

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24th January 2011

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Burton, Curry, Davies, Francis, Galletley, Long and Richmond. (9)

APOLOGIES – Councillor Cossins, Councillor J. M. Lyonette, Mr. T. Fisher and Mr. N. Rees. (4)

STAUTORY CO-OPTEES – Mr. M. Frank. (1)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Mr. R. Egan and Mr. D. Moyes. (2)

ABSENT – The Ven. S. Bain, Mr. T. Grant, Ms. S. Lund and Mrs. V. Mitchell. (4)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Mrs. H. Scott.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Elizabeth Davison, Assistant Director: Finance, Resources Group, David Hall, Assistant Director – Finance, Resources Group, and George McQueen, Assistant Director – Planning and Resources.

CYP51. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – Councillor Long declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in Minute CYP52 below, due to a family connection.

CYP52. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) detailing the draft Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (previously circulated) which had been prepared as a basis for consultation, following the feedback received on initial proposals released in November 2010 and the Local Government Finance Settlement received in December 2010.

The Assistant Director – Finance gave Members an overview of the financial position and referred to the Government grants received, the basis of the four-year grant for Council's that froze Council Tax in 2011-12; and the pressures facing the Council over the next few years.

References were made to the basis for the preparation of the MTFP; the uncertainty around Government grants in future years; the significant impact this income had on the Council's total resources in conjunction with Council Tax revenue; and the percentage amount of Government grant which this Council had lost in 2011/12. Discussion ensued on the projected impact on the MTFP of capping on future Council Tax increases, and the withdrawal of Capital Funding for the Extended Schools initiative. Members expressed appreciation at the work the Extended Schools initiative had previously conducted, and were informed that School Governors had the ability to re-allocate funds within a school's individual budget to commission the Extended Schools services.

Members scrutinised and entered into discussion on the impact of the proposals relevant to this Scrutiny Committee which were detailed at Appendix 8 of the submitted report, and included the Library Services Review; Local Education Statutory Functions; Early Intervention and Prevention; and the Early Years Inclusion Review.

Discussion ensued on the proposed reductions to the budget of the Library Service; the possibility of accessing alternative funding streams; the use of the Third Sector to deliver services that may be withdrawn; the need to obtain the views of residents who did not use the Library Service to inform how usage could be increased; the need to develop imaginative and innovative responses to the loss of services; and reduced access to services.

Focus turned to the proposed budget reductions in relation to Local Education Statutory Functions, and consideration was given to the funding arrangements for academies, and the impact this could have on the Dedicated School Grant (DSG); the comparison between the increase in the DSG and the rate of inflation; the impact of 'incremental drift' on the DSG; the need for the minimum funding guarantee mechanism to protect school budgets against large fluctuations in school numbers; the ability of a school to adopt a service and franchise that service to other schools; and the income from the Pupil Premium and Forces admissions.

Members entered into discussion on the budget reductions in relation to Early Intervention and Prevention, and further consideration was given to the proposed reductions to the Education Welfare Service and the Youth Service; a more targeted approach to focus on the most vulnerable; the risks associated with the proposed reductions and the use of an Equality Risk Assessment; the importance of early intervention, and the impact this has on future years; and the involvement of the Voluntary Sector.

Members considered the Early Years Inclusion Review, and it was highlighted that a large amount of feedback had been received as part of the budget consultation in this area. Representation against the proposal was heard at the meeting from members of the Early Years Inclusion Team, and discussion ensued on the reduction in the numbers of experienced staff, the value of the consultation, and comparisons with the Portage Service provided by the Council. Members entered into further discussion on the transition period in relation to the new approach; the impact the revised service would have on the most vulnerable; the training required to expand staff skills and awareness, and the timescales available in which to roll this training out; the cost of the redundancies in this area, and across the Council as a whole; the application and cost of consultation; and the cessation of the Connexions Service.

Members gave consideration to the proposed charges for services, and determined that the proposed charges in this area had a minimal impact as most services were provided free at the point of delivery.

Discussion ensued on the removal of Home to School Transport from the budget process, and the responsibility for school transport; the number of schools that had

registered an interest in becoming academies; and the reduction in School Meal options and the impact this may have on school meal take up.

RESOLVED – That the following recommendations be forwarded to Resources Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation on the Medium Term Financial Plan:-

- (a) that, in relation to the savings proposals within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee:-
- (i) Library Service Review (Appendix 8/6), this Scrutiny Committee notes the position in relation to the Library Service Review, and that there may be potential to access alternative funding streams and extend volunteering opportunities;
 - (ii) Local Education Statutory Functions (Appendix 8/24), this Scrutiny Committee notes that the statutory minimum will be provided, and regrets that non-statutory functions will be vastly reduced;
 - (iii) Early Intervention and Prevention (Appendix 8/25), this Scrutiny Committee regrets the reductions in relation to Early Intervention and Prevention, acknowledges the importance of this service, and raises concerns in relation to future provision;
 - (iv) Early Years Inclusion Review (Appendix 8/26), this Scrutiny Committee acknowledges the depth of feeling expressed in comments received from practitioners and parents, both at the meeting and as part of the consultation process itself, however regrettably accepts the recommendations outlined in the submitted report;
- (b) That regular overview reports monitoring Early Intervention and Prevention be received at future meetings of this Scrutiny Committee.
- (c) That regular overview reports monitoring the take up of School Meals be received at future meetings of this Scrutiny Committee.