

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),  
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Melbourne, Molik, Mia Rees and Singh

Co-opted Members: Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic Representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative) and Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative)

Mia John (Youth Council Representative)

### 11 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Phillips, Heather Joyce and Matthew Richards (Parent Governor Representative).

### 12 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

### 13 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 19 January were approved as a correct record.

### 14 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2024 & DRAFT BUDGETARY PROPOSALS 2021-2022

Members were provided with an opportunity to consider those items contained in the draft Corporate Plan and draft Budgetary Proposals which fall within the responsibility of this Committee.

It was noted that the proposals will be considered by Cabinet on Thursday 25 February, prior to being considered by Council on 4 March 2021.

### **Corporate Overview**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance); Chris Lee (Corporate Director Resources); Ian Allwood (Head of Finance); and Rob Green (Operational Manager – Schools and Budgetary Control) to the meeting.

Councillor Weaver provided in a statement in which he referred to the provisional settlement received just before Christmas which means a shorter budget process. As the settlement was better than anticipated the level of savings is lightly lower, as is the Council Tax.

Ian Allwood, Head of Finance provided Members with a presentation during which he outlined:

- Strategic Context
- Covid-19 – Looking forward
- Local Government Settlement
- Draft Revenue Budget (savings, employee imps, fees & charges)
- Consultation and Engagement
- Financial Resilience Mechanism
- Reserves
- HRA – Medium Term Financial Plan
- Capital Programme Development
- Capital Strategy 2021/22
- Detailed Capital Investment Programme and Funding

The Chairperson thanked the Head of Finance for his presentation. Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows.

- Members queried the efficiency savings for Education, assuming from that it relates to the achievement and inclusion central budget and whether officers confident that it will not have any adverse delivery within the Central Service. Members were advised that £2.5m of the £10.244m savings is on schools delegated spend, it is a 1% efficiency on the schools budget not on education. Previously 100% of the demographic growth was given to schools and then the non-demographic growth was capped which would include any pay settlement at 70%. It gives greater certainty when using the 1% efficiency and it has now been part of the budget setting mechanism for some 6 or 7 years now.
- Whilst Members noted the move towards the efficiency saving they queried whether there is now more monies and resources for schools, particularly bearing in mind the difficulties faced as a result of the pandemic. The Cabinet Member advised that it is true that this year, this budget and the financial position to be faced over the year ahead has more unknowns than any budget in recent years. Welsh Government have provided significant funding over this year to cover both the costs and lost income of Covid. Whilst there are some indications that some funding will be available in the next financial year, the full extent is unknown as the amount of any further costs ongoing. WG have already put in extra funding for school holiday activity and catch up sessions and the Council have provided an additional sum of £0.5m on top of that. School balances are also difficult, they are a snap shot of the position. Funding is not disappearing and not under threat. Education have done a good job in taking into account the anticipated costs that will have to be faced and the funding for schools needs to be looked at in conjunction with the funding for the Cardiff Commitment, Child Friendly City initiatives Youth Services and the summer catch up will be crucial this year.
- Members noted that some children and young people will face ongoing challenges beyond this year and that services both in school and out of

school that support education and well-being over a period of years are to be maintained. Interventions this year and the next few years are extremely important.

- Members asked whether the Schools budget has been exempted from any efficiency savings and with reference to the £8.8m of schools growth asked whether that represents a stand still budget for schools or whether there is any real terms growth within that figure. Members were advised that in terms of growth, it is not a stand still. It is £8.8m growth but it is net of the £2.5m efficiency which includes pay awards and pupil growth. It will be led by pupil numbers but there will be elements of need as well.
- Members noted that the Corporate Plan makes reference to the impact of pandemic on children's mental health and the disproportionate effect on disadvantaged groups. Will there be additional support for schools facing additional costs as a consequence or will they be expected fund from existing budgets. The Head of Finance indicated that there is likely to be additional support from Welsh Government. Additional support has already been received to cover school meals and school transport. The majority of schools have also claimed additional costs from Welsh Government. Those costs will be monitored and representations will be made to Welsh Government.
- Members discussed the Capital Budget, the investment in school buildings, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme and the Band B funding and queried whether that the budget is adequate to still fit to deliver the Band B priorities. The Cabinet Member advised that, in addition to the Band B Funding, further funding has been identified for investment in the rest of the school estate. The Band B scheme is critical. It is not just about the building of a new school, it is how it helps the education service, help young people get the most out of it. There must be a programme of generating capital receipts across the council which is monitored and driven forward of the next years.

