEVELOPING A JOINT APPROACH TO PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING ADOLESCENT RISK

The Committee considered a recommendation to endorse a Transformation Bid proposal of up to £50k to the General Purposes Committee to develop a joint approach to preventing and addressing adolescent risk. This would be contingent on key partners also contributing financially and in kind to the project. A lot of work had already been carried out on the way that services were delivered to 0-5s and on children's social care and this would provide a similar detailed analysis in relation to older children and adolescents. It was proposed to work alongside partners with ISOS, a consultancy partnership with a good track record in developing policy, building capacity and improving delivery within the public sector, to see how the offer might be shaped better.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- How this proposal linked with the earlier discussion about making savings on early help services (minute 273 above refers). The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that the early help proposals related to savings which could be delivered through changes to the management structure rather than to the service offer. The aim was to identify and galvanise the full range of support services offered by the Council and partner organisations and to establish clear pathways for accessing this support.

- Sought reassurance that the review would seek to make the best use of the resources available. The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding confirmed that this would be the case;

- Whether the involvement of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) office might be subject to review given the recent change in leadership, although an agreement in principle had previously been obtained. The Chairman stated that he was willing to speak to the Acting PCC about this if needed.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) endorse a Transformation Bid proposal up to £50K to the General Purposes Committee, contingent on other partners (Police and Crime Commissioner, Clinical Commissioning Group and Police) also contributing financially and in kind to the project.

277. PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2 2019/20

The Committee reviewed the performance report for Quarter 2. At the request of the General Purposes Committee those projects which were exceeding their targets were now colour coded blue. Changes were proposed to two indicators to include numbers of young people whose status was not known as well as those who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Commended the new format and style of the report;

- Sought clarification of the positon of those young people described as ‘not known’. Officers stated that this was a formal classification and related to those young people who were not known to be in education, employment or to be NEET. Numbers would be relatively low as the status of the majority of young people was known.

- Asked whether the arrow indicating direction of travel on the target relating to pupils receiving a place at their first choice secondary school was pointing in the wrong direction. Officers undertook to check this and report back.
(**Action**: Senior Analyst – Business Intelligence)

- Asked for more information in relation to the changes in number of children with child protection plans. Officers stated the small size of the cohort meant that a single large family coming under protection plans could make a significant change in the overall figure. The Chairman suggested that it would be helpful to include this type of information in the narrative accompanying the figures.
(**Action**: Senior Business Analyst)

- Noted that numbers receiving youth services had decreased and asked whether this was due to a particularly intensive style of intervention. Officers confirmed that this was partly the case and that consideration was being given to delivering that type of support at an earlier stage.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) note and comment on performance information and take remedial action as necessary;

b) agree changes to indicators 6 and 129.

278. AGENDA PLAN, APPOINTMENTS AND TRAINING PLAN

The Committee reviewed the agenda plan, committee appointments and the training plan.

It was resolved to:

a) note the following changes to the published agenda plan:

i. Corporate Parenting Annual Report: Deferred from January 2020 to March 2020.
ii. New Item: Special Educational Needs and Disability Demand Management – January 2020
iii. New item: Cambridgeshire Outdoors – March 2020

b) note that that the Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board had been discontinued;

c) note the Committee training plan.

279. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee would meet next on Tuesday 21 January 2020 at Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman
(date)