

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins and Molik

Co-opted Members: Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative)
and Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative)

110 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative), Cllr Mia Rees, Councillor Mike Phillips and Mia John (Cardiff Youth Council Representative).

111 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

112 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 18 January were approved as a correct record of the meeting as proposed by Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative) and seconded by Cllr Robert Hopkins.

113 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2022 - 2025 & DRAFT BUDGETARY PROPOSALS 2022 - 2023

The Chair welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance), Chris Lee (Corporate Director, Resources), Ian Allwood (Head of Finance) and Matthew Jones (Group Accountant) to the meeting to provide Members with a **Corporate Overview** of the draft budget proposals.

Members were provided with a presentation outlining:

- the Corporate Plan;
- Covid 19 – the current year context and Welsh Government (WG) support;
- the provisional settlement overview;
- the draft revenue budget, including savings, employee implications of savings and policy growth, fees and charges;
- Use of the financial resilience mechanism in 2021/22;
- Reserves;
- the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 – 2026/27 and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA);
- Capital Programme Development for 2022/23 – 2026/27;
- Cardiff Council's Capital Strategy 2022/23; and
- The Capital Investment Programme 2022/23 – 2026/27 and funding

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

- Members sought information as to whether the withdrawal of EU funding as a result of Brexit was already having an effect or would only make an impact in future years. Members were advised that it was difficult to distinguish between the impacts of Brexit and of Covid. There have been issues with labour shortages and movement of goods across national boundaries that have affected Council programmes. Officers advised that money had been set aside to cover both short- and long-term price pressures.
- Members sought clarification on whether the £9.3 million uplift to the delegated schools budget represented a real-term increase or was accounted for by the growth in pupil numbers and employee costs. Members were advised that it reflected the rise in pupil numbers.
- Members queried whether the end of the Hardship Fund meant that ongoing costs would have to be covered by school budgets. Members were advised that in all services the budget accounted for new standards but where there were significant pressures on PPE or cleaning regimes for example these would be covered in part by contingency.
- Members sought clarification on the implications of the national policy on free school meals and when they would become apparent, and further what the implications on the Pupil Development Grant would be. Members were advised that the full details were not yet apparent but that the Welsh Government (WG) aspiration appeared to be that no Local Authorities would be worse off as a result of the policy. The transition to free school meals would be phased. The Council is continuing to engage with WG for further details.
- Members asked when WG was likely to give earlier notice on grants coming into schools, and whether there would be relaxation on schools recording budget surpluses. Members were advised that school budget surpluses were, in some cases, linked to late receipt of grants, and that this could be repeated. The Council is pragmatic about budget surpluses held as a result of receipt of additional money, but in rare cases, where a school does not have a plan for use of the surplus, the Council could not rule out intervention.
- Members discussed the engagement of young people in the budget consultation and how the impact of money spent on young people's projects would be measured. Members were advised that while the response to the budget consultation had been disappointing, account was taken of all available information on the impact of the pandemic on young people. In

relation to performance and outcomes, information is sought from external bodies as well as Council sources in order to identify the most effective initiatives.

- In relation to Children's Services, Members sought clarification on the savings that were anticipated from external spend. Members were advised that the principal savings were expected to arise from existing policies in relation to foster placements and different levels of preventative care.
- Members enquired about the resilience of the revenue for the 21st Century Schools programme. Members were advised that the Capital Programme had been tested for resilience. The £40 million capital target has been in place for a number of years and includes school and other assets. The Council has been prudent in its assumptions on when it will be delivered. Sensitivity analysis regarding borrowing rates has been carried out. In the school programme there has been some significant slippage regarding asset renewal and the priority is to address this. In relation to the SOP there have been conversations with WG which has enabled the purchase of the Ty Glas site.
- Members sought clarification in respect of the net budget for Children's Services for 2022-23 and how it compares with the previous year. Members were advised that there was a significant increase; £8.4 million. There have been conversations between Children's Services and Accountancy regarding planning and service delivery and calculating costs, presumed savings and required investments.
- Members sought clarification on staffing in Children's Services. Members were assured that investment in additional resources was already costed in.
- Members enquired as to when the findings of the Progressive Review into Youth Services would be available to inform decisions about how money set aside under the Financial Resilience Mechanism might best be used, and whether annual one-off additional spending on Youth Services would be continued. Members were advised that the review would change the way Youth Services operates. There has been one-off additional spending over the past 2 years due to the challenging circumstances of the pandemic.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children and Families) and Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services) to the meeting to provide Members with information in relation to the budget proposals and relevant parts of the Corporate Plan as they relate to **Children's Services**.

