

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),
Councillors Cunnah, Joyce, Naughton, Phillips, Mia Rees, Singh and
Taylor

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

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cunnah and Melbourne, Patricia Arlotte, Matthew Richards, and Claire Marchant (Director of Social Services)

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

COUNCILLOR	ITEM NUMBER	NATURE OF INTEREST
M Phillips	3	Personal – Family Members receives ALN support

3 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2023 AND DRAFT PROPOSALS 2020-2021

The Committee received a report providing context for the scrutiny of those sections of the Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2020 – 2023 and the Draft Cabinet Budget Proposals 2020 – 2021 as they relate to those functions under the remit of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that in July 2017 the Cabinet set out a policy programme and associated delivery commitments entitled 'Cabinet Ambition'. This established the Cabinet's key priorities for the municipal term and outlining a programme to continue to drive the city economy forward, whilst ensuring the benefits of success are felt by all residents. Capital Ambition was refreshed in February 2020 to reflect the continuing commitments for the administration.

The Corporate Plan and the Well-Being Plan are key documents in delivering Capital Ambition as they translate the administrations priorities into deliverable objectives. The Well-Being of Future Generations Act also places a statutory duty on the Council to publish well-being objectives. The Council and the Public Service Board have adopted the same 7 wellbeing objectives reflecting their shared aspirations for the City. The Corporate Plan is structured around Capital Ambition priorities and the 7 well-being objectives.

The Corporate Plan also sets out the performance measures and targets that will enable the Council and its scrutiny committees to monitor delivery.

The report provided a summary of the budgetary position in terms of the resources available to cover base expenditure, commitments and budget realignments. Savings of £9.764 million are required as follows: £5.048 million from efficiency savings; £2.541 million from income generation; and £2.175 million from service change. The report provided an indication of the level of savings required in each directorate and as a percentage of the overall savings required.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance), Chris Lee (Corporate Director Resources) and Ian Allwood (Head of Finance) to the meeting. Ian Allwood provided Members with a presentation.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, seek clarification or raise questions:

- Members discussed the reliance placed on grant funding in the short term and asked how the risks were judged. The Cabinet Member stated that it was a challenge but there was regular communication with Welsh Government. The purpose of short term funding was to ensure that it was spent on the specific service. Communication was also necessary to ensure that there is significant notice if there are going to be changes. The Corporate Director indicated that a medium plan is presented, in which certain assumptions are made. There will be reflection on the medium term requirements depending on the outcome of the UK budget in March of this year.
- Members expressed concern that the digitisation programme did not reflect the same level of digitisation proposals as in previous budgets and requested information as to how we deliver more savings and alleviate pressure from staff. Members noted that that it had proved challenging and that future proposals would need to be more specific.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People & Communities) and Deborah Driffield (Assistant Director, Children's Services) to the meeting. The Assistant Director provided Members with a presentation.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, seek clarification or raise questions:

- Members asked whether £900k savings was achievable bearing in mind the existing pressures and noted that having the residential assessment unit and better assessments it had already led to a reduction in the costs of placements.
- Members noted the numbers of foster carers being assessed and that the drop out was fairly low was the initial assessment had taken place, it would appear to be if there is a change in the family circumstances. Currently the time lapse between sign up and approval was approximately 6 months.
- Members sought information in relation to the number of placements within a 20 mile radius. The Cabinet Member stated that there is a target of 75%. The Assistant Director advised that the locations are now mapped and information can be provided.

- Members discussed the category and costs of placements and were advised that different providers offer different services and there are different rates depending on location. The costs can sometimes be quite significant and can also depend on the number of children with the provider. A Panel has been set up to consider all those out of county placements and ascertain whether they can be brought home, or brought nearer to Cardiff before returning home.
- Members noted the importance of join up and that a new board had been established to under the needs coming from social care across the board. It is important to understand the model required.
- Members referred to the recruitment of two youth people's emotional health and well-being specialists and asked how those posts would be funded. They would be funded from the Integrated Care Fund, which will be administered by the Regional Partnership Board. It is hoped that they will be in post by June of this year. They will be based in Cardiff Schools.
- Members asked about the degree of consultation with young people bearing in mind the amount of savings needed and changes within the service. They were advised that a participation framework is being drafted which is currently in its early stages. Further that whilst children have been involved in developing the strategy, they were not involved in the budget strategy.
- Members asked for further information in relation to the performance measures information provided.
- Members discussed the contingency fund and whether it should have been allocated bearing in mind the struggle to achieve the budget savings over previous years. Members noted that there had been overspends previously and that there are pressures on all local authorities.
- Members welcomed the introduction of the Social Worker Market Supplement and noted that it was for a 12 months period. Officers advised that it the implementation and affect would be monitored closely and that it is believed that the biggest impact will be around retention as opposed to recruitment.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills, Nick Batchelar (Director, Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Tate (Assistant Director, Education and Lifelong Learning) and Neil Hardee (Head of Performance Resources and Services) to the meeting. Members were provided with a presentation.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, seek clarification or raise questions:

- Members noted the increase in the cost of school transport; the bus pass and asked how the figure was calculated. Members were advised that part of the budget realignment has seen an increase in the

transport budget. However, the costs are still subsidised. Members expressed concern that the increase in costs could mean an increase in traffic on the roads, it would also have a knock on effect on those children who are eligible for Free School Meals; families may have to consider which children to send to school. The Cabinet Member stated that whilst being able to offer those children free school bus passes, any financial support provided has to be available to every child who is eligible across the city.

- Members discussed the school based counselling saving of £100k and the reasons why it would not have any impact on service provision. Members were advised that the figures related to management savings. It was accepted that there are pressures on the Counselling services however other funding is being considered, for example next year an additional grant has been identified. The whole school approach grant whilst will held to increase awareness of the mental health challenge and will provide further intervention and support for individual schools. Concern was raised that delivery of the counselling service needs to be undertaken now, the Assistant Director advised that consideration is already being given to extending provision and making sure that it is targeted and that the best value is being obtained.

Members asked whether there is enough capacity to deliver the grants and were advised that when Local authorities are notified of additional grants late in the year it does of course make it more difficult to scale up capacity. At the end of last year additional grant monies were prioritised against building up human resource but it needs to be done in a sensible target way bearing in mind that the continuation of the funding is uncertain.

- Members welcomed the creation of seven new youth worker posts and requested information as to where they would be based and their specific roles and responsibilities. They were advised the exact roles had not yet be determined due to the late confirmation of funding.
- Members discussed the domestic abuse performance indicator and that the compliance of teaching staff was low. Members noted that whilst there is belief that Headteachers do take it seriously, there should be questions if there is a trail of non-compliance. What is important is to ensure that there is proactive engaged work with parents and families.
- Members welcomed the commitment to the period dignity grant and queried its scope. Officers advised that young people will be involved in the evaluation of tenders due at the end of the month. Sustainable products were discussed, the Cabinet Member felt that whilst it is important to promote these products and encourage girls to think differently about using reusable products, there should be caveats about how those products are used. It is very important to listen to young people about what they want to use rather than imposing it on them.

- Members expressed concern that there did not appear to be an indicator to measure the progress and achievements of children who were EOTAS. It can be difficult to create a KPI link because it is about every individual pupil and having a discussion about an individual pupil journey. It is important to talk about appropriate education rather than alternative education. A flexible set of indicators is needed as it is important that we increase the reach of EOTAS, and reduce the overall number.

4 : 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.

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

5 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no urgent items tabled at the meeting.

6 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Committee is on Tuesday 10 March 2020 at 4.30 pm.

The meeting terminated at 2.30 pm

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