

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 9 January 2023

PRESENT – Councillors Crudass (Chair), C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson and Snedker

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

APOLOGIES – Councillors Ali, Preston and Willis; Carly Stonier, John Armitage and Sally Hudson

ABSENT – Councillors Bell, Lucas, Sowerby; Maura Regan, Tim Fisher and Janet Woodcock

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources) and Allison Hill (Democratic Officer)

CYP30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP31 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 - 2026/27

The Assistant Director - Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27, which had been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 December 2022, as a basis for consultation.

The submitted report referred Members to a briefing held on 14 December 2022, which had been offered to all Members, on the background and the overall proposals contained within the MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27, and requested that Members of this Scrutiny Committee now consider those services and finances specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee to enable a response to be formulated to Cabinet as part of the consultation exercise.

The Assistant Director of Resources provided an update on the Local Government financial settlement, which had been received on 19 December 2022, subsequent to the approval of the draft MTFP by Cabinet, and advised on the impact this settlement had on the assumptions made within that approved draft MTFP.

Members examined the Revenue Estimates for 2023/24 in Appendix 1 and the budget pressures and savings outlined in Appendix 2 of the submitted report, noting in particular the increased demand on the Strengthening Families Team, the increased in the number of Looked After Children and the increased number of Children and Families requiring support; and referred to the review commissioned by Central Government in respect of the challenges facing Children's Social Care and the expected response to the expected pressures nationwide.

Members expressed particular concern that there was no provision within the budget for

increased demand for Children and Families requiring support for the years 24/25 and beyond and feared for long term financial implications if there was no future investment for children and young people. The Assistant Director of Children's Services advised this Scrutiny Committee that the projections were based on the increase to the numbers last year and the anticipation that these numbers will level out over the coming years.

It was also noted that the investment of services for Social Care for both Children's and Adults Services was the most significant split of investment, accounting for nearly two thirds of the overall budget.

Members also discussed adoption and placements and the budget costs in relation to Adoption Tees Valley, the Regional Adoption Agency this authority is mandated too and questioned if there was equability across the authorities.

Members referred to the capital provision of £1.124 m for the replacement roof at Whinfield School and the wider issue of academisation and referred to the separate school condition funding budget paid direct to academies by the Department for Education and the government's full academisation of all schools and questioned the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion on the significant work required to the roof and plans towards future discussions with schools on the implementation of the Education White Paper.

Members also examined the provision within the wider budget for discretionary services and whether these services were being provided at the expense of core services within Children's Services which are under continued pressure and will continue to do so with the cost of living, working wage and child poverty challenges ahead.

RESOLVED – That the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised, following consideration, the following is this Scrutiny's views on the draft MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27:

(a) That the proposals contained within MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27, in relation to those services and finances which are specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, be agreed.

(b) That this Scrutiny Committee agree that all future discretionary spending should improve the lives of children and families and recommend that Cabinet considers the impact on Children's Social Care when making any discretionary spending decisions.

(c) That the Chair, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Scrutiny Committee, to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on 19 January 2023.