Members noted that it is a critical and major part of the investment, it is alongside council house building scheme, and that it will remain a massive priority for the Council.

- Members commended the work undertaken with the realignments and noted the uplift of over 9% in Children's Services. Members noted that that amount took in account some of the costs incurred during the course of this year and know will be needed to support children coming out of the pandemic.

### **Children's Services**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children and Families); Sarah McGill (Corporate Director People & Communities); and Deborah Driffield (Director Children's Services) to the meeting.

Councillor Hinchey provided a statement in which he commended the commitment of the social care workforce and the increasing demands on the service since the first lockdown in March which has led to an increase in the number of contacts progressing to assessment, an increase in cases remaining open and requiring services, an increase in the number of children on the Child Protection Register, children looked after and children requiring care and support.

The Director of Children's Services provided Members with a presentation in which she outlined the escalating demand for Children's Services; the alignment of the service with the Corporate Plan; and the Budget Build Up, Budget Pay Inflation, Budget Growth, Budget Savings and Capital Programme 21/22 – 25/26.

The Chairperson thanked the Director of Children's Services for her presentation. Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows.

- Members asked, when looking at young people and their re-offending are there any KPI's going back over a longer period of time to consider the trends. The Director advised that the information would be available and that the information can be included into the report card which is being worked on.
- Members sought information as to the length of a time a young person would remain at the assessment centre, and what happens thereafter. Members were advised that the statement of purpose has been registered. Work is now being undertaken on the pathway into assessment and out again. The young person would stay at the assessment centre for a maximum 10 weeks, although they do not have to stay that long providing there is wrap around care in place. Also trying to temporarily register some of the support workers as foster carers so they could have overnight support with those young people.
- Members queried the accommodation sufficiency and what are the number of children's home that have been built and the number of placements that that would equate to. The Cabinet Member referred to previous discussions concerning the expansion of placements. The issue is about building the right type of placement and them having the right support. It is important that consideration is given to homes for children being spread across Cardiff. All Members need to embrace those young people into our community and help them to be part of the community. There are a number of examples across Cardiff; Ely, Heath and Cathays. The number of homes and the number of placements can be provided.

Members were advised that the numbers were increasing but it is about the right type of accommodation and working with partners to step people out of being looked after into the real world and being supported properly.

The Director provided some further information in relation to the current position regarding homes/placements; the assessment unit will be providing 4 beds for young people up to a maximum of 10 weeks; Oakway which has been registered as an emergency step up / step down pop up when

required; Crosslands which is a 6 bed which is currently subject to a feasibility study review so hopefully become two smaller units; and currently we looking for 2 more new builds to take on. We are also looking to take on more pop up / pop down so that we will have furnished accommodation we can use when we need it and a pool of staff we can draw on.

- Members referred to the 9% increase in Children's Services budget this year which equated to £6.7m, and the ever increasing demand on Children's Services and queried whether the budget will be sufficient to meet that increasing demand particularly in the context of the pandemic. Members were advised the increase in budget build will allow for more creative working to manage step down families into available support. There has to be time to carry out robust assessments, and make sure the children can be linked in where they can be.
- Members noted that whilst the authority does not appear to be able to attract the number of Social Workers required, there has been a large number of applications for the Social Worker assistant posts that had been advertised – 45 have been shortlisted and interviewed.
- Members asked about the reference to efficiency savings of just over £400,000 which related to funding additional places young person's gateway and the consequential reduction in the need for residential placements; and whether the need for financial mitigations has been anticipated should that target not be met. The Director advised that the biggest risk is the cultural change for Social Workers for them to feel confident to step those children down and that those children will be safe and secure and it is the right thing to do. The efficiency savings are all wrapped around the same thing; core planning; moving young people on; and making sure you are assessing and managing risk properly. Unless social work practise is right and is robust the reunification framework will not work.
- Once children step down, the majority are linking back in with their families, and it is therefore about supporting them on that journey and ensuring the Personal Advisors and support workers are signed up and understand that provision.
- Brief mention was made to the Youth Justice Strategy in the Corporate Plan and relative strategy, Members sought clarification as to whether there were any additional costs in implementing the strategy. There were additional costs associated with the restructure, for example an additional Operational Manager who has responsibility for Youth Justice. Consolidation is taking place in relation to the next tier of managers but that has already been built in. There will also be a review of the some of the contracts, for example the substance misuse contract.
- The Corporate Director advised that there have been exceptional demands on the service this year; one of the key pieces of work to be taking forward is understanding the financial implications of the implementation of the strategy and it being monitored to assess what that means in terms of the overall budget.

