

My Ref: Scrutiny/CYP/MJH

Date: 20 February 2019

Councillor Chris Weaver
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



Dear Chris

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Corporate Plan and Draft Cabinet Budget proposals 2019/20

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 18 February 2019. The Committee would also like me to thank Councillor Hinchey, Councillor Merry, Christine Slater 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, and Education.

The Committee welcomed the increases in funding for both Children's Services and Education, particularly at these difficult times. Following the consideration of 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 Committee considered that there was a clear link between Cardiff Ambition's four priorities, the Corporate Plan 2019-22 and Well Being Plan that has been developed in accordance with the statutory requirements of the well-being of Future generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Consultation

- The Committee expressed some concern around the validity of the consultation undertaken this year as it did not provide people with the opportunity to offer their views on the prioritisation of proposed savings and increase spending;

- The Committee also expressed its considerable unease at the meagre level of consultation and engagement with Children and Young People. The Members noted that you were also concerned, however the Committee recommended that future consultations must be reviewed, to ensure that Children and Young People, across the City, are provided with the opportunity to express their views on the Budget proposals and priorities of the Council.
- The Committee was also interested to hear about effectiveness of the delivery to selected streets, where previous response rates were poor, and requested that further details of which roads were targeted, be provided to the Committee.

Revenue Budget

- The Committee inquired about the level of achieved savings through the digital first programme, the Members were unclear as to what would be achieved, this year, and requested further information on the level of savings achieved in 2018/19 together with the anticipated savings for 2019/20, be included in the response to this letter.

Children's Services

- The Committee noted that the Children's Service Budget would be realigned for 2019/20, however the Members considered that the savings proposals were quite ambitious, at this early stage in the development of programmes to safely reduce the number of children entering local authority care changing the level and type of provision available in Cardiff, and sought assurance that the £2M would be achievable in 2019/20.
- The Committee discussed at some length the performance target for "The percentage of Children's Services Social Worker vacancies" which was set at 18%. The Committee was aware that the current level of Social Worker vacancies is 30%, as a result, the Committee recommended that a more realistic target should be included in the Corporate Plan, with the ambition to reduce the level to 18% over a few years. In addition the Committee requested that a

briefing report be presented to Committee, in the summer, on the development of the recruitment and retention strategy together with an updated workforce plan.

Education

- The Committee welcome the inclusion of a pressure bid for Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) provision, to the value of £500,000, and fully supports this pressure bid. The Members also expressed their interest in how this extra resources would be used to support young people who are educated other than at schools and requested that a briefing paper be presented to Committee, in the summer, setting out the plans for this funding.
- The Committee also noted that the Directorate had received additional grant funding across a number of areas, and requested that the additional resources should not just cover anticipated overspending, but should be also utilised to support service improvements.
- The Committee welcomed the announcement that the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and Travellers funding was being continued into 2019/20. However the Committee recommended that the Director utilise this additional year to prepare for the future loss of this grant.

School Transport

- The Members discussed the introduction of the Travel Support Allowances, and requested details, later in the year, on the uptake of the Travel Support Allowance, to determine its effectiveness.
- The Committee also noted that savings were proposed from the implementation of the Active Travel Plans for schools. The Members requested that the Directorate monitors Plans to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on the environment, through an increase in car journeys to school the Members and provides the Committee with a briefing on the implementation of these plans later in the year.

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 20 February and it is possible that these points will be raised with you in greater detail at that meeting.

I hope that these comments will have been of assistance to you and the Cabinet in considering the Budget proposals on Thursday 21 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', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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

Christine Salter, Section 151 Officer

Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services

Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong learning

Chair of Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Steve Gerrard, Network Operations Team Leader

Rita Rohman, PA Finance

Claire Deguara, Cabinet Office