

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 January, 2018

PRESENT - Councillor C Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, KE Kelly, Lister, Mills and Storr. (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillors L Hughes and Wright. (2)

ABSENT – Councillor Crudass (1)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Elizabeth Davison, Assistant Director, Finance, Human Resources and Systems; and Tony Murphy, Head of Education and Inclusion.

CYP30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP31. MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – Submitted – A report (previously circulated) of the Chief Officers Executive which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 12 December, 2017 in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2018/19 to 2021/22.

Reference was made to the proposals within the submitted report in relation to the current position of the MTFP and to the proposed allocation of an additional £4.4 million which had been identified to create five Futures Fund Investment themes which would stimulate growth and would be used over the four years of the MTFP.

It was however reported that since the publication of those proposals there had been two significant areas of change which would affect that position, namely the announcement by the Government to allow Council's to increase Council tax by an additional one per cent in 2018/19 and 2019/20 before a referendum was required and the National Pay Award offer which had been made to the Unions which was over and above that originally budgeted for and would potentially remove all of the funding for the proposed Futures Fund.

Cabinet had considered the proposed increase to the Council Tax at its meeting held on 9 January, 2018, and had agreed to amend the proposed Council Tax from 1.99 per cent plus a social care precept of three per cent (4.99 per cent) to 2.99 per cent plus an adult social care precept of three per cent (5.99 per cent) in 2018/19.

Discussion ensued on the budget pressures and in particular the cost of children's external placements and children's legal fees; and the work that is ongoing in the children's transformation project to reduce the spend and the review of commissioning in Children's Services on external placements; and the transportation costs for children in out of area special placements.

A Member questioned how external residential placements had been anticipated to reduce by £0.700m, however this had actually increased by £0.3000m leading to the £1m pressure. The Assistant Director, Finance, Human Resources and Systems advised the Members that the transformation programme work had not found any savings as anticipated and the analysis of the costs relating to external placements had been appropriate in each case. She also explained to Members how only two or three new children with specific needs can create extremely expensive packages of care.

Discussion also ensued on the proposed allocation within the Futures Fund for one-off funding towards Neighbourhood Renewal and it was reported that, if approved, a further report would be submitted to Cabinet proposing an approach; and the further use of that funding in helping Looked After Children (LAC) to become 'work ready' after the Council as Corporate Parent for LAC recognises the inequality of opportunity for these children to gain employment. The Chair requested that this Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of the work to help LAC and be involved where possible.

RESOLVED – That Cabinet be advised that this Scrutiny Committee supports the proposed principles within Theme 5 of the Futures Fund and the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.99 per cent plus the three per cent social care levy to fund Adult Social Care for 2018/19.