



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2017 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Dr Moore (Chair)
Councillor Aldred (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Malik

Councillor Grant

Councillor Senior
Councillor Willmott

In Attendance:

Councillor Russell – Assistant City Mayor, Children Young People & Schools

Standing Invitees (non-voting):

Peter Flack, Teaching Unions
Ms Anu Kapur, Leicester Secular Society
Kulsum Hafeji, Youth Representative

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57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Gerry Hirst (co-opted member), Carolyn Lewis (co-opted member), Councillor Cole, Mohammed Al-Azad (co-opted member) and Rabiha Hanan (standing invitee)

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

64. DRAFT BUDGET 2017/18

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed budget for 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The Chair commented that it had been difficult to scrutinise the report and referred to her email to Commission Members (26/1/17).

Councillor Russell, the Assistant City Mayor for Children, Young People and Schools introduced the budget relating to the Children's Services area, explaining the budget was presented in the same way as the last 3 years noting that because of the level of cuts imposed by the government a once a year approach was no-longer viable, the council had to make savings and consideration was being given to how this could be achieved through reviews in services. The two areas being focused on in relation to the general fund were Early Help Services and Youth Services.

In terms of the Early Help Remodelling review Councillor Russell explained why it had taken longer to report on the outcomes it was noted that the responses received included more than 500 suggestions within which there were more than 40 themes that the service had to fully consider and determine whether they were viable and feasible.

Commission Members were informed that the Youth Services consultation had also begun and that consultation period was live until April 2017.

Councillor Russell noted that because of the changes to education funding there was also a need to pay due regard to that budget.

The Chair reminded commission members that a special meeting had been scheduled on Monday 6th March 2017 to receive the Early Help Remodelling outcomes.

Concern was expressed regarding the £4million target saving to be made in Early Help services that the details of that were not available at this meeting and Commission Members wanted to know the responses to the consultation and what if any changes would be made. Commission Members expressed their frustration with the process and in particular that all details were not brought to this meeting, before budget council, so that backbenchers could fully scrutinise the proposals.

Commission Members felt that in relation to the Early Help Remodelling consultation whilst it was appreciated that there were difficulties and a need to consider all of the suggestions and proposals it was a concern that scrutiny was not part of the consideration process.

Councillor Russell advised that the data was still being worked through and gave some of the headline figures to show the scale of responses that officers were dealing with. Councillor Russell indicated that there was potential for 12 changes arising from the responses and the full analysis currently ran to 70 pages. As there was still more to go through this would be reported fully to the March meeting. The commission noted this response and suggested that if the council could find funds to meet the concerns of the responders then the council should look to do that.

In relation to the education services grant Martin Judson, Head of Finance (Investing in Children) confirmed that there was a contingency sum of £3million

to balance the reduction in the education services grant.

Referring to the report (page 20-21) and the spending reviews, Commission Members stressed that children's services were a priority especially with regard to the circumstances of the child population in the City, children's services was an area that should be looked at very carefully before taking any money out of its budget and there were other areas of the council's budget that could be looked at again to take money from. In terms of this budget for example it was felt that money could be taken from Highways maintenance and put into children's services as a general point.

Concerns were expressed that the budget process had become unclear, the figures could not be triangulated, there was no forecast impact and Commission Members could not compare like for like.

It was suggested that education had been cut back and reduced more than any other service in the council and Commission Members asked if there was a comparative between education and for example neighbourhood services or social care.

Councillor Russell replied that it would take time to provide a response to that point and assured Commission Members that there was still a strong focus on education within the division, however there was a cross over between social care and education and there was strength in looking at children services holistically.

Referring to 7.3 of the report, Commission Members expressed concern that they were being told that the number of children needing social care services was vastly increasing however that was not being reported or attracting the same level of publicity as Adult Social Care. Councillor Russell agreed that there was a focus on adults and that had been raised as an issue with the Secretary of State and at the Local Government Association, it was likely that because adult's social care had more impact on the NHS it became more of a focus because of the national funding situation.

A member commented that there were a large number of working groups across the council, and it was suggested that was an area that should be scrutinised to look at attendance, whether the group was necessary, whether it could be done differently, how often the group met and whether it was necessary to meet that often, what cost was involved and the level of support being given by the council whether it be provision of support staff, officer time or just a room in a council building.

Councillor Russell indicated that some work had commenced to look at working groups in children's services as there were a whole range of different meetings taking place and the service were looking at those structures, the support given and how they could be more efficient.

In relation to the impact of previous reviews and where savings had been made Councillor Russell advised that in children's social care the department had

expanded its use of Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) to try and reduce LAC numbers. There had also been changes in the education services grant and the general fund was being used to offset some of the reduction in that grant. Specific grants to children's services had been taken away by the government and a lot of work in the department had been done to manage that.

It was proposed and duly seconded that in light of the need and importance of early help and youth work the commission requests that in the budget setting 17/18 consideration be given by the executive to reduce savings targets in spending reviews for children services.

It was also proposed and duly seconded that information be presented to council to show the comparative savings between departments.

It was further proposed that it be recommended to OSC that each scrutiny commission should look at all of the working groups within their remits across the council to scrutinise attendance, whether the group was necessary, whether it could be done differently, how often the group met and whether it was necessary to meet that often, what cost was involved and the level of support being given by the council whether it be provision of a room, support staff, officer time and how they could be more efficient.

Upon being put to the vote Commission Members agreed the three proposals outlined above.

AGREED:

1. That the Children Services element of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2017-18 be noted;
2. That in light of the need and importance of early help and youth work services the commission requests that in the budget setting 17/18, consideration be given by the executive to reduce savings targets in spending reviews for Children Services;
3. That information be presented to council to show the comparative savings between departments;
4. That it be recommended to OSC that each scrutiny commission should look at all of the working groups within their remits across the council to scrutinise attendance, whether the group was necessary, whether it could be done differently, how often the group met and whether it was necessary to meet that often, what cost was involved and the level of support being given by the council whether it be provision of a room, support staff, officer time and how they could be more efficient.