



Leicester

City Council

minutes of the Meeting of the

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 13 JANUARY 2021 at 4:00 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Dawood (Chair)
Councillor Cole (Vice Chair)

Councillor Pantling
Councillor Rahman

Councillor Riyait
Councillor Whittle

In Attendance:

Councillor Cutkelvin, Assistant City Mayor - Education and Housing
Councillor Russell, Deputy City Mayor - Social Care and Anti-Poverty

Also Present:

Gerry Hurst - Roman Catholic Diocese
Janet McKenna - Unison
Joseph Wyglendacz - Teaching Unions Representative

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98. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Co-opted Member of the Commission, Carolyn Lewis.

99. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cole declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting that he had family members who worked within schools and a family member that worked within the Council.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interests. Councillor Cole was not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during consideration and discussion of the agenda

items.

100. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the minutes of the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 30 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

103. DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2021/22

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed budget for 2021/22.

The Strategic Director of Social Care & Education and the Head of Finance noted the following in relation to the budget in general and the Children, Young People and Schools aspect of the budget;

- This year the budget was a one year stop gap budget, as it was unclear as to the ongoing impact of; the pandemic, on spending and on the economic downturn.
- There had been minimal changes to the budget for 21/22 and no further information had been received from government regarding the budget beyond this period.
- The proposed budget was in many respects a roll forward of this year's-based budget, taking into account some areas of pressure that had arisen as a consequence of the current year.
- Details were provided on mainstream education and the vast majority of their budget which came through the dedicated schools grant. It was further explained regarding the amount of funding that the Council had for direct engagement in the schools area was noted to also be very limited but being maintained.

The presenting Officers further explained and responded to comments from Members of the Commission:

Placement Service

- It was noted that significant work was being done to address the substantial proportion of the budget which was allocated to placements for children who are looked after. For example, children in specialist placements noted to be quite expensive.
- In terms of placement costs, it was reported that there was sufficient head room in that budget to carry the service through to next year without additional growth. However, work was required to keep the costs under control.

Special Education Needs (SEN) service

- The majority of funding for Special Educational Needs (SEN) was drawn from the dedicated schools grant, however the bulk of the funding for the provision of transport to get Children and Young People to and from

school came from the Council's General Fund Budget.

- Following a recent review, the results showed that Leicester had a larger proportion of SEN service users who receive Council funded transport compared to other authorities.
- Of those who were supported, a larger proportion were transported by taxi rather than an inhouse bus network. In addition, the average route cost for those services was generally higher than in other authorities.
- This was an area where there was significant pressure on the budget and therefore substantial work was being carried out to;
 - better understand where the service was in terms of the transport budget,
 - ensure that the service was getting value for money for its existing contracts,
 - ensure that the demand for those services was balanced. i.e. travel training and supporting families to transport the children themselves.
- It was further noted that this budget was offset by some savings which the Council had put in around the new framework taxi contracts and savings through expanding personal budgets, however there was still a £2.2m increase in the SEN transport home to school budget.
- The service noted the importance of securing the best outcomes for young people and of supporting young people to have the greatest ability to travel independently, which was a vital life skill for when they became adults.
- In order to address the growing number of education health and care plans, there was an increase in the Special Education service team of £400k. This was especially required since, the team had not received an increase in capacity for a number of years, despite ongoing growth in demand, driven by legislation.

Connexions Service

- There was a planned Connexions Service review which was to take place this year however this had been paused due to the impact of the pandemic on the economy.
- Instead the fund was retained, and the service was being restructured to be more efficient.
- It was noted that, as a result of the pandemic, there had not yet been an increased demand in the Connexions service however, they now had better detail on what was happening with those existing service users who were not in education or employment.
- It was noted that there was likely to be some significant impact on youth and employment services in the next 12 months as a result of the pandemic.

Children Social Care and Early Help

- The Children's Social Care and Early Help budget had been controlled very tightly this year and was reported to be in a steady state.
- There was also additional funding that had been put in which allowed the Children's Services budget to be at the level it needed to be

especially compared to other authorities.

- It was further confirmed that there had not been an overall increase in safeguarding demand for Social Care services during the course of the pandemic and details were provided on the support given to families during this time for instance the recent increase of domestic abuse incidents within households.
- Therefore, no significant increase or additional pressure was anticipated. The challenge would be to what extent the budget could be reduced going forward.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Commission welcomes the position taken to retain the connexions service.
3. That a report on the SEN transport budget be brought back to a future meeting of the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission.