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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** TUESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2018, 10.00 AM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact [scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk)

6 **Correspondence Following Committee Meeting** (Pages 3 - 10)

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My Ref: Scrutiny/CYP/MJH

Date: 14 February 2018



Councillor Chris Weaver  
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Chris

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Corporate Plan and Draft Cabinet Budget proposals 2018/19**

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 13 February 2018. The Committee would also like me to thank Councillor Hinchey, Councillor Merry, Councillor Bradbury, Ian Allwood and relevant Directors and Officers for their attendance. The Committee welcomed the presentations on the Corporate Plan, Cabinet draft Budget proposals overview and the draft budget proposals for Children's Services, Education, and the Play Service.

The Committee welcomed the increases in funding for both Children's Services and Education, particularly at these difficult times.

The Committee considered the information presented and the answers provided to Members' questions, during the way forward section of the meeting. The Committee agreed to provide you and the Cabinet Members with the following comments, concerns and recommendations:

**Corporate Plan and Overview**

- The Members expressed some concern around the validity of the Budget Consultation as the majority of the respondents were white, over 45 and from the North of Cardiff, which does not reflect the demographics of Cardiff. The Committee therefore recommended that a more robust consultation exercise should be undertaken for next year's Budget.

## **Children's Services**

- The Committee discussed, at some length, the level of contingency required to fund any additional looked after children during next year. The Members welcomed the Cabinet Members observation that the current budget report is not an accurate reflection of the funding required. The Committee therefore recommended that the Children's Services budget should be reviewed to better reflect the anticipated number of Looked After Children, at the end of March 2019.
- The Committee also requested details of the split between Children and Adults services of the Budget realignment £3.99M, to be provided in time for the Council meeting on 22 February 2018.
- Members also requested clarification of the anticipated savings from the "Signs of Safety" and Children's Home, and whether these savings would start to be made after 3 years or 5 years.

## **Education**

- Members expressed some concern with the sudden loss of grants for Education, and its impact on school funds, in particular those schools which were already facing deficit balances. The Committee welcomed the assurance that both Education and Finance would be providing advice and support to these schools, Members agreed to keep a watching brief on this situation.
- Members also discussed the revenue budget impact of, what they considered a high level of borrowing, needed to implement the proposed Education Capital Programme. The Committee was assured that the Section 151 Officer had considered that the programme remains affordable.
- The Committee took the view that the savings in relation the introduction of the Travel Support Allowance (Line 73) must be reconsidered by Cabinet, as Members considered that it would have an adverse effect on the environment, infrastructure, and families themselves, particularly those in poverty.
- The Committee requested that the Directorate review the travel arrangement to Llanishen High, due to concerns expressed about the safeguarding of children and duty of care to our pupils.

## **Play Service**

- Members welcomed the positive briefing from the Cabinet Member on the operation of the new service. Members noted and welcomed the Cabinet Members proposals to align the Play Service with the Youth Service, under Education, to provide a fully joined up service for those between 0 and 17. The Committee therefore agreed to receive a further briefing report on the operation of the Play Service and plans for its future, to a forthcoming scrutiny meeting.

I will be copying this letter to all the relevant Cabinet Members and Directors as well as the Chair of Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee in advance of its meeting on Wednesday 14 February and it is possible that these points will be raised with you in greater detail at that meeting.

Corporate Plan overview

I hope that these comments will have been of assistance to you and the Cabinet in agreeing the Budget proposals on Thursday 15 February and look forward to a positive response to the points raised in the letter, from you and the other Cabinet Members, within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**  
**Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

Cc

Councillor Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Councillor Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment, Skill

Councillor Bradbury, Cabinet Members for Culture and Leisure

Christine Salter, Section 151 Officer

Tony Young, Director of Social Services

Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong learning

Chair of Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Jon Maidment, Operational manager, Parks and Sport

Steve Gerrard, Network Operations Team Leader

Rita Rohman

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**SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET  
CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE**

**Fy Nghyf / My Ref:**  
**Eich Cyf / Your ref:** Scrutiny/CYP/MJH

**Dyddiad / Date:** 15 February 2018

**Councillor Lee Bridgeman  
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee  
Room 279  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
Cardiff. CF10 4UW**



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Dear Cllr Bridgeman

**Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Corporate Plan and Draft  
Cabinet Budget Proposals 2018/19**

Thank you for your letter dated 14 February 2018 and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 15 February 2018.

