

SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE

Cyf/My Ref: CM49269

Eich Cyf/Your Ref: Scrutiny/AEJ/LB/CW/010323

Dyddiad/Date: 2 March 2023

Councillor Lee Bridgeman
Chairperson Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
City of Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Lee

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 28 February 2023 Draft Budget Proposals 2023/24

Thank you for your letter dated 1 March 2023 and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 2 March 2023.

The following paragraphs address each of the Committee's further information requests:

Budget Consultation

Consultation on the Council's budget proposals for 2023/24 ran from 23rd December 2022 to 29th January 2023. The survey was available online and in hard copy, in English, Welsh, Arabic and Polish, with the Council working closely with partner organisations to ensure as representative a response as possible. Targeted engagement work was also undertaken in areas with traditionally low response rate as well as with Children and Young People. The Budget Consultation received a total of 6,047 responses which represents a statistically significant sample size. Based on the latest midyear population estimates, the number of responses represents around 2% of the total population over 10 years old. Compared with major surveys undertaken by other cities that the Council is aware of, the number of respondents to the Budget Consultation represents the largest response rate.

Settlement Timing

Prior to the 2020/21 Budget Round, the Provisional Settlement was communicated to Local Authorities each October, with the Final Settlement in December. In 2019 these dates were delayed, to December 2019 and February 2020 respectively, due to changes occurring within UK government at the time, which led to the snap General Election of December 2019. The understanding of Local Authorities at the time was

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

WORKING FOR CARDIFF, WORKING FOR YOU

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



that this would be a one-off situation and that timings would revert to their usual October/December basis in future years. However, issues since then (not least the Covid pandemic) have meant that Welsh Government have continued with the later dates and have, as yet, not returned to the traditional settlement timings.

Settlement figures are a critical part of overall budget planning and so current timescales, coupled with indicative settlement figures that often change are very challenging from a financial planning perspective, particularly in an economic environment as unsettled as recent times. Local Authorities are obliged to set a balanced budget by 11th March each year, so current settlement timescales significantly condense the period in which the Local Authority has the clearest picture of the forthcoming financial year.

Where there are significant changes between indicative settlement figures and Provisional Settlement, as has been the case in each of the last two years, this affects the significant planning work that has occurred up until that date. In recent years, the Provisional Settlement has been more favourable than the previously issued indicative. Greater risk would be posed in a situation where Provisional Settlement was less favourable. However, neither situation is ideal from a planning perspective. The timing of the Provisional Settlement, in December, also necessitates the delay of public consultation. This is because consultation in advance of settlement would be based on a position that would be highly likely to change.

Children Looked After Numbers

There are currently 22 children with a Placement Order who are not yet placed with prospective adopters. All of these children are currently in foster placements - 15 in Cardiff and 7 out of area. When adoptive placements are identified for these children, they will often be out of area as this is often considered to be more appropriate and in the best interests of the child. Additionally, a number of young people from other authorities are placed with adopters in Cardiff.

Children's Services KPIs

Please see the updates in relation to individual indicators at Appendix 1.

Ty Storrie

For context Ty Storrie, run by Cardiff Council is located in the west of Cardiff near Ty Gwyn School. It is a purpose built registered Childrens Home for children and young people aged between 6 and 17 with disabilities and complex needs. The following link provides a short video on the building and facilities at Ty Storrie [Ty Storrie English](#).

There are currently 27 children accessing Ty Storrie as well as 12 children and young people currently going through their induction / settling in period, which includes visits to the site with family, tea visits after school leading up to their first stay. There is a plan to significantly increase the usage of the building allowing much more children to access this provision. In August 2022 only one, sometimes two, children per night were accessing this provision. In February 2023 this has increased to at least two children every night, and for eight nights in February, three children received overnight short breaks.

We are currently proposing a change to the shift patterns for staff to both make it a more attractive role and assist with recruitment and retention, plus assist with increasing the usage of the building. With that being in place from April we aim for four children per night to start attending regularly. The outcome of this increased usage is the immediate stepping down of alternative community-based support or increased provision going into the home. We also know the significant positive benefit this short-break provision provides to the young person and their family, so we would see a reduction in families reaching crisis and needing the child to access full time residential provision; provision that in the current market is not there, and where there is no other option, is met by expensive bespoke placements.

We believe that the demand for a bespoke placement for a child or young person with a disability or complex needs will reduce if we increase this capacity, however we have the option of meeting this need through the use of an additional room in the building and not a reduction to the availability of overnight short breaks to other children.