Members queried whether the services provided in house, which appear to be greater than the commissioned services, impacted on our ability to outreach into the community and gain community confidence in what we do. The Director advised that not all services are provided in house; all contracts – a large number of which are with external providers are just about to be reviewed. A resource hub is to be developed within children's services which will provide a better platform for Social Workers to access information. It is accepted that currently we are not making best use of what is already available in the community.

- Members raised concerns about substance abuse in young people in Cardiff becoming normalised and whether early intervention is working, what is the impact on the ground. Members were advised that the figures in Youth Justice were decreasing but it is accepted that there must be a clear prevention strategy, however it is not just substance misuse but all of their childhood experiences that impact on whether children become accommodated. There is a whole prevention strand within the Youth Justice Service; there is a Team Leader that covers that area around prevention. The Director would like to see all partners joining together; children's services; health and the police and referred to the work on a programme being undertaken with regional partners in relation to mental health called Starting Well.
- Members asked whether the setting of the target for care leavers being in education at 65% not ambitious enough. They were advised that the target was set as it was thought to be achievable but the Director hoped that the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Action plan will address this. A lot of the young people are nowhere near work ready and there has to be more creative thought as to what interests them and build on that and improve their aspirations.
- The Cabinet Member advised that there had been a briefing recently informing Members of the work being done with Early Help and what can be done to continue to build services.

### **Education and Lifelong Learning**

The Chair welcomed Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills); Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning); Neil Hardee (Head of Services to Schools); Suzanne Scarlett (Operational Manager, Partnerships and Performance); Richard Portas (Programme Director of SOP); and Phil Norton (Youth Service) to the meeting.

Councillor Merry provided a statement in which she thanked teaching, school and education staff for their efforts over the last year. It has been a very difficult time for all. Schools have of course been open even though not all pupils have been attending. In terms of the Corporate Plan the impact of Covid-19 has been recognised together with Child Friendly recovery - including playgrounds, innovation labs, the children's university and the Summer Holiday Enrichment Programme

(SHEP). It is also important to consider the Cardiff 2030 vision and Post-16 provision.

The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning provided Members with a presentation outlining the alignment of the service with the Corporate Plan; the Budget Build Up; Budget Pay Inflation; Budget Growth, Budget Savings and Capital Programme 21/22 – 25/26.

The Chairperson thanked the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning for her presentation. Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows.

- Members noted the disproportionate impact on learners the pandemic has highlighted; a third of children may not have access to a mobile device. Members queried whether the 70% target was as ambitious as it could be and whether the service will be working with schools going forward to maintain and further enhance the provision of digital services. Members were advised that 20,000 devices had been provided during the pandemic. Prior to the onset of the pandemic there were high aspirations to improve digital information in schools which had been assisted by a grant from Welsh Government; initially it involved ensuring the infrastructure was in place, thereafter provision of the devices and training. The pandemic shifted the focus of the funding and a review took place to identify children who were digitally deprived; those who either did not have access to a device or adequate Wi-Fi. MiFi devices have also been provided to children who were unable to access Wi-Fi in their homes.

A recent audit undertaken with schools concluded that 10,300 devices were provided to those children without devices, although we are aware that some are not using the devices provided and some families who do not have access to a device have not requested one. The figures are therefore fluid. All teachers were also provided with a new laptop in the summer also.

An ICT strategy has been worked up with Schools Stakeholders; our aspiration is that every children above foundation phase will have a device. For foundation phase, one device for every two children. The aim is to get all schools using the home platform. In the last month Welsh Government have purchased 50,000 devices for all Welsh local authorities; Cardiff will receive 6,392 of those devices.

The ask of schools going forward is about 2.5% of the schools delegated budget, which is the equivalent to schools collectively spending £25,000 for every £1m spend on the schools delegated budget to ensure that the infrastructure is adequate; reaching the device ratio aspirations; ensuring the sustainability of the Mi-Fi devices for those who do not have access to adequate Wi-Fi in the house; and improving audio visual infrastructure in schools.

- Members queried, as seen from the Budget Strategy and Corporate Plan, the reference to the Cardiff Commitment and the element relating to youth justice, how is the funding to be used. Members were advised that Youth

Services have come up with a string of ways that it could be spent, the Cabinet Member would like to see an improvement in how the Youth Services operate over the next year and to see a widening of the more fluid engagement with young people in terms of some of the longer term issues arising from the last year.

