

Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Monday 4 February 2019 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor CA Gandy (Chairperson)
Councillor FM Norman (Vice-Chairperson)

Councillors: CR Butler, ACR Chappell, JF Johnson, MT McEvelly and A Seldon

In attendance: Councillors EPJ Harvey, AJW Powers and EJ Swinglehurst.

Officers: Chris Baird (director children and families), John Coleman (statutory scrutiny officer) and Andrew Lovegrove (chief finance officer).

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Burbidge and Mr James.

49. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the children and young people scrutiny committee on 29 November are confirmed as a correct record.

52. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 5 - 6)

Questions received from members of the public and the responses provided are attached at appendix 1.

53. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Pages 7 - 8)

Questions received from members of the council and the responses provided are attached at appendix 2.

54. ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL 2019-20

The committee considered a report containing the alternative budget proposals submitted by the It's Our County (IOC) Group.

Councillor EPJ Harvey introduced the alternative budget, with a particular focus on those elements relating to children and young people, and raised those principal points below in the presentation provided:

- The alternative budget was based on the themes of prosperity, wellbeing and sustainability;
- The revenue and capital budget contained within the alternative budget were based on the same funding envelope as the executive's budget but reprioritised the work programmes in each;
- The alternative budget would invest in investigations of transitioning to the Hertfordshire family-centred support model in Herefordshire. The Hertfordshire model had produced impressive statistics in respect of reduction of children on protection plans amongst other benefits and demonstrated how best practice from other areas was being understood and applied locally. The proposal to implement the Hertfordshire model would be facilitated by the broadening of the directorate at the Council to include responsibility for children and families;
- Investment of £70k in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was proposed in the alternative budget.
- A social services pilot for families on the edge of care was also proposed through the alternative budget. The pilot was intended to help reduce the number of cases that require more serious intervention.
- The alternative budget would also provide funding to investigate the provision of a respite facility for teenagers with disabilities amongst the three counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.
- IOC had also amended the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) in which there had been a re-prioritisation of investment.

Councillor AJW Powers spoke in response to Councillor NE Shaw's question which had been raised earlier in the meeting. It was denied that the alternative budget sought to 'fritter away' or spend money in an arbitrary fashion. The alternative budget sought to implement preventative measures in order to release funding for curative measures in future. The additional funding outlined in the alternative budget was a signal of intent and would enable vital work to be undertaken on early intervention services. The investments outlined in the alternative budget were well evidenced and represented positive outcomes for children and adults in the county.

The chief finance officer provided his assessment on the robustness of the alternative budget proposals. He was comfortable that the proposals could be delivered.

Members of the committee raised the following principal comments in the discussion which followed:

- Feedback from the budget consultation to increase spending on social workers and children's services had not been fully taken into account in the alternative budget. The proportion of additional investment dedicated to the children and families directorate in comparison to the amount identified for economy and place was not felt to represent the outcomes of the budget consultation. *IOC explained that investment had not been applied in proportion to the budget consultation response; it was noted that the executive's budget had not sought to structure its investment on such a principle.*
- IOC was congratulated on producing an alternative budget which was seen as a significant achievement which required a lot of effort.
- It was important that funding of work with vulnerable adults and children was well organised. It was recognised that the alternative budget was well designed and the only negative element was that it proposed funding for a 1 year period only. *IOC explained that the alternative budget and the executive budget was a one*

year exercise; the relationship between the budget and the MTFS had been summarised.

- The Hertfordshire family-centred model was raised and if additional information could be shared. *IOC explained that the statistics concerning the implementation of the model were compelling. As part of development plans, methods to implement the model and identification of alternative sources of funding would be undertaken.*
- The application of the Hertfordshire model in Herefordshire was queried. It was noted that Herefordshire was a smaller area and very rural in nature. *IOC confirmed that the two areas were dissimilar but the model would be adapted to Herefordshire. It was noted that the model had been implemented in West Berkshire which was closer in nature to Herefordshire. The allocation of funding in the alternative budget was intended to investigate the potential implementation of the family centred model in Herefordshire.*
- The work that children's services were undertaking with Staffordshire and Doncaster was raised and why it was felt that the Hertfordshire model should be implemented rather than continue the current work in progress. *IOC explained that where good practice was identified it should be investigated as a potential model to be introduced locally. The director children and families explained that Doncaster was working with the council to improve the approach to quality and performance of social work practice and Staffordshire was involved in work concerning edge of care service. He explained the local authority learns from best practice of other areas and this can be both rural and urban.*
- The focus on prevention in the alternative budget was supported which accorded with a priority for the scrutiny committee on early intervention. A member also commended the investment for creative and cultural projects; arts projects were effective in engaging dementia sufferers and challenging pupils.
- The changes required to the structure of children's service if the Hertfordshire model was implemented were queried. *IOC explained that £15m had been used to develop the approach in Hertfordshire. The proposal in the alternative budget was to investigate the introduction of the family-centred approach to determine the potential rewards of the implementation of the model in Herefordshire.* The proposed investment to work with Worcestershire and Gloucestershire was queried. It was noted that there were problems with children's services at the two authorities and investment locally rather than with other areas was raised. *IOC noted that Herefordshire could not fund a respite unit independently but that a need persisted for specialist respite care in the county. By working with the two local authorities on a market shaping exercise for respite care a sustainable provision could be investigated which would meet future demand for specialist respite care.*
- It was queried whether the local authority was in a position to realise the proposals in the alternative budget. *IOC explained that the risk involved was minimal but the risk of not seeking to investigate a new model and approach were significant. The introduction of the model would represent a strategic approach which would have a benefit to all local services and the wider community.*