Corporate Plan Commitments

The Cardiff 2030 Vision was launched in November 2019, pre-pandemic, and whilst the goals, values and desired outcomes remain constant, there is a need to revisit the commitments to action in the context of the challenges and opportunities being faced by children and young people after two and a half years of disruption. This work is being completed in partnership with schools.

Within this review, there is a key and essential need to focus upon workforce development. The actions proposed in the Corporate Plan are not new, these were stated in the Cardiff 2030 vision, and are acutely relevant. The inclusion of these actions here signals an acceleration of activity to make change happen.

In relation to School Improvement, we need to respond to a period of significant national reform in education, whereby curriculum, qualifications and the accountability framework for school performance are all transforming. It will be essential for Cardiff to ensure that our local arrangements are robust, effective and responsive to the needs of children and young people in our city, and proactive in supporting our schools to deliver upon their School Improvement Priorities.

KPIs – Children and Young People – more information on K1.03

This KPI is collected via the Bi-Annual Child Friendly City Survey, which will next be delivered in early 2024. The survey is made available via schools and youth support services and this question sits within the context of a range of other questions on children's rights. The resulting data set is available to all participating schools and settings, the Youth Council, the Council and Public Service Board members.

Additional Learning Needs Places Delivered Across the City - Target

The formal places proposed in the target is in line with the Cabinet approvals brought forward in 2022. These are formal places that have been brought forward in line with the School Organisation Code 2018 and have been scheduled to be in place from September 2023. The number of ALN places stated has been a challenging target alongside significant increases from September 2022. Further increases of formal places will need to be brought forward through further school organisation proposals, which are planned to be brought forward within

the next 6 months. **If Cabinet deem the proposals appropriate the earliest proposals could be implemented would be September 2024.**

Pupil Development Grant and Free School Meals

Welsh Government have asked Local Authorities to continue to administer the process for identifying pupils who would be eligible via the means test for a free school meal, whilst this is not ideal it will enable WG to identify amounts required by schools for the PDG allocation process. As this is also used to identify eligibility for the PDG Access grant (old school uniform grant) WG believe this will continue to provide an incentive for parents to continue to apply. This will run alongside the roll out of the universal free school meal provision for all primary aged pupils so should not have a direct impact on this initiative.

Attendance Strategy

There is no specific research being undertaken in relation to attendance, but the Education Welfare Service has a good insight into the issues affecting attendance through their Persistence Absence Reviews. These are being undertaken in every school to highlight pupils with poor attendance and ensure that there is support and interventions in place to secure a improvements and a return to school which has given them so have a clear picture of the current challenges and issues.

In 2011 when Cardiff reorganised the EWS, delegated funding to schools to employ School Attendance Officers and implemented a new 5 step approach to attendance, primary attendance had been consistently between 92.5 – 92.8% for the previous 5 years. It took a lot of hard work to get to 94.8 – 95% pre-covid as improvements were incremental year on year. Given that primary attendance is currently running at 88.9%, 92.5% is an ambitious target given the current challenges schools face. We have to change the culture that's crept back in relation to casual attitudes to attendance, anxiety and caution about illness etc. It is considered unrealistic and unachievable to set targets any higher at the current time.

Schools in Deficit

At the start of the year 2022/23, five schools indicated that they needed to go into deficit protocol. Through working with the schools, this list reduced to three schools entering the protocol for 2022/23. The schools are Cardiff West High, Allensbank Primary and St Albans Primary. For the year 2023/24, we anticipate an increase in the number of schools applying for a deficit, and we will keep the Committee updated during the course of the year.

Youth Services Budget

I have asked officers to provide the Committee with a detailed breakdown of the spend and funding components of the Youth Service Budget within the next few weeks.

Youth Hubs

Details on proposals for Youth Hubs can be shared with the committee. With reference to step 4.06 within the Corporate Plan, it relates to progressing, not completing, the Youth Hub in the City centre. This step has been amended to clarify the next milestone; *progressing plans for a youth hub in the city centre and agree a preferred option by Autumn 2023.*

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - *Members felt that joining up of some of the new capital projects around community facilities and schools could present an excellent opportunity across the City to join-up developments of new community facilities and schools. The Fairwater Campus proposal has already been cited an example of doing this, and the Committee would recommend that the Cabinet explore and commit to this option going forward.*

Accept - The Council welcomes the positive comments regarding the community facilities provided on the flagship Fairwater Campus project and the recommendation is fully accepted. It is expected that Community Focussed Schools will also form a key part of the School Organisation Programme Strategy that is due to be developed within the next 12 months and has also recently been announced as an objective of Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. Work is underway with Youth Services, Children's Service and Communities to consider options to collaborate in the provision of services for children and young people through shared facilities.


