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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** TUESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2021, 10.30 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)

**Correspondence following the Committee Meeting** *(Pages 3 - 14)*

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Ref: Scrutiny/AEJ/LB/CW/230221

24 February 2021

Councillor Chris Weaver,  
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance,  
Room 519,  
County Hall,  
Atlantic Wharf,  
Cardiff CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Weaver,

**Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 23 February 2021**

On behalf of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you, Councillor Hinchey, Councillor Merry and officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 23 February 2021 to consider the Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22 and Draft Corporate Plan 2021-24.

The meeting initially considered the Corporate Overview and was followed by scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and sections of the draft corporate plan relevant to the terms of reference of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. Presentations were made by officers from the Resources, Education & Lifelong Learning and Social Services Directorates. Following the presentations Members had the opportunity to question the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders and supporting officers. The comments and observations made by Members following this item are set out in this letter.

❖ **Corporate Overview**

Members would like to take opportunity to commend you, Cabinet colleagues and officers for your approach to the budget setting process, particularly during a very challenging year for the authority.

In terms of your Portfolio, Members felt there were a number of issues that would require your input and commitment going forward and would appreciate your views on.

Members were pleased with the realignments for Children's Services and the uplift of over 9%. Members now feel that this reflects realistic figures for the Service. Members asked whether the figures were sufficient to meet increasing demand. More than ever, Members felt that a robust budget monitoring regime be in place, and that this Scrutiny Committee receive regular updates on spend, demand and any challenges the service faces. Further views are set out under the Children's Services section.

In addition, Members asked about the likely additional costs in the period ahead relating to intervention for children and young people who may display increasing mental health challenges and the disproportionate effect this would have on disadvantaged children and young people and their communities. Members were reassured that Welsh Government had provided additional funding to date, and that the Council would continue lobby Welsh Government for funding so that schools budgets were not adversely affected by these additional costs. With this in mind, this Committee would welcome regular updates on this.

#### ❖ **Children's Services**

Members asked a number of questions around the increase in the budget and realignment of funds, efficiency savings in relation to residential placements, and some of the targets set for the corporate plan. Members would like to commend the work undertaken by the Service Area in relation to the recruitment of social work staff – we will continue to monitor this quarterly. In terms of more specific areas of questioning, Members wanted to feed back their views on the following:

**Prevention and Early Intervention** – Members asked about the importance of prevention and early intervention in relation to the behaviour of some children and young people in the community. Anti-social behaviour and the risk of young people being groomed for drugs etc. were still a major issue, and the “normalisation” of this behaviour increasing. Therefore, we would request that updates on this issue be provided to this Committee, but any

review include the Youth Service being fully engaged in finding solutions going forward. Members were informed that a review of commissioned services and the development of an Adolescent Strategy would be coming forward and we would appreciate a timeline on when this is likely to happen and be considered by this Scrutiny Committee.

**Placements** – Members asked questions around proposals for the new Assessment Centre, along with more general questions around placements within Cardiff. Arising from this, Members would request the following information:

- Homes for Children – how many buildings/ places are currently available in Cardiff
- Homes for Children - Number of Children and young people requiring this type of support
- Assessment Centre – What will be the availability via the Assessment Centre?
- Assessment Centre – what has been forecast as the likely uptake?
- What KPIs will be developed for this area

Members of this Scrutiny Committee will also build into its work programme a regular update on placements, including the progression of the Inquiry report on Out of County Placements.

**Youth Justice** – this Committee will continue to closely monitor the Youth Justice Service improvements, which will include any financial implications. Members heard that contracts in relation to this service are being reviewed and will welcome this information being considered by the Committee. In addition, Members asked around numbers in relation to longer-term reoffending rates and were informed that a report card was currently being updated, so would request a copy of the score card containing this information.