Members noted that at present the funding is in the FRM rather than in the base budget but that there is money in the budget for 1:1 mentoring which is also important.

- Officers advised that the young people have been benefiting from the open access provision, in particular the virtual youth clubs. There has been a digital senior youth worker in place over the last 12 months; there has been enormous benefits from that; a Q&A session was organised with Mark Drakeford; and a number of well-being challenges on line. There has also been a link up with the Prevent Strategy.

Pop up youth clubs is another consideration, literally driving to different parts of city on different nights. This will allow the temporary expansion of part time youth workers contracts. It will help respond to different issues in different parts of the city which reassures the city that there are people working with young people and also getting the feedback from youth people in terms of what could be available longer term. There could also be expansion of the youth innovation grant reach. A lot of these things could be done by expanding temporary contracts.

- Members enquired, with reference to the schools efficiency target, as to whether the £2.54 m in the budget equates to 1% of the schools delegated budget and whether or not that is a realistic target with the pressures that the Covid recovery will bring. Members were advised that the 1% has been there for a number of years. It is realistic and it will be interesting to look at the size of school balances at the end of this financial year. One of the impacts of the schools being closed is that they have been able to make some quite significant efficiencies in some areas and schools will end the year with quite substantial buffers.
- Members asked that when looking at summer holiday provision that the language and narrative is considered carefully to ensure that a generation is not stigmatised by making them think they are worth less. The Cabinet Member advised that she believed that the language used is extremely important - children will not be sat down at a desk looking at school with a black board, it will not happen. It is vital to ensure that our children and young people are not left with the message that they have no chance of ever reaching their potential because of Covid. It is important that they hear that. There needs to be a variety of provision to suit different children and working with partners we can widen the breath of the support.

Members sought clarification as to whether or not the SHEP programme was compulsory, whether it is available to everyone and how is it shaping up? With reference to secondary school provision there was some work done during the year before last; it is more important with the secondary school provision to make it a more youth service based approach. Further,



it if it all took place at school it may inhibit the number of young people who would engage with the programme.

- Members asked for further information in relation to the child friendly recovery and referencing to mental health and wellbeing; what will provision going to look like; will it be 5 day a week access to someone in the school or will it be external. Members also asked about the current waiting list for CAHMS. Members were advised that a report has been prepared for Cabinet which sets out some of the immediate issues and how they are to be addressed. A survey of Head Teachers has been conducted to establish what support they are seeking; it requires a joint response across Council departments, Education, Early Help, School based Counselling and colleagues in mental health. A meeting has been arranged to look at providing the optimum levels of support into schools. It is also important that young people are consulted with and that their voices are heard.

In relation to CAHMS, there has been a 30% increase in demand for primary service and increased waiting times as expected at present. In October, the service was hitting 28 days to assessment target but now closer to 56 days. Waiting times for specialist services are now up to about 24 weeks unfortunately. It was noted that those figures do not include those young people do not meet the threshold for CAHMS involvement. It is not known whether a private diagnosis would be acceptable.

- Members noted the reference to the building of relationships with community focused schools in the Corporate Plan and were advised that head teachers have reported that the relationship with the Community has improved during the pandemic. They have had to depend on parents being primary educators; that relationship has improved in most circumstances. Emphasis is on driving forward a community focussed school approach as schools begin to re-open. A plan does need to be developed, but in reality it is already being done and it needs to be built on.
- Members expressed concern that schools may be penalised for their current budget surplus and noted that there will be discussions about this at the up and coming Budget Forum meeting. Schools do have lists of projects, there will be efforts not to penalise schools. Previously we have met with schools to discuss the projects to ensure that those projects are sensible and will be spent within a reasonable time. There will be some schools where some of the surplus balance will be retained, obviously for that school. That is more when the balance has been increased over a number of years.
- Members asked about the reduction in the Consortium budget; the reasons for the reduction; where have the savings been made; and the impact going forward. The Director advised that the reduction is an efficiency saving, in terms of the scale of budget allocation has the saving will have little impact. There are now also new ways of working, for example meeting over Teams.

AGREED – that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

15 : SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN - ADAMSDOWN & SPLOTT

***Members were advised that Appendices 6, 7, 8 & 9 of the Cabinet Report contains exempt information of the description contained in Paragraphs 14 and 21 of Parts 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.***

The Chair welcomed Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills); Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning); Neil Hardee (Head of Services to Schools); Suzanne Scarlett (Operational Manager, Partnerships and Performance); Richard Portas (Programme Director of SOP); and Michele Duddrige-Friedl (Operational Manager, Planning & Provision) to the meeting.