In addition, all Band B schools to date have prioritised working with communities in their school visions and through the asset programme work is also underway to provide a range of community sports provision in schools such as Cardiff West Community High School, Corpus Christi Catholic High School, St Illtyd's Catholic High School, and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Eder.

Recommendation 2 - *We recommend that the Cabinet agree to undertake a review of the Youth Service budget, and report back on how it intends to strengthen the budget going forward. This would include how it will move away from the reliance on grant funding; and how it will grow the base budget and sustain it in the coming years.*

Partially Accept – we will review the youth service budget, including how the service will move away from grant funding within the context of available resources. In terms of partial acceptance, what cannot be predetermined at this stage is the overall quantum of resources available to the Council in future years and the choices that the Council will have to make in terms of how funding is prioritised.

I hope that this letter captures the key points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process this year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a yellow background, reading "C. Weaver".

Y Cyngorydd/Councillor Christopher Weaver
Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad/Cabinet member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance

cc

Councillor Ash Lister, Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's Services)
Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education
Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People
Councillor Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance
Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Richard Portas, Programme Director of School Organisation Planning
Steve Morris, Operational Manager, Sport, Leisure and Development
Neil Hardee, Head of Services to Schools
Suzanne Scarlett, Operational Manager – Partnerships & Performance, Education
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
Members of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
Jo Watkins, Cabinet Support Office
Tim Gordon & Jeremy Rhys, Media and Comms
Cllr Adrian Robson – Group Leader
Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader
Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader
David Hugh Thomas – Chair Governance & Audit Committee

Appendix 1

KPI	Target	Update	National or Local ?
The percentage of care leavers in categories 2,3 and 4* who have completed at least three consecutive months of employment, education or training in the 12 months since leaving care	65%	Target setting is difficult because the cohort of young people is relatively small and changes from one year to the next. 2021/22 performance was 64% - our target is to maintain with small improvement.	National
The percentage of care leavers in categories 2,3 and 4* who have completed at least three consecutive months of employment, education or training in the 13-24 months since leaving care	65%	Target setting is difficult because the cohort of young people is relatively small and changes from one year to the next. Performance for 2021/22 was 68%; current performance for 2022/23 is 65% - our target is to turn around the reduction and at least maintain. It will be kept under review.	National
The number of children looked after fostered by Local Authority foster carers	130	Current performance is 117. It is challenging to increase the number of in house foster carers against a national context of a reduction in the numbers of people expressing an interest in fostering.	Local
The number fostered by external foster carers as a percentage of regulated placements (excluding kinship)	60%	Current performance 58% and decreasing - challenging.	Local
The number of children looked after placed in in house residential placements	15	This target is in line with the recently approved Children's Services Accommodation Strategy.	Local
The number placed in external residential placements as a percentage of regulated placements (excluding kinship)	17%	Current performance 18% and increasing - challenging. (Lower is better.)	Local
The number of children returned home from care during the year	60	Target setting is difficult as reunification decisions are made on a case by case basis. This target will remain under review to ensure that children are only returned home when it is safe and appropriate to do so.	National
The percentage of children looked after in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff	60%	Current performance 56% - challenging.	Local
The percentage of children looked after in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff or a neighbouring Authority.	80%	Current performance 76% - challenging.	Local
The percentage of permanent social worker vacancies in Children's Services.	24%	Current performance 27% - challenging target in the context of the national shortage of social workers.	Local
The number of young people in receipt of a prevention service from the Youth Justice Service	130	Current performance 103 - challenging.	Local
The number of first-time entrants into the Youth Justice System	60	Target reduced from 70 in 2022/23 and will be subject to ongoing review. Current performance is 31.	Local
The percentage of children re-offending within six months of their previous offence	40%	Current performance is 44% - challenging	Local
Youth Justice – the percentage of children with an order ending during the period who were living in suitable accommodation	Baseline	This indicator is new for 2023/24 so a baseline is required before future targets can be set.	National

KPI	Target	Update	National or Local ?
	being set		
Youth Justice – the percentage of children with an order ending during the period who were in suitable education, training or employment	Baseline being set	As above.	National
Youth Justice – the percentage of children with an order ending during the period who had an identified Special Education Need and Disability (SEND) / Additional Learning Need (ALN)	Baseline being set	As above.	National