



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

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

Held: TUESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2018 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

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

Councillor Cassidy

Councillor Riyait

In Attendance:

Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Russell, Children and Young People's Services

Standing Invitees

Joseph Wyglendacz – Teaching Unions representative

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53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Carolyn Lewis (co-opted member), Anu Kapur (standing invitee), Councillor Chohan, Councillor Willmott and Councillor Aldred.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

62. COUNCILS DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed budget for 2018/19 to 2020/21.

Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Russell, Children and Young People's services introduced the budget relating to the Children's Services area.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance (Investing in Children) gave a presentation summary of education and children's services budgets 2018/19 which included areas of spend and sources of funding and highlighted budget pressures.

Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Russell, commented that although commission

members were receiving more specific detail of the budgets and streams of funding in the presentation to gain a fuller picture only the General Fund element would be contained in the report to council.

The Chair welcomed the extra detail being presented to commission members and took the point of a more global report being presented to council.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance (Investing in Children) indicated that there would be some slight change to the "Departmental total" set out in the Budget Ceilings table (pg 30 App One) to take account of the Education Services grant ceasing and an adjustment of corporate funds set aside previously to balance that. Martin Judson, Head of Finance (Investing in Children) also agreed to send a financial reconciliation between the Budget Ceilings figures in the report (pg 30) and the Education and Children's Services Budget figures within the presentation to commission members.

Commission members discussed the significant pressures on budget lines, expressing concern at the level of impact of the increasing numbers of LAC and Child Protection cases upon Placement costs and Social Care Service costs as well as the increasing demand for services for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and pressure on the High Needs Block (DSG) budgets which included a shortfall of nearly £2m.

In response to questions from commission members it was noted that:

- The number of young people in the city was increasing significantly through increase in birth rate over time plus increase in migration. This brought with it other issues and pressures that impacted upon services.
- SEN numbers were increasing through population growth and coupled to that was an insufficient grant allocation which was not reflective of the increasing population.
- Services in Leicester had become better at identifying children with SEN and the special school provision had reached capacity at approximately 1,100 places with projected growth only funded at £4,000 per place.
- Compared to other authorities the costs relating to special schools overall were low which was a positive, however the increasing demand on transport costs was an area being considered for improvement.
- The service was at an early stage of reviewing all of its SEN placements and services to identify and ensure the most appropriate placements, working with schools to see if there were other ways of working and looking to capitalise on areas of expertise in the system.
- Ultimately some support services might not be provided by the authority due to funding pressures but the service would work with partners and consider fully who delivered specific services.
- The loss of the Education Services grant would have a significant impact on the school improvement service however corporate contingencies were made last year with funding set aside to mitigate that. The school improvement service would reduce with changes taking place over the summer (2018) and the service remaining would focus on those schools where there was most need.

Concerns were expressed that the report did not appear to differentiate the costs for services that were statutory or discretionary, or how the reducing funds were impacting on the legal obligation to perform and deliver certain services and where discretionary services were being lost.

Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Russell responded that the vast majority of services provided were statutory and there was some control over discretionary, e.g. in terms of children centres there was a duty to provide a service but the level of service was not set by statute. Costs for statutory services were increasing significantly and therefore the money available to spend on discretionary or non-prescribed services was diminishing.

The Chair commented that there was a need to look at the whole budget and to identify other areas of the council where savings might be made to enable reallocation of money to the Children's Service budget, in particular from areas where it was not essential spending.

AGREED:

1. That the Children Services element of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2018/19 to 2020/21 be noted,
2. That the Overview Select Committee takes account of the comments of the Commission outlined above.