That cabinet member children and families complimented the alternative budget as a complex piece of work and acknowledged that it had raised some issues which she would discuss with officers. It was commented that the alternative budget in relation to children's services was broadly aligned to the executive's budget but with some additional funding for some elements.

The director children and families was invited to comment and thanked all who had contributed for their support for the approach of children's services to early intervention and preventative services. The difficulty of improving service delivery in an area under massive pressure was explained.

There was a brief adjournment at 15:16. The meeting reconvened at 15:25.

The committee proposed and seconded its recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the committee:

- **notes the cabinet members welcoming of the ideas coming forward in the alternative budget and the commitment to exploring these ideas further with officers;**
- **welcomes the emphasis on the family centred approach to supporting vulnerable children and families. The committee recommends that the 'It's Our County 'group updates the alternative budget to present additional evidence relating to the family centred approach; and**
- **has some concern over the short term nature of the funding, which does not extend beyond 2019/20.**

55. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

The committee received and noted the work programme 2018/19, the response of the executive to the spotlight review on dental health and childhood obesity, the executive response to the task and finish group on section 20 and the recommendation tracker.

The committee considered and agreed the scope for a task and finish group relating to the court judgements concerning children's services. The committee explained that as part of the review the Ofsted inspection outcome from 2012 should be circulated. It was agreed that Councillor CA Gandy would act as chairperson of the task and finish group and that the membership of the group would be finalised by the chairperson and officers following the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the scope of the task and finish group relating to the court judgements concerning children's services is agreed and that Councillor CA Gandy is appointed as the chairperson of the group.

The meeting ended at 3.32 pm

Chairman

Supplement – schedule of questions received for meeting of children and young people scrutiny committee – 4 February 2019

Agenda item no. 5 - Question from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Dr Whalley, Hereford	What assurance can the Scrutiny committee provide that there will be regular monitoring of the impact of changes proposed in response to recent court judgements which takes account of feedback from employees and the public as to their effectiveness?	Chairman of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Children’s and Young People Scrutiny Committee has been asked to conduct a task and finish group to understand the judgements of the high court and how they are being addressed. Subject to the committee confirming the draft terms of reference, which appear elsewhere on the agenda today, the task and finish group will explore what new measures are in place to ensure that adoption processes and placement orders are appropriately and consistently applied. It will also examine how the wider corporate culture change is positively influencing working practices within children’s services. It is a function of the executive to ensure that performance and culture change within children’s services is reviewed and managed, and cabinet considers reports quarterly regarding performance. In addition a performance challenge session is scheduled monthly, focusing on performance of the children and families directorate, which is attended by the chairpersons and vice chairpersons of the scrutiny committees and the group leaders. However, the children and young people’s scrutiny committee has indicated its intent to review the effectiveness of the actions being taken and make reports or recommendations to the executive to support continued improvement.</p>			

Supplement – schedule of questions received for meeting of children and young people scrutiny committee – 4 February 2019

Agenda item no. 6 - Question from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Councillor NE Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty	The alternative budget seems eager to fritter away crucial funds on good causes, £70k to CAHMS, an NHS organisation and £50k to “local arts organisations” for work with disadvantaged youth, amongst many others. All worthy, but no attempt is made to consider what outputs/outcomes are required. Can the Chairman consider the suitability of allocating money in this arbitrary way, given recent and ongoing departmental savings requirements affecting the delivery of services that Herefordshire Council has a statutory responsibility for, and for which we are judged by OFSTED?	Chairman of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed alternative budget and will ensure that this issue is explored during the debate.</p>			