**Corporate Plan and overview**

In relation to budget consultation, within the Corporate Plan for 2018 – 2021 there is an objective to review and refresh the Council's engagement process and tools including the Citizen Panel by June 2018 in order to improve the robustness of the Council's consultation exercise.

**Children's Services**

In order to address your comments in respect of the Children's Services budget, I believe it would be helpful to outline the Cabinet's approach to funding and meeting budget pressures in Children's Services. This includes a budget realignment to meet the full year impact of known commitments in the current financial year together with the provision of a contingency budget to meet potential but as yet unknown costs in the forthcoming financial year. This approach ensures that where the level of specific pressures that occur during a financial year result in an overspend within the service, these known pressures are then fully funded as part of the Council's Budget for the following year. This is an essential element of the Council's approach to financial resilience, ensuring that on-going financial issues in one year are not carried forward and allowed to build up in the future. This is reflected in the proposed budget for 2018/19 by a budget realignment for Children's Services of £3.990 million. This is an addition to the £1.5 million allocation already built into the Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Strategy to reflect the impact of demographic pressures. These sums total £5.490 million and reflect the full year effect of known commitments at the time of preparing the Cabinet's budget proposal to Council.

The other element of the Council's approach to funding and meeting budget pressures in Children's Services is to maintain a service specific contingency budget in order to reflect the potential for increased costs in relation to external placements for looked after Children during the forthcoming financial year and this is set out in paragraph 58 of the Cabinet Budget Proposals Report. The Contingency budget of £950,000 is specifically in relation to the potential financial cost of an increase in the number of placements during the year and would enable funding to be provided for up to 24 full year or 48 half year external fostering placements. A separate allocation of £450,000 has also been made to meet exceptional inflation costs in Children's Services in 2018/19 including the impact of the Children's 4 Cs Collaborative Framework. Although there have been significant budget pressures in Children's Services in recent years, this is not necessarily an indicator for the future with no direct link as such to demographic trends. Future trends in relation to looked after children are difficult to define with the need for placements often identified at short notice in relation to a particular set of circumstances and often with significant costs attached to them. This was certainly the case in the current financial year with increased placements reflecting a range of issues including specific child protection issues and family breakdowns involving multiple children. There is therefore no right or wrong figure in relation to the amount allocated to the contingency budget, it is simply a judgement of what is reasonable in the context of the Council's overall budget together with a recognition that there is a clear possibility that some level of further pressures will arise. In arriving at this judgement, regard is also taken of the preventative measures and other excellent work being undertaken within the Social Services Directorate to control costs, to return children from out of county and to reduce the number of children for whom care placements may be required in the future.

Increasing the Contingency Budget for as yet unknown costs would only increase the funding gap and would require further savings to be identified in other service budgets including within Social Services. The alternative would be to further increase Council Tax.

With regard to the £3.990 million budget realignment, this is entirely in relation to Children's Services as set out above.

The Director of Social Services has reminded the Committee that it has already received a detailed presentation on the anticipated medium and long term impacts of its early help strategy including signs of safety and has agreed to make a further presentation covering this and other matters relating to residential accommodation for children in the near future.

## **Education**

Your comments in relation to loss of grants for Education and in respect of the Education Capital Programme are noted.

With regard to the introduction of the Travel Support Allowance, the view is that this may benefit families on low incomes by giving them more flexibility in how they use their money. There is the opportunity to review these arrangements should attendance at school become an issue.



Regarding the concerns expressed around the travel arrangements to Llanishen High, I will arrange for a separate response as this is not directly related to the budget being discussed at Cabinet today.

**Play Service**

The Committee's comments are noted.

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process.

Yours sincerely



**Y Cynghorydd/Councillor Christopher Weaver**  
**Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad/Cabinet member for**  
**Finance, Modernisation & Performance**

