BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.00PM 5 JANUARY 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Older (Chairman); McCaffery (Deputy Chairman), Allen, Phillips, Smart, Wakefield-Jarrett, Barnett and Wells

Statutory Co-optees: with voting rights:: Mike Wilson (Diocese of Chichester) and David Sanders (Diocese of Arundel & Brighton)

Non-Statutory Co-optees: Carrie Britton (Children's Health) (Non-Voting Co-Optee)

Apologies: Councillor Pat Drake, Councillor Lynda Hyde, Mark Price, Rachel Travers, Kenya Simpson-Martin and Rohan Lowe

PART ONE

33. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

33.1 **Declaration of Substitutes**
Councillor Wells substituted for Councillor Hyde and Councillor Barnet substituted for Councillor Drake.

Apologies were sent from the Youth Council Representatives, Rachel Travers (CVSF representative) and Mark Price (Youth Services)

33.2 **Declarations of Interest**
There were none.

33.3 **Declaration of Party Whip**
There were none.

33.4 **Exclusion from the Press and Public**
In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

33.5 **RESOLVED –** That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

34. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

34.1 The Chair introduced the meeting saying this was a Special Budget meeting for CYPOSC to look at the Budget proposals for 2010-11, ask questions, raise issues and put forward any suggestions.

CYPOSC would then need to forward their comments and views to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission for the 26 January 2010.

35. BUDGET UPDATE & DIRECT BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2010/11

35.1 The Director of Children's Services and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People presented the Children Services Budget proposals for 2010/11 and answered questions with the Assistant Directors of Strategic Commissioning and Governance, Learning, Schools and Skills, City Wide Services, Clinical Director, Head of Service for City Early Years and Service and the Head of Financial Services for (Children, Families and Schools).

35.2 Members were advised that there were considerable challenges facing CYPT, the main budget pressures being:

- Child Agency and In House Placements
- Services for Care Leavers
- Legal/Court costs
- Area Preventative Grants

35.3 Members were pleased to be reassured that an independent review of duty and assessments had concluded the thresholds used by CYPT were at the right levels.

35.4 In response to a question regarding whether Children's Centres were reaching those most at risk members were advised that further work was being undertaken to provide more support for families with domestic violence, alcohol and substance misuse issues.

35.5 The Committee were informed some services are offered that all families can access such as health visitors whilst other services are by invitation only and these are the services used to target interventions.

35.6 The Committee heard how the costs of mother and baby placements were high, the process is expensive and outcomes vary. Work has begun to understand why there is a higher use of these placements in Brighton and Hove than in other areas. This will include looking at which types of families gain most from having a placement and identifying better value alternatives.

35.7 Members were told that compared to other authorities it was felt that the judicial system in Brighton and Hove was much more in favour of having mother and baby placements. CYPT hopes to persuade the court that long and expensive mother and baby placements often do not have the positive outcome hoped for.

35.8 There will be a further emphasis placed on holistic working and the use of projects such as "Team Around the Family" and the "Family Pathfinder Project" for earlier intervention.

35.9 Members were informed that potentially £1 million, of the £1,940 million of savings had been earmarked from the Central Risk Provision for Children's Services in light of the increased pressures following the death of Baby P, the Laming Report and the impact this has had on safeguarding.

35.10 There was some concern that if grant funding were used to fund a shortfall in mainstream budgets this might affect future efforts to obtain grant funding. In answer to a question that further clarification was needed on the statement that 'there are no service pressures within CYPT as a result of grant funding coming to an end. The Director of CYPT advised members that for 2010/11 no grant funding streams were to end.

35.11 The Director confirmed that savings would be focused in those areas that were less effective with support being maintained for the most cost effective interventions.

35.12 In response to a question on the £200,000 savings and the concerns from members on making this saving from the Connexions grant, the Committee heard how the current commissioning of services was not achieving its outcomes and services needed to look at more cost effective intervention and decommission less effective services. It was noted that Members requested further comparative information on the proposals, for savings in relation to Connexions and the Youth Offending Service (YOS).

35.13 Members felt that the level of information provided for the budget scrutiny needed to be reviewed as the high-level nature of the documents meant it was difficult meaningfully scrutinise the proposals.

35.14 In answer to a question on how the school transport budget savings were going to be made taking into account the sensitive nature of young people with Special Education Needs (SEN), the Committee heard that there was a clear strategy focusing on a more vigorous application of criteria and by looking at each individual case, by looking at reducing long, uncomfortable journeys for young people and whether they could access services nearer to their home. Reviewing expensive individual taxi journeys and looking at alternatives to promote independence and more creative individual programmes were also being explored.

