

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held virtually on Tuesday 11 January 2022 at 2.30 pm

Committee Members Present:	<p>Councillor Phillip Howells (Chairperson) Councillor Jennie Hewitt (Vice-chairperson)</p> <p>Councillor Toni Fagan* Councillor Helen l'Anson Councillor Mike Jones* Councillor Jim Kenyon* Councillor David Summers Andy James – Co-opted Member* Councillor Graham Andrews*</p>
Officers:	<p>Darryl Freeman* Director for Children and Families Andrew Lovegrove* Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer Ben Baugh Democratic Services Officer (Clerk) Simon Cann Democratic Services Officer (Technical Support)</p>
In attendance:	<p>Councillor Diana Toynbee*, Cabinet Member – Children’s and Family Services, and Young People’s Attainment. Councillor Pauline Crockett* Cabinet Member – Health and Adult Wellbeing Councillor Liz Harvey*, Cabinet Member – Finance, Corporate Services and Planning Councillor David Hitchiner* - Leader of the Council</p> <p>*denotes virtual attendance</p>

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Due to technical issues with the audio feed and live streaming the meeting was adjourned and restarted at 3.30pm

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53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Sam Pratley, Co-opted Member

54. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

56. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A copy of the public question received and the response provided is attached at appendix 1.

57. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No questions had been received from Councillors.

58. 2022/23 BUDGET SETTING

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report the purpose of which was to seek the views of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the budget proposals for 2022/23 as they related to the remit of the Committee.

During the debate the following key points were raised:

- The Local Government Finance Settlement had been received but was only for the 2022/23 year rather than the three years that had been promised. It was expected that the settlement for the following two years would be announced later in the year.
- The settlement was broadly in line with what had been expected.
- Significant pressure on the budget would come from Looked After Children (LAC) not because their numbers had risen but because many of the children had very complex needs which increased placement costs and there were few local options to meet those needs.
- There were longer term plans to increase efficiencies and reduce costs but these would not come into play soon enough to affect this year's budget.
- Pressure on the budget would also come from the High Needs Funding Block.
- There were many potential efficiencies that could be exploited by a move to all ages (birth to end of life) commissioning. The Council was at the early stages of thinking and delivering on this so the benefits of the move would not be seen this year.
- In response to Councillor's questions, the Director for Families and Children would provide the Committee with a more detailed breakdown of LAC costs, including some case studies.
- Approximately 20% of social workers were locums. Agency staff cost more so there had been efforts to recruit more permanent staff but this had been incredibly challenging; there was a national shortage of social workers, highly competitive salaries were being offered and the Council struggled with its geography. As part of the improvement process the department would be taking on additional staff which would be funded from reserves.
- Grant money had been used to embed Talk Community and earlier help and intervention for early years aged children.
- Social work was a profession that needed a degree qualification so it would be difficult for the Council to train its own social workers but it could encourage local people into the profession by supporting apprenticeships.
- The Chief Finance Officer reassured Councillors that there was sufficient provision in the budget to recruit more staff and to account for raise in rates of pay.
- There had been a decrease in the number of locums in senior posts but an increase in the number of locum social workers.
- Circa £7m of income came from outside bodies rather than from specific grants from Government. Any opportunities to bid for additional funding were readily seized upon.
- Funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities had been identified as a pressure this year as although historically the Council had been able to match

spending to the funding, this year it had reached the point where funds would not cover costs.

- The Council was looking at investment in the county's school building stock as part of its environmental programme.

The recommendations below were proposed and seconded and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

Having discussed the budget proposals for 2022/23 as they related to the remit of the Committee, the Committee:

1. Noted and accepted the children and young people services budget for 2022/23;
2. Requested that they be provided with a more detailed breakdown of where money was being spent in the budget on specific service areas; and
3. Recommended that in future budgeting there be an increase in the allocation for early help/early years funding.

The meeting ended at 5pm

Chairperson