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

- Members enquired about the implications on the Council's work with children's home providers and out of county placements of the WG's commitment to end profit in the children's care sector. Members were advised that a wide range of provision had been opened over the past year. There was increased emphasis from WG on providing resources for children's care provision. Representations had been made to WG by the heads of Children's Services across Wales indicating that whilst there was agreement in principle with the policy it was important that it was phased in to avoid a shortfall in provision. Research is being undertaken to determine a sustainable model for Cardiff. Meetings had been set up with providers to explore various models and reassure providers of the Council's continuing desire to work with them. The aim is to work towards improving outcomes for children. Enterprises in the private and not-for-profit sectors have the experience to assist the Council in setting up its own care homes. A national training programme will be required to address staffing shortages and competition for staff between local authorities.
- Members were advised that the Council was heavily reliant on the independent sector for fostering and as a consequence it is not be possible to move to an all in-house model in a short time scale without a significant increase in funding. Concerns had been expressed in the media about the lack of funding to keep children in the family. It is important to focus on the needs of families with children with disabilities.
- Members enquired about the risk that efficiency savings related to the Reviewing Hubs might not be achieved. Members were reminded that the role of the Reviewing Hubs was being expanded to encompass all children on care plans with the aim of providing the appropriate level of support at the earliest opportunity. There are risks associated with the availability of support and staffing shortages.
- Members enquired about the risks associated with appropriate placement funding and shifting the balance of care. Members were advised that in recent weeks the market has become more challenging and children have had to be placed further afield. The Council continues to monitor the market on a weekly basis.
- Members questioned the number of additional places for children delivered in the current year and the plans for the next year. Officers advised that Oakway provides 2 emergency places for children awaiting their 12-week assessment. The Council is using its capital resources to provide additional short-term emergency and respite accommodation. In addition, the Council is adopting the with North Yorkshire Model to develop Edge of Care residential accommodation and a 'hub and spoke' model to provide children moving on from care with multi-agency wraparound support. There have additionally been negotiations

with 2 national providers to secure access to further beds.

- Members were pleased to note the successful recruitment of staff but sought further information on the retention of staff. Officers commended the work of staff involved in recruitment. Members were advised that retention had been positive overall; every effort was made to encourage members of staff to remain in post but there was always some natural churn. Residential staff were now included in recruitment and retention and more people had come forward to work in children's homes.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills), Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning), Mike Tate (Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning), Neil Hardee (Head of Services to Schools) and Suzanne Scarlett (Operational Manager, Partnerships and Performance) to the meeting to provide Members with information in relation to the budget proposals and relevant parts of the Corporate Plan as they relate to **Education**.

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

- Members sought an update on the replacement measure for Pupil Development Grant. Members were advised that there was no further information from WG. Cabinet Members have raised the matter with Ministers. While there is support for the principle it is imperative that additional resources be provided.
- Members discussed whether the Council was being sufficiently bold in their planning for additional ALN places. Officers advised that the Council was working towards the information contained in the available data. Future growth is anticipated, and the Council will respond appropriately. It is anticipated that the establishment of further provision will be constrained by the physical characteristics of sites.
- Members commended the Directorate on a well-deserved positive Estyn report. Members referred to the Estyn recommendation for additional counselling support and enquired about the resources required to meet that additional support, and whether that support was sustainable. Officers advised that additionality is being built into the service. The Council will be responding to the recommendation in due course.
- Members sought clarification as to when the outcome of the progressive review of youth services would be available which will inform the deployment of additional resources. Officers advised that the review would commence on 7 March 2022; the first phase would focus on the deployment of additional resources received in the Budget settlement and will be undertaken in the first 2 weeks of March.

