

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel - 14 November 2018 Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2019-2020 Draft Minutes

Alison Shannon, Chief Accountant, presented the draft budget report and medium-term financial strategy report. The panel were invited to comment on the proposals and respond to the recommendations. The Chief Accountant also invited the panel to suggest changes to the current budget setting process to improve consultation arrangements.

The Chief Accountant outlined the background to the work done to respond to the previous projected budget challenge of £19.5 million for 2019 – 2020 that was presented in a report to Cabinet on 11 July 2018. The projected budget challenge figure was now estimated to be £6 million after further work was done to identify budget efficiencies, budget reductions and income generation opportunities.

The Chief Accountant advised the panel that comments on the draft budget and medium-term financial strategy will be included in a report that will be presented to Scrutiny Board on 11 December 2018. The Chief Accountant outlined the next steps in the budget consultation process. The panel were invited to comment on the report.

The panel commented on the lack of detail in the budget report about the proposals for budget reductions and income generations relating the children and young people services and would like more information. The Chief Accountant agreed to note the comment and agreed to look at making changes to the layout and content to make the information clearer about the proposal and the implications for individual services provision.

The following is a summary of panel discussion about proposals for budget reduction and income generations

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Tier 3 funding to Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust

The panel queried the reduction in the budget of £137,000 for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the implications for children and young people needing support. Andrew Wolverson, Head of Service People, advised the panel that the service undertook a review of funding for services at Tier 3 as part of the budget preparation work. The review involved comparing the approach adopted by neighbouring local authorities to funding of this service and the evidence showed that very few provided funding at this level. Most of the council's reported that they focus their funding at Tier 2 level of support for people needing a lower level of mental health support. The panel were advised that Wolverhampton CCG is responsible for meeting the needs of children and young people needing access to specialist mental support. The Head of Service advised the panel that there have been detailed discussions with colleagues at BCPT and WCCG about the proposals.

The Head of Service advised the panel that savings from the proposal would be invested to improve services at the Tier 2 level of support.

The panel queried the impact of the budget reduction on the ability of the Council to meet the needs of young people with mental health concerns and how our provision compares with that offered by neighbouring authorities. The Head of Service People

reassured the panel that the principal underlying the approach is that the fundamental services at Tier 2 and that services at Tier 3 should be the responsibility of the CCG to fund and deliver. The expectation is that an increase in investment at Tier 2 level will reduce the number of young people being referred to Tier 3 by intervening much earlier with support. A new Tier 2 service will be re-commissioned based on the learning from the HeadStart programme about which projects have been successful.

The panel queried the impact on the service of children diagnosed with autism if funding is reduced and if the new service could meet the current level of demand for support. The Head of Service People advised that Robert Hart has responsibility for developing the autism strategy. The scrutiny officer agreed to re-circulate a briefing paper prepared by Rob Hart about the current strategy. The panel agreed to add the topic to a future agenda item for the panel to consider. The Head of Service advised the panel that the needs of the young person would be detailed in the education health plan, which would detail the support needed.

Supervised Contact Centre Provision for Children and Young People

The panel queried the implications of reduced spending on the supervised contact centre provision. The Head of Service advised the panel that the figures quoted do not represent a budget reduction. The panel were advised that work had been done to review the current use of the service and a number of efficiencies had been identified that could create extra capacity, if alternative provision was provided where supervised contact was required. The change in usage would allow the service to be offered to other potential users such as courts where a location is available for supervised contact and other local authorities looking for similar provision. The service would provide a source of income for the council.

Mark Taylor, Director of People, explained that the consideration would be given to adding a note explaining in future budget reports a situation where an increase in income has helped to reduce a larger savings in expenditure than would have occurred without the income.

WV Active Catering Offer

The panel queried the reasons for the reduction in the budget for the service. The Director of People advised the panel that a review of the catering service at WV Active venues had been done as the service does not generate enough profit to cover the costs of providing it. The responsibility for the WV Active service has been transferred to the Director of Public Health who is looking at use of vending machines to replace the current provision. The Council is looking to reduce the level of subsidy to the catering service.

The panel queried if there were plans for make use of the space in the centres that would be left if the catering service was removed and the subsequent loss of income. The Director of People advised the panel that no decision had been made about the future use of the space, but the aim is to make the best use of any space.

Resolved:

The panel comments on the draft budget and medium-term financial strategy 2019-2020 to be included in the feedback in the report to Scrutiny Board.

A report on the autism strategy to be presented to a future meeting of the panel.

The Chief Accountant to review the presentation of the budget savings proposals in future reports to give more details about the impact of the planned changes on the level of service provision.

The Chief Accountant to consider the presentation of budget reports to show how proposals for income generation have lessened the impact on the overall budget.