35.15 Members informed that they were aware of transport issues for pupils with SEN attending out of school activities, how some of these arrangements were inflexible and that families would need to be consulted about any changes to school transport. Members agreed to forward on extra information to the Assistant Director of Learning, Schools and Skills.

35.16 In answer to a question on the reduction in the number of staff, the Committee heard that Children's Services did not propose any redundancies.

35.17 In answer to a question on whether health partners could contribute to the Children's Services budget, Members heard how the Children's Trust already worked closely with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and other agencies; decisions of budgets and services were being developed on a 'Trust' basis, rather then within organisational silos. This can be seen in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) which sets out the Trusts priorities which inform where savings and investment in services are made. The CYPP

is owned by all Trust partners. Work is ongoing to look at how savings can be made in improved working between organisations.

35.18 In answer to a question as to what savings were being made from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in comparison to safeguarding services, Members heard how the DSG budget for 2010/11 is £135 million and the 4.1% increase is ring-fenced grant money. The Schools Forum have examined different ways to use this additional funding e.g. recruiting more educational physiologists. Schools are expected to take on a wider range of services to meet the increasing needs of families.

35.19 Further information was requested on who fixed the 4.1% increase and how the variations in grant percentages worked, Members were told that there was a complicated formula and schools would receive between the minimum funding guarantee of 2.1% per pupil and the maximum of 4.1% per pupil of the funding, other factors such as deprivation were also taken into account.

35.20 Concerns were raised in relation to savings within Children in Care, the Committee were informed how there was a full complement of staff and how there had been Social Care recruitment issues in the past which had led to Agency staff covering vacancies, which was not cost-effective. Several vacancies had been filled through joint working with the University and creative promotional advertising. Other Local Authorities also had recruitment and retention issues within Social Care.

35.21 In answer to a question on what priorities and pressures the Schools Forum identified, the Committee were told how funding pools had been put together for creative solutions such as Mentors for schools. Schools were increasingly adopting a cluster approach to solving challenges.

35.22 Questioning on the Aiming High Grant focused on how savings would be identified. Members were advised that many of the services provided by this grant were already delivered using base budgets; these would be transferred to the grant budget. There would be a long lead in time to changes in service provision.

35.23 In answer to question on whether the Aiming High Grant was match funded by the PCT and whether it was ring-fenced, the Committee heard how the budget was ring-fenced but that services were provided through a combination of the base budget and the grant; as savings have to be made this year discussions would need to be held with partners and parents.

35.24 Concern was expressed regarding £300k savings within Looked After Children budget. Members were advised that this level of resource represented a very small number of cases. Members were informed that the rate of referrals was up from previous years and that the most cost effective packages would be need to be identified with child safety being at the forefront, by reviewing decisions, joint working, market management and procurement.

35.25 In response to whether there were any job losses through the £987,000 (VFM) savings; Members heard that there were no proposals for redundancies. Members raised concerns as to whether staff would have a heavier workload, the Committee were informed that if staff were expected to do more they would be graded appropriately, but

it was more around making efficiency savings through looking at different and possibly more local care packages; same provision at a lower cost.

35.26 In response to a question on the length of service of Agency staff and whether there was sufficient time for them to bond with the children and their families, the Committee heard how the focus was on recruiting to permanent positions as this short term placements were costly; with emphasis being on the retention of staff. Social Workers had high workloads and this was a common factor with other authorities too and that 7 extra staff and 2 Independent Review Officers had been recruited since the Lord Laming report.

35.27 Members were concerned at the £4.5 million (10%) savings that Children's Services were expected to make. It was felt that the percentage savings should be different with the varying Directorates as Children Services were responsible for child protection and safeguarding of children, their percentage savings should be reduced and in future savings should be looked at differently.

35.28 Councillor McCaffery said that she was aware of the dedication of the staff, but could not support these proposals due to the level of savings proposed which she believed rendered it an unsafe budget which jeopardised children's safety .

35.29 **RESOLVED-**

(1) Members resolved to ask for additional information on the following proposals :

- Connexions
- YOS
- transport and impact on after school activities
- DSG and schools formula
- Aiming High
- additional information around the VFM proposals

(2) Members to forward on information of families who had issues with transport for out of school activities to the AD for Learning, Schools and Skills.

(3) Further information was requested on the Dedicated Schools Grant who fixed the 4.1% increase and how the variations in percentages were calculated.

(4) In future the Council to look at different ways of making savings rather than the same percentages from each directorate.

(5) CYPOSC to forward its comments to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission (OSC) meeting of the 26 January 2010, to be incorporated into the single scrutiny response to the budget.

The meeting concluded at 6.30pm

Signed Chair

Dated this day of