**Budget Realignment** – as already stated, Members were pleased with the uplift in the Children’s Services Budget, and the news that this would allow for more “creative” ways of working. We would like to reiterate that we would seek reassurance that the budget spend was done so creatively and effectively, focussed on preventative action; that efficiency savings were being achieved particularly with regard to savings identified as accruing from a reduction in residential placements through provision of an additional 25 places through the Young Person’s Gateway; and that the service was operating successfully, albeit within the context of ongoing uncertainty arising from the pandemic. We reiterate the request that this information be provided to this scrutiny on a regular basis.

#### ❖ **Education & Lifelong Learning**

Members of the Committee would like to echo the thanks from Councillor Merry to all Education and schools staff on their achievements during the past 12 months. It is very much appreciated by Members of this Committee.

Members very much welcomed the focus towards recovery by the LEA and Schools, including details of some of the longer-term commitments going forward. Members were satisfied by responses relating to school recovery, mental health, community focussed schools, the summer programme, youth service and digital deprivation. Members also stated that they were reassured by the efficiency savings and schools balances. Education recovery remains a priority issue for this Committee and would therefore request that we are kept well informed in how the school recovery proceeds over the next year with regular updates to this Committee. Some more detailed issues Members wished to feed-back included:

**Digital deprivation** – Members wish to commend the work that has been undertaken in this area and its impact in relation to tackling digital inequalities across Cardiff. Members felt assured that there will be a strong commitment to maintaining this.

**Youth Service** – The Committee welcomed the additional FRM funds available for the current year. However, Members raised the issue of sustainability of the service. As already stated, Youth Services play a critical role in prevention services and therefore, Members seek reassurances that the administration will commit to the sustainability of the Service and its role within prevention and early intervention. We request that regular updates are brought to this Committee.

**Mental Health** – at our Committee meeting in January, Members flagged the issue of mental health during discussions with Councillor Merry and officers on the Child Friendly City Programme. We await a response from Councillor Merry on this issue, but Members wish to reiterate its concerns regarding children and young people currently under the threshold for Services; the capacity of the CAHMS Service; the importance of promoting what has worked well for children and young people during the pandemic; and positive messaging to ensure that young people do not feel “worth less”.

**Summer Provision** – the Committee has already requested that the draft summer programme be considered by this Scrutiny Committee in due course.

To recap, I would request your views and/or additional information in relation to the following:

- Commitment to robustly monitoring the effectiveness of the Children’s Services budget and to commit to providing regular updates on this;
- Views on potential additional costs in the period ahead relating to intervention for children and young people who may display increasing mental health challenges and for a commitment to continue to lobby Welsh Government for funding; consider the capacity of provision and thresholds; and provide this Committee with regular updates on this;
- Prevention/Early Intervention - Details of when the reviews of commissioned services and the development of an Adolescent Strategy would be taking place;

- Placements - provide Members with the following information:
  - Homes for Children – how many buildings/ places are currently available in Cardiff
  - Homes for Children - Number of Children and young people requiring this type of support
  - Assessment Centre – What will be the availability via the Assessment Centre?
  - Assessment Centre – what has been forecast as the likely uptake?
  - What KPIs will be developed for this area
- Youth Justice – provide a copy of the score card setting out longer-term reoffending; and
- Youth Service – provide reassurances on the sustainability of the Youth Service.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

I should be grateful if you would consider the above comments and work with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders to provide a response to the content of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**  
**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

Cc: Councillor Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children & Families  
 Councillor Sarah Merry, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills  
 Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources  
 Ian Allwood, Head of Finance  
 Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
 Neil Hardee, Head of Services to Schools  
 Mike Tate, Assistant Director, Education & Lifelong Learning



Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities

Deborah Driffield, Director of Children's Services

Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services

Dylan Owen, Head of Cabinet Office

CYPSC Members

Cabinet Support Office

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Date: 24 February 2021

My Ref: SS/CYP/WILLOWSHS\_02\_21



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Councillor Sarah Merry  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 FEBRUARY 2021 -  
21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS, BAND B: REPLACEMENT WILLOWS HIGH SCHOOL**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of Cabinet proposals relating to replacement Willows High School. Please also pass on our thanks to Mel Godfrey, Michele Duddridge-Friedl and Richard Portas. The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

