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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Work Programme**

2. We continue to give consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee and taking into account the ambitious programme of change across the Council and the key role of Scrutiny in ensuring that the programme is able to deliver the service improvements and the budget savings necessary.

**Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)**

3. Scrutiny has given consideration to the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2017/18 to 2020/21. As Members will be aware there are no major proposals contained within the proposed Plan for 2017/18; and Cabinet is consulting 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.
4. We were advised that, although work was still on-going to implement the proposals contained within the 2016/17 Plan, on the whole, the savings which had been identified would be achieved, with the exception of the Library, which, at the time of our meeting, and, again as Members will be aware, had been deferred by Cabinet.
5. Delivery of the MTFP is still a challenge and there are a number of significant on-going pressures which have been identified over the next four years. Additional savings of £3.9 million over the life of the MTFP have been identified, together with a proposal by Cabinet to use capital receipts to off-set these pressures.
6. Scrutiny Members noted that the savings to be made regarding Children's Services were on track and also noted the future budget pressures in relation to the increase in children's external placements and the children's agency cover which is not unique to this authority.
7. All Scrutiny Committees will be considering the proposals within the MTFP and will report back to our Scrutiny Committee in due course.

## **Services for Families of Children with Disabilities 0-3 Years Review**

8. We have met on two occasions now to discuss the remodelling of services for families with children with disabilities 0-3 years, which is as a result of the substantial cuts made in the Medium Term Financial Plan and the re model of the whole Early Help Service.
9. On 12 December we met with parents who access the Council's service for families who have children with disabilities in the specific 0-3 years age group and found this meeting very useful in understanding the importance of the positive intervention at this stage which was likely to lessen the need for much more complicated and possibly costs action later.
10. At our next meeting we are meeting with health visitors and the Community Paediatricians to gauge their views of the current service.

## **Extension of Funding to Age 21 for Children in Foster Care**

11. We considered the costs of funding to age 21 for young people in foster care placements as part of the legal requirement on local authorities to provide Staying Put Arrangements for young people in care and to improve their experiences of being in care and to challenge the historic poor outcomes experienced by young people in care.
12. There are currently eight young people in Staying Put Arrangements and the cost of internal provision ranges from £130.00 to £162.32 dependent upon age and individual circumstances. The cost of Independent Fostering Agency provision agreed as part of the Tees Valley Framework is £340.00 per week.
13. The risk involved in offering Staying Put placements is a reduction in the number of foster placements with regard to both internal and external provision, as the expectation for them to provide care longer to a young person than 18 years is required.
14. There has been success over recent years in the recruitment of internal foster carers however, the availability of in-house foster carers does not fully meet demand.
15. Where external foster placements are commissioned via the Tees Valley Framework there is also the issue with the continuation of placements for young people beyond the age of 18 years and up to 21 years that over time this may adversely affect availability of placements from the Independent Fostering Agencies.

## **Early Help**

16. We continue to monitor the progress of the Early Help redesign following the MTFP approval to review the service.
17. The delivery model focuses 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.
18. Support and interventions offered to children, young people and their families under the new model will include 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.
19. The Head of First Contact and Localities has now assumed 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.
20. 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 600 families in Darlington in the coming year.
21. We have been advised that the savings target of £170k for 2016/17 has been achieved and that indications were that the 2017/18 savings of £700k will also be achieved; and are very supportive of the work of the officers in developing this new system and are 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.

## **Meetings**

22. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:
  - (a) Attended the six monthly DFE Review of Children's Services; and
  - (b) Presented 'Stars in our Schools' certificates to support staff at Borough Road Nursery School and West Park Academy

**Councillor Chris Taylor**  
**Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**