- Members enquired as to whether the evaluation of the Summer of Smiles was available and how the programme was expected to be developed following that evaluation. Officers advised that the evaluation would be forwarded to the Committee once it was available. The evaluation will feed into the forthcoming summer activities. It is unlikely that there will be match funding from WG this year and the activities will therefore be targeted on supporting the most vulnerable children and young people in the city.
- Members sought clarification on the budgetary proportion of Children's Services and SEN out of county placements. Officers advised that the information was not available but that where a child was placed out of county and had a Statement of SEN the cost of meeting those needs was met by the host authority.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward.

114 : EDUCATION PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills), Mike Tate (Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning) and Suzanne Scarlett (Operational Manager, Partnerships and Performance) to the meeting in relation to this item.

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

- Members sought clarification on how the Council planned to take forward its work with the Central South Consortium to ensure it is focused on Cardiff's priorities, particularly in relation to the Cardiff Commitment and the provision for vulnerable learners. Officers advised that the Council had met with senior leaders in the Consortium and shared with them its objectives which will feed into performance objectives for schools.
- Members enquired as to whether senior managers had discussed with head teachers and WG how schools will address the absence of a national accountability and assessment framework. Officers advised that the Council now has a more intelligent system for evaluating schools and that the new accountability and assessment framework would be built into it when it became available. The Council is in discussion with WG on the progress of the new framework.
- Members discussed the support being provided to schools to engage in the Rights Respecting Schools programme with more than 70 schools involved. The strength and capacity of governing bodies is being built to enable them to participate in holding

schools to account. The Council is working with the Swansea University Human Rights Observatory and UNICEF UK to ensure the proper evaluation of its work on children's rights.

- Members queried what was preventing the remaining schools joining the Rights Respecting Schools programme. Officers advised that participation in the programme was gradually increasing. Support was being offered to schools to enable them to engage in the programme and assist them in progressing through its stages. Subsidies have been offered to help with registration fees. The Council is confident that all schools will eventually join the programme.
- Members requested information about the communication with parents in relation to the evaluation of schools and reform of ALN provision. Officers advised that the evaluation system is more intelligent and requires careful communication with parents. A school-based approach will be needed to ensure that parents understand the new system. Monitoring indicates that 92% of schools are ready for the ALN reform. The ALN reform is school is being supported by the Directorate and Central South Consortium.
- Members enquired about progress in respect of community-focused schools and the Team around the Schools approach. Officers advised that pilots were currently being undertaken at 3 schools. Capacity for future rollout would need to be assessed. There will need to be a link with the locality-based approach of Children's Services.
- Members asked about the roll-out and implementation of the Cardiff 2030 strategy and were advised that the strategy was being reassessed in the light of the pandemic. The intention is not to alter the vision but to restate the short to medium term objectives to achieve the greatest impact in light of current knowledge. The Statement of Intent will be republished with a 3-year operational plan in readiness for the new academic year.
- Members sought information about the work being undertaken to ensure coordination between secondary schools and primary schools pursuing the new curriculum. Officers advised that the new curriculum was locality based, so primary and secondary schools in the same cluster will be working on a similar skills-based curriculum. Collaborative working between both Primary and Secondary schools is important in constructing the new curriculum. The curriculum may vary between different primary schools while having similar components. Although the implementation has been deferred schools remain focused on working towards it.
- Members were advised that there was a governor training tool that is used to audit the training required by governors.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward.

115 : SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING: CARDIFF WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP)

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills), Mike Tate (Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning) Richard Portas (Director of Schools Organisation Planning) and Catherine Canning (Policy Officer for School Organisational Planning) to the meeting in relation to this item.

The Cabinet report seeks authorisation to proceed to submit the final WESP to WG for approval following the completed public consultation.

