

DRAFT EXTRACT FROM CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 26 JANUARY 2011

Present: Councillors Older (Chairman); McCaffery (Deputy Chairman), Deane, Hyde, A Norman, Phillips and Janio

Statutory Co-optees: with voting rights::

Non-Statutory Co-optees: Carrie Britton (Children's Health) (Non-Voting Co-Optee), Joanna Martindale (Community Voluntary Sector Forum) (Non-Voting Co-Optee) and Rohan Lowe (Youth Council) (Non-Voting Co-Optee)

Apologies: Councillor Melanie Davis, Mike Wilson, David Sanders, Amanda Mortensen and Mark Price

PART ONE

42. SCRUTINY OF DIRECTORATE OF BUDGET STRATEGIES

- 42.1 Councillor Vanessa Brown, the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, introduced the budget proposals for 2011/12. Councillor Brown reminded the committee that the budget papers placed before them had been produced in December 2010, but that work on the budget was an ongoing process. In addition, some Government grant allocations had still to be confirmed and that hopefully this could help offset the reduction in funding.
- 42.2 Cllr Brown then answered members' questions, with support from Terry Parkin, Strategic Director, People; Steve Barton, Lead Commissioner for Children, Youth & Families; Gill Sweetenham, Acting Lead Commissioner for Schools, Skills & Learning and Louise Hoten, Head of Business Engagement Children's Services & Environment Finance.
- 42.3 Responding to concerns about a 50% reduction in funding for the Education Welfare Service, Mr Parkin told members that there was an opportunity to progress service integration in the council's Delivery Unit including the role of Education Welfare Officers in relation to the mainstream children's social work teams. This would create efficiencies and savings, but more importantly would create a simpler and more coherent care pathway for children requiring support. This was an instance in which improving the service would also create savings. Mr Barton went on to summarise the Children's Services Value for Money Programme and gave specific examples of initiatives which have enabled the council to deliver services more efficiently.
- 42.4 In reply members expressed concern at the impact of any cuts to early intervention services; Mr Parkin told the committee that the council was acutely aware of the importance of early intervention. Indeed, this was a particular local priority given the high numbers of children in care in the city, and, subject to finalisation of the budget it was anticipated that additional resources would be made available to support early intervention. The council was currently examining why the city figures for children in care were so high including the relationship, and assumptions about the links to local

patterns of substance misuse. Particular attention is being given to the incidence of domestic violence and the numbers of children entering the care system. This work (and early interventions based on its findings) will be key to managing the number of children taken into care within the current threshold for intervention which has been carefully reviewed and validated.

Members requested further written details of the detailed plans to restructure children's care services when these became available.

- 42.5 In answer to a question about the quality and timeliness of social work assessments, as identified in the previous report to CYPOSC in relation to the Ofsted Inspection, Mr Parkin told members that the council continues to work closely with its partners about thresholds for referred to social work teams. Inappropriate referrals are an issue as they also require proper assessment and these impacts on available social work resources. By working with partners, the number of inappropriate referrals could be reduced and costs better managed.

Officers agreed to return to the committee at a later date with more details on this issue.

- 42.6 In answer to queries about savings identified in out of city SEN placements, Mr Sweetenham told members that effective early intervention work had reduced the need for specialist out of city placements for children with SEN. It was therefore possible to make savings in this budget area.
- 42.7 In response to questions about plans to reduce city Educational Psychologist (EP) capacity, Mr Sweetenham explained the background to the headline figures in the budget report. When the city had first developed an area team approach to children's services, educational psychologists had taken a lead role in developing services in each locality. As this work was now successfully established and with the improved understanding with partners and parents regarding Special Educational Needs Statements this should reduce the need for Educational Psychologist time.
- 42.8 Rohan Lowe, Youth Council Representative asked whether young people had been involved in the budget consultation, it was confirmed that although the focus groups used for the consultation were in the main adults that Young People were involved in consultation through the work of the Youth Participation Team and specific projects such as the Youth Services Review.
- 42.9 In response to a query as to how a reduction of £130K in youth services could be managed, Mr Barton told members that proposals were being developed through the Youth Service Review to make best use of resources, particularly in terms of efficient use of estates.
- 42.10 In response to questions about city music services, Councillor Vanessa Brown told members that it was an outstanding service, that the savings identified had been agreed by the Head of City music services and that if the grant was lower than expected it would be looked at again. Mr Parkin informed members that these services received relatively generous direct government funding and it should be possible to reduce local subsidies without a negative impact. However, the council was committed to offering

musical opportunities to all city children and would closely monitor the effect of the changes to ensure that they did not unduly impact upon particular communities.

- 42.11 In answer to whether the authority was responding to the SEN Green paper challenges, Members were told the authority works closely with the local Special schools and that it would consult fully with its partners over the planned changes.
- 42.12 In relation to the savings for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Services (EMAS) Members were informed that the service could be provided better and more economically by working directly with schools.
- 42.13 It was agreed to add “outcomes” to the “menu of service interventions options - Prevention activities”.
- 42.14 In answer to a question on when the Equalities Impact Assessments pertaining to these plans be published, members were told that these would be ready for the appropriate Cabinet meetings.
- 42.15 Further concern was expressed that there would be a need to consider the cumulative impact of savings on multiple service users. The Committee were told that this would be taken into account.
- 42.16 The Committee were informed that the minutes from CYPOSC would be forwarded onto the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

42.17 RESOLVED

The Committee requested additional information (to be supplied at a later date) on:

- (1) The restructuring of the Education Welfare service;
- (2) Partner performance regarding welfare assessment referrals;
- (3) Staffing information of social worker assessment times;
- (4) A report on how Children’s Services was engaging with the local 3rd sector
- (5) “Outcomes” added to the “menu of service interventions options – Prevention activities”

