

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 January 2017

PRESENT – Councillor C Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Crumbie, L.Hughes, KE Kelly, Mills, Storr, Tostevin and Wright. (9)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Curry and Lister, Janet Woodcock, Glenis Harrison, Tim Fisher, Paul Rickeard and Jane Kochanowski.

ABSENT – None (0)

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None. (0)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None. (0)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor C Hughes.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE –Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality Services; Hilary Tillotson, Service Manager, Placements and Adoption; and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

CYP23. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP24. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 7 November, 2016.

With regard to Minute CYP21/Nov16, Councillor C Hughes referred to the Childcare Sufficiency Review 2016/17 and the reference to child minders being deemed inadequate and assured Members of this Scrutiny Committee that all local authority child minders were audited throughout the year and that those which had been deemed within the Review were not engaged by this authority. All child minders are monitored by Ofsted and are reported for purposes of childcare sufficiency.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

CYP25. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) – Submitted – A report (previously circulated) of the Chief Officers Executive (previously circulated) which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 December 2016, in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2017/18 to 2020/21.

It was reported that there were no major proposals contained within the proposed plan, however, Cabinet were seeking views on a proposed Council Tax increase of 1.99 per cent, with a two per cent levy, agreed by the Government to fund Adult Social Care for 2017/18 and subsequent years, the current schedule of charges and the use of capital receipts to assist in funding the MTFP.

The Assistant Director, Finance and Human Resources reported that work was still on-going to implement the proposals contained within the 2016/17 MTFP and that, on the whole, the savings which had been identified within the current plan, would be achieved with the exception of the Library relocation, which had been deferred by Cabinet pending further consideration. It was also reported that, although challenging, good progress was being made to deliver those savings which had been programmed for future years.

Discussion ensued on a number of significant on-going pressures which had been identified over the next four years and it was reported that additional savings of £3.9 million over the life of the MTFP had also been identified which would offset those pressures, together with the use of capital receipts as proposed by Cabinet.

Discussion ensued on the agreement by the Government to allow Council's the flexibility to increase its Adult Social Care precept by an additional one per cent in 2017/18 and 2018/19 (from two per cent to three per cent) on the condition that the total increase to 2019/20 did not exceed six per cent; the reduction in the number of new homes being built which had an effect on the Council's income in relation to both Council Tax income and the New Homes Bonus; and the position in respect of the monies received from Section 106 Planning Agreements, when developers did not meet their requirements in relation to affordable housing and where those monies were shown within the Statement of Accounts.

Members of this Scrutiny Committee noted that the savings to be made regarding Children's Services were on track and also noted future budget pressure relating to the increase in children's external placements and children's agency cover which was not unique to this authority. Members discussed ensued on the use of agency staff and the issues around recruitment and retention of social workers. Members were advised that the Director of Adults and Children's Services was the chair of a working group looking at the regional picture and developing a consistent approach to agency usage. Members agreed that they would like to meet with social workers and it was suggested by the Councillor C Hughes, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People that Members initially contact Simon Hart, the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board who was also in the process of meeting with social workers so that there was no duplication.

Members also commented on the reduced income to this authority as a result of schools converting to academies.

Regarding the schedule of charges for 2017/18, Members noted that there was nothing contained within that fell under the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the current position be noted.

CYP26. SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES 0-3 YEARS REVIEW – Submitted – The notes of the meetings of the Review Group held on 2 November and 12 December 2016.

The Chair advised Members that the next process of the Review was to meet with the Community Paediatricians and Health Visitors.

RESOLVED – That the note of meetings be received.

CYP27. EXTENSION OF FUNDING TO AGE 21 FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE – The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with information regarding the cost of funding to age 21 young people in foster care placements.

The submitted report outlined the legal framework requiring local authorities to provide Staying Put Arrangements which came into force on 13 May 2014; and the number of current Staying Put Arrangements which currently was eight young people.

The submitted report also detailed the costs relating to the period 1 September 2015 to 30 September 2016 and the projected expenditure for the period 1 October 2016 to 31 March 2017; the monitoring and evaluation process prior to a young person reaching the age of 18 years ; the benefits and risks associated with foster carers offering Staying Put placements, primarily being the reduction in the number of foster placements for both internal and external provision; and the priorities for the coming six months.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP28. EARLY HELP – The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Members of the progress of the Early Help redesign following the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) approval to review the service.

The submitted report outlined the delivery model which is focused on families with additional needs below the threshold for statutory intervention from Children's Services and aims to reduce the demand on statutory services providing families with the necessary and timely services to meet their needs.

It was reported that the service will undertake work with families where a child has additional needs which are currently not being met and requires multi-disciplinary/agency input and focus on maintaining school attendance and supporting the most vulnerable young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). The service will also work with children on the 'Edge of Care'.

The submitted report outlined the service requirements and the support and interventions offered to children, young people and their families which includes family casework looking at relationships; family dynamics; maintaining children and young people within the family; parenting support via 1 to 1 and group work; support for parents with mental health and substance misuse issues; direct work with young people including 1 to 1 work and group work; education support; ensuring employment of young people and adults within the family; and managing risky behaviours keeping children safe.

The submitted report also detailed the actions to date which included The Head of First Contact and Localities assuming the responsibility for the Children Access Point, Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub, the Locality Teams, Children Centres, Families Information Service, Youth Offending Service and Anti-Social Behaviour in August 2016, including the 0-3 Service; the consultation sessions which were carried out during July to September 2016 with staff, parents and partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector, including schools; and the establishment of an Early Help Reference Group recognising the role of all partners, who will review the Early Help offer in Darlington and undertaken necessary revisions and ensure all partner organisations are signed up to the delivering Early Help to the families of Darlington.

It was also reported that the Children Centre delivery via a Hub and Spoke Model is being proposed and work was on going to secure the model within schools so that consultation can commence on this in February 2017; the Liquid Logic case management system had been operational for staff since October 2016 and an electronic Early Help Assessment form for all partners will be available in April 2017; and staff consultation for employment implementation on the new model was due to commence in January 2017.

The Head of First Contact and Localities advised Members of this Scrutiny that the Service is aimed at supporting 600 families in the coming year with a new way of working which will be very challenging for the staff who were grateful for the opportunity they have been given to remodel the service. She also advised Members that the project was on time to deliver the 2016/17 savings target of £170,000 and indications were that the 2017/18 savings of £700,000 will also be achieved.

Members were complementary of the work of officers in developing the new system and were confident that the new service will be able to meet the needs of families with the potential for future savings despite Early Help not being a statutory service.

RESOLVED – (a) That Members note the progress to date and the savings achieved.

(b) That this Scrutiny continues to monitor the progress on the MTFP proposals in relation to the Early Help Services.

CYP29. WORK PROGRAMME – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to the work programme for this Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2016/17.

The Chair advised Members that he intended to carry out a ‘deep dive’ review of school improvement following the report to this Scrutiny in April 2017; and that it would be useful for Members to understand the role of the School Commissioner.

RESOLVED – That the current status of the work programme be noted and the additional items be programmed for future meetings.