Members felt that, overall, the proposals appeared to be in their early stages and that detail was not yet available on some of the issues they raised. Members stated that they were keen to ensure that this proposal would meet the ambitions of the programme, and this Committee would therefore need to be kept informed and up-to-date with key developments, with them being considered by CYPSC when available. Further comments included:

**Demand for Places/ Future Proofing**

Members asked a number of questions in relation of demand for places at Willows, ensuring the proposal is future-proofed; 6 forms of entry; sufficiency of provision in faith schools and catchment areas. Members were informed that a Catchment Area review was to take place. Therefore, Members wish to request you provide an indication of when this is likely to take place and come to this Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

## **Changing Perceptions**

Linked with its impact on demand for places at the school, Members asked a number of questions around changing perceptions of Willows as an option. Members were satisfied with the responses received on this issue, but would be interested in being kept informed of any consultation/engagement on this issue to gauge public perceptions going forward.

## **Post-16 Provision**

Members enquired about the decision to not provide post-16 provision at the site and were informed that further research on options needed to take place. Please can you provide a likely timescale on this, and commit to bringing the options to us at policy/service development stage.

## **ALN Provision**

You were asked about ALN provision on site and Members were pleased that provision would be available. Officers informed Members that a wider ALN Strategy was being developed, and again would request that an indicative timescale be provided as to when the draft Strategy would be available for scrutiny.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

Members requested further information on future consultation and engagement on this proposal, stating that lessons from earlier consultation on Band B proposals be learned. Members would therefore reiterate the critical need for engagement with the whole community going forward, that this be continuous and that it include all groups affected by the proposals, including the gypsy and traveller community; and learning lounge. Members would welcome a timetable on proposed consultation and engagement on this proposal.

## **Transport Provision**

Members were concerned about the accessibility to and from the proposed school site and would therefore request that further information be provided in relation to proposed transport provision. This information should include details of safe walking and cycling routes.

## **Proposed Site**

In the closed session, Members examined issues relating to the proposed site at Lewis Road. Members stated that they were disappointed at the lack of detail in relation to this, and again, would request that they be kept up-to-date with

developments. Members also agreed that, should we return to “normal business”, a site visit take place for them to gain a better understanding of the area and scale of development.

During discussions, Members also questioned the suggestion that Splott Market could potentially operate from the school site and would recommend that other options for this be considered, due to the adverse effect the market could have on school grounds, particularly in relation to wear and tear of the site with heavy use of cars etc.

### **Financial Model**

Members asked about the financial model used for this proposal and were assured that a business justification case would have to be put forward to the Education Minister for approval. Members would again request that this Committee be included in the development of the business case to assist in the consideration of the security of the proposal and any associated risks.

Given the range of “unknowns” still surrounding this proposal, Members of this Scrutiny Committee would request that a detailed timetable, with anticipated key milestones be supplied to us to enable us to programme in key dates for us to monitor this project.

To recap, arising from this letter, the Committee **is requesting**:

- i. A detailed timetable on the whole proposal, be supplied to this Committee to enable us to programme in key dates for us to monitor this project. This should include:
  - A timeline and details of consultation and engagement on this proposal;
  - Key milestones in relation to the development of the business justification case;
  - Further details on the acquisition and development on the site, to potentially include a site visit by CYPSC Members; and
  - Timescales in relation to research relating to Post 16 Provision and commit to bringing the options to us at policy/service development stage
  
- ii. Information be provided in relation to proposed transport provision. This information should include details of safe walking and cycling routes.

- iii. Likely timescales for when the Catchment Area Review will take place.
- iv. Timescales for the ALN Strategy development including when it would be available for scrutiny.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

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

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**  
**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: CYPSC Members

Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Michelle Duddridge-Friedl, Operational Manager, Planning and Provision

Richard Portas, Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme

Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services

Joanne Watkins - Cabinet Officer Manager

Melanie Jackson, Cabinet Support Office

Helen Eager, PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning