

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 15 January 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Layton (Chair), Ali, Crudass, Dillon, Renton, Storr and Toms.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen and Johnson, John Armitage and Sally Hudson.

ABSENT – Councillor Durham, Carly Stonier, Maura Regan and Janet Woodcock.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Wallis.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion), Paul Dalton (Democratic and Elections Officer) and Olivia Hugill (Democratic Officer)

CYP36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP37 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024/25 - 2027/28

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), which invited Members to give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2024/25 to 2027/28, and forward any views, in particular those in relation to the services and finances which were specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 5 December 2023 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to discuss and consider the overall contents of the MTFP, however, with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to those areas within their remit, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 18 January 2023, for consideration. It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation.

A briefing was delivered to Councillors on 13 December 2023 which provided an overview and highlighted key points in the plan. It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2024/25.

Discussion ensued on whether the costings and savings identified in the report entitled 'Children's Social Care in Darlington – Ensuring Placement Sufficiency and Enabling Creative Alternatives' had been incorporated within the MTFP; the level of detail provided to Members and the format of the submitted report; the proposed invest to save proposals outlined; and the impact of school non-attendance on budgets.

RESOLVED – (a) That, should any further savings be identified, this Committee feels that priority should be given to SEND provision, and the further development of creative alternatives and in house proposals to reduce the dependence on costly external

placements.

(b) That the report be noted, and that the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 18 January 2024.

CYP38 SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM - CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IN DARLINGTON - ENSURING PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY AND ENABLING CREATIVE ALTERNATIVES

The Assistant Director, Children's Services, submitted a report (previously circulated) to enable Members to consider a series of proposals to reduce dependence on costly external placements and to support and improve placement sufficiency for children and young people in Darlington.

The submitted report referenced a report that had been submitted to Cabinet on 5 December 2023, and invited Members to comment on, and note, the proposals.

Members entered into discussion on the improved fostering offer, and the expansion of the Cedars to a seven days per week offer.

RESOLVED – That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee note and welcome the Placement Sufficiency proposals, which will progress to Council within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) process.