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

- Members enquired about the capacity in terms of physical resources to deliver against the WESP targets. Officers advised that the target of 50% of schools being Welsh medium was within the context of a declining birth rate. In terms of buildings and sites it was a matter of looking at proposals sensibly within this context.
- Members discussed expanding Welsh Medium education provision beyond the 3-18 age range, including in higher education and linking to the world of work. Officers advised that this was covered by Outcome 5 of the WESP. Action plans will be put in place by September 2022 and there will be a formal review after 2 years. There will be close liaison with universities and colleges in developing the proposals. Research is required to discover the learning pathways and decision making in early years and throughout education and the transition to work. The Council provides research, planning and action elements. The 10-year plan provides an opportunity for long-term strategic planning.
- Members expressed concerns about what was required to upskill the teaching profession to be able to deliver the WESP targets, particularly in the context of Covid. Officers advised that a National Workforce Development Plan was expected within a few months. There is currently a lack of consistent methods to record whether members of the teaching workforce can either teach Welsh or teach fluently in Welsh. Research is required to discover a consistent recording method and feed the information into the national policy position.

- Members sought information on plans to recruit good Welsh-speaking teachers into English medium schools. Officers advised that in considering expansion of Welsh medium education the workforce element has to be borne in mind and sustainable growth in training across Wales was required. There is a strong immersion unit for teaching staff and there is the opportunity to broaden its scope.
- Members noted that the training and recruitment of Welsh-speaking teachers was a Wales-wide problem, and that Cardiff was ahead of some other LAs in addressing it. It is not desirable to draw teachers from other LAs so a national approach is required. It is also important to have good senior leaders in Welsh medium education.
- Members referred to the model being trialled at Plasdwr for enhanced Welsh through the English stream and sought information both on how progress would be monitored and on plans to further develop and extend the model. Officers advised that good progress was being made on the school. The Council was looking to map out the model in more detail ahead of the appointment of a head teacher. The model is based on research from the Basque country where a number of different models have been used to successfully grow use of the Basque language to high levels. Discussions are underway around external research into the success of the model.
- Members noted that even a top-grade GCSE results in Welsh did not necessarily make an English first language student confident in using Welsh. There are different approaches to acquiring the language practiced in Welsh and English medium schools. It is not desirable for a large proportion of the population to feel disadvantaged because of their inability or lack of confidence in using the language.
- Members asked whether the Action Plans due by September 2022 would contain greater detail on how the WESP outcomes would be achieved than in the Strategic Plan. Officers advised that the document was a 10-year strategic plan and so providing full details on all actions were not possible. However, greater clarity has now been provided. The Action Plans need to be submitted and approved by Welsh Government by September 2022. The Strategic Plan contains details about how the Action Plans will be set out.
- Members enquired about the strategy of making Welsh medium the prime option presented to parents considering an education place, and ensuring parents had confidence in continuing in the Welsh medium from nursery through to secondary school. Officers referred to the high transfer rate from Welsh to English medium and highlighted the importance of promoting Welsh medium education and the wider context of support for the Welsh

medium option.

- Members discussed the need for understanding the reasons parents were not progressing their children into Welsh medium secondary education, as parents might have valid concerns that needed to be addressed. Officers advised that a tailored approach was required with particular research into communities with a low take-up of Welsh medium to assess how take-up might be raised.
- Members enquired about research from Welsh speaking teachers about their learning pathways. Officers advised that a rounded approach to research was being undertaken and that the suggestion would be considered.
- Members discussed whether it was intended to raise the number of fluent Welsh speakers or to accept a number of people who had some understanding of Welsh but lacked confidence in using it. Officers advised that there needed to be a balance between growing Welsh within the English medium and immersion options. The Plasdwr model is intended to increase Welsh fluency within the English medium sector and there is an expectation that there will be significant amount of teaching in Welsh within the model.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward.

116 : 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.

117 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled.

118 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Tuesday 1 March 2022 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams.

The meeting terminated at 2.35 pm