Councillor Merry was invited to make a statement during which she briefly referred to the history; the original plan was to rebuild Willows High School on the site at Tremorfa Park, St Albans RC Primary school was to be closed and Baden Powell Primary School and Tremorfa nursery was to be expanded. However, St Albans is no longer to be closed and further proposals had to be considered. The proposal now is to relocate Willows High School on a site and Lewis Road.

The Programme Director provided Members with a brief outline:

- The recommendation to Cabinet is to acquire land at Lewis Road;
- To provide a report, in due course, providing responses following an engagement exercise rather than a consultation;
- The new location is within a mile radius of the existing site;
- The school will have six forms of entry (FE), there will not be a sixth form;
- In terms of education it is an opportunity for a new vision and there is an opportunity to rebrand.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the non-confidential information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows.

- Members referred to the previous closure of high schools due to falling numbers, the fact that those numbers rose again and there are currently difficulties with the number of schools places, the example being Eastern High School. Members also referred to the reduced forms of entry (FE) number in the new proposals for Willows High School. Members were advised that discussions are taking place regarding the importance of future proofing schools as they are rebuilt to accommodate growth; business cases have to be written and submitted to Welsh Government and critical forensic analysis of pupil numbers and projections must also take place.

There are faith schools and a Welsh Medium school in the area which were considered when assessing the 6 FE for Willows High School. Members referred to the plans for capacity at Cathays High School and were advised that the position with Cathays and Willows High Schools are

different and have a different context. No school is the same; they need to respond to different aspirations. Officers advised that a 6 FE was appropriate in all the circumstances.

- Members asked about the longer term challenges in retaining local families and noted that in the original proposal significant emphasis was placed upon post 16 provision and what that provision might involve, there had also been strong support in the post 16 element in the consultation. This proposal is less specific. Members were advised that it is not felt that a 6 FE school would be able to support a post 16 that is large enough to be financially viable by itself. It is important to ensure that any proposal moving forward is sustainable. It is important to go through the education commissioning process to work out what is important for all involved. The programme needs to be enhanced and robust. It is important to go through the process locally to work out what the best solution may be. There are lots of different opportunities the school is presented with.
- Members sought confirmation about ALN provision on the new site, it was noted that Willows High School does have a number of children who are educated other than at school (EOTAS). Members were advised that there needs to be consultation with SRB/ALN provision elements of the process which run parallel to the engagement process. It will form part of the ALN strategy and will need to be considered by Cabinet in due course. Members noted that it is important to ensure that there is the correct balance of SRB/ALN provision distributed across the city.

Members asked for clarification about the number of children who attend faith schools in that area, which faith schools they attended and whether those faith schools can cope with those numbers. Members were advised that St Iltyd's continue to have spaces, they have increased their Pupil Admission Number (PAN) to 7 FE. There is also St Teilos in that area and some do go across to Bishop of Llandaff, although very few. A few also go to Corpus Christi depending on where they live and the primary school they attended previously. It is expected going forward that there will be a sufficiency of places, although preferences sometimes change if there is a new school.

- Members referred to the number of pupils who attend Marlborough and Howardian Primary Schools who are unable to access places at Cardiff High School and have to reluctantly attend Willows High School. How is the perception of a school to be changed if it is moved further away? Members were advised that a strategy has to be devised which revolutionises the perception of the school within its local community. Eastern High School is an example of schools that's perception has changed massively within the community. Fitzalan is in the same position, although a new school was not required in that instance. They both have in catchment supply which exceeds demand. Every school needs to be trusted and in touch with its local community and responding to what its community requires. It's important that parents have a good understanding of all the schools on offer not just those in their local areas. Parents will look around, they want to consider what is important to them in their own personal circumstances. Catchment areas will also need to be considered

bearing in mind the development, although it needs to be considered once the full picture is known.

- Members referred to the Cardiff West and Fitzalan High Schools, in particular in relation to engagement and the sites. Members were advised that lessons have been learned. The engagement exercise will be different as the formal consultation process does not have to be followed, it provides an opportunity to engage on the important issues for parents and the community. The method of engagement will also be different considering the current pandemic and the opportunities that has presented.

The committee moved into closed session to discuss the confidential appendices.

AGREED – that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

#### 16 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

#### 17 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Monday 15 March 2021

The meeting terminated at 3.45 pm