

## Public Questions for Cabinet meeting on 12 September 2018

### Item 5 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

#### **General questions on covering report**

##### **1) Brett Walker**

We the public have been told that the very high salaries paid to directors and assistant directors are because of the accountabilities they hold. If this is really the case why have members not required the chief executive to hold the director responsible for the spendthrift mismanagement of the Children's budget accountable?

*Response to be provided by Cllr David Fothergill*

##### **2) B Burnstall** (not attending meeting – Scott Wooldridge to read out these questions)

1 Why are council members allowing the chief executive to employ a temporary director paid at £900 per day plus £270 expenses?

2 Why are council members allowing the chief executive to advertise for a new finance director with a salary that is reported to be £20,000 more than that paid to the one who just left?

3 The council's senior management has ballooned in recent years despite the council reducing in budget and headcount. It is much larger than that of other councils. Why are council members not requiring the chief executive to make a big reduction in the number of directors and assistant directors instead to cutting things like gritting and road safety? Why are council members putting the council's senior management team before lives?

*Response to be provided by Cllr David Fothergill*

##### **3) David Orr**

This County Council was founded in 1889 and now faces a terminal threat to its existence.

The BBC report that Somerset is in pole position to follow Northamptonshire into insolvency.

I supported a council tax freeze for the first 3 years of austerity. However, the freezing of council tax for party political reasons for the 4 years until the elections in 2017, has eroded the base budget and hastened this Council's financial crisis.

Recovery after crisis is always more expensive than maintaining investment.

Whilst ordinary staff costs have fallen by almost 50% since 2010, senior management costs have only fallen by around 10%.

The Commissioning Council structure is designed for outsourced services but duplicates management. The commissioning structure in social care should be scrapped.

News comes that a modest £70,000 from Taunton Deane Council saves the Taunton Park & Rides for one year while simple reconfigurations take place. Has that news damaged this Council's reputation for sound management?

The status quo of confusing two-tier Local Government in Somerset with 6 councils is unaffordable with continuing austerity.

I am a longstanding supporter of a Unitary Council for Somerset. I support David Fothergill's initiative but with a new management team.

We cannot ask taxpayers to put more money into our Councils whilst wasting money on 6 Councils when one is enough or excessive management overheads.

With the County Council, Taunton Borough Council and with all 5 MPs and the Government being Conservative, why doesn't Somerset get a fair deal?

I fear that the County Town of Taunton and Somerset are in a spiral of shameful decline.

If this Council cannot afford to borrow to build new schools for all of the new homes built, who will?

The Government grant to Councils is designed to smooth out inequalities and prevent postcode lotteries. It cannot be removed altogether. It is now time that all Conservative Councillors tell their own Government loud and clear that "enough is enough". The crisis cuts before us today feel more like Greece than the UK as the 5th largest economy in the world.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Mandy Chilcott / Peter Lewis*

#### **4) Alan Debenham**

(1) Bearing in mind my attendance at many County Council meetings over recent years giving grave warnings of the tragic consequences of this Tory government's extreme right-wing austerity onslaught, via complete withdrawal of revenue support grant from some two-thirds of total budget to zero by 2020, AND my giving of detailed written notice of alternative national economic measures and protest actions to not only reverse these cuts, but also to actually expand our local services, THEN HOW ON EARTH IS IT that I still witness virtually no real on-street or on-media fightback from elected Councillors and their local parties in doing their main vital job of maintaining these services at all costs ?

(2) With the development many years ago now of the Medium Term Financial Plan and its well advanced budgetary programming, HOW ON EARTH IS IT that the County Council is now in this ridiculous predicament of having to make in-year emergency cuts of some £13 million in this year's budget and some £15 million in next year's with devastating consequences on essential services for our most vulnerable residents ?

AND ARE THESE CUTS on top of those already in the MTFP for 2018/19, as agreed at last February's budget agreement, or part of an up-to-date re-appraisal of the whole budgetary position ?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Chilcott / Peter Lewis*

### **5) Patricia Rowe**

I wish to submit 2 questions to Cabinet regarding Month 4 budget monitoring report

1) In 7.8 Finance Overspend it states that there is a projected overspend of £105,000 which has increased by £158,000 since the last report. The narrative says these costs relate to the costs for interim director of finance and the appointment of a permanent replacement. Given that the whole year costs for a Director of Finance would have been budgeted for, projected and reported, this seems like a very large variance. I would like to know the budget allocated for the Director of Finance's post, and a breakdown what has been set against it that has led to the increased variance of £158k - eg the projected costs of the Interim Director, recruitment costs for both interim and permanent post, projected additional costs of new director, any other employee costs etc

2) in the budget monitoring report it refers to a number of unfunded posts, that is to say, posts created or appointed to (either with a direct employee or agency employee) outside of a directorate's budget constraints - how many of these posts are there across the county council, what is their total projected cost for the current financial year and were all of these appointments made through the county councils revised recruitment protocol or approved by the CEO.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Mandy Chilcott / Peter Lewis*

### **Adult Social Care proposals**

#### **6) Bob Ashford (to be read at the meeting by Scott Wooldridge – Monitoring Officer)**

Dear Councillor Fothergill,

We are writing to you to express our real concerns at the impact the proposed cuts to adult and children's services will have on families in Frome. Whilst we are aware of the difficult financial situation the Council finds itself in we would ask that you and

your fellow councillors look at reprioritising any potential budget reductions away from those who are already in crisis.

Fair Frome is a local charity which has no political affiliation. We work in partnership with those organisations in Frome (statutory and voluntary) who already work with disadvantaged families to identify need and provide practical support where we can. To this end we already run the local Food and Furniture Banks and run Community Lunches, “Holiday Hunger” and other programmes. Whilst Frome appears relatively affluent I am sure you are aware that two areas in Frome are already in the bottom 20% most deprived areas of the country as measured by HMG deprivation indices. From the take up of our services it is obvious that this situation has further deteriorated with the introduction of Universal Credit and the already substantial reductions in Sure Start and other targeted services for children and families in the area. This combined with substantial rises in accommodation rental prices and house prices has led to a “perfect storm” which is driving even more local families into poverty.

We are thus concerned that the proposed cuts and reviews in expenditure for early years, youth services and youth offending services as well as those for children and adults with disabilities and Young Carers, will have a further calamitous impact. We work very closely, for instance, with the local Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau, relying on them to advise families in crisis and refer on to us for practical support. For many of the individuals and families they see they provide a real lifeline and enable them to get back to financial stability which benefits the whole community. We know that these proposed reductions will mean that they will lose £98,000 from next year’s funding – a cut of 21% from their overall funding which will inevitably result in some loss of paid staff and service availability for clients.

As I said we do recognise the difficulties you face as elected members in trying to balance a forever reducing budget but ask you to do all within your power when the Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet meet on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September respectively to mitigate the impact on the most vulnerable in our local communities.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Giuseppe Frascini / Stephen Chandler*

**7) Liz Simmonds (part adults / part children)**

**Background**

Somerset Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Strategic Forum supports the work of the wider voluntary sector across Somerset. A key part of this work is to create relationships of trust with our public sector partners through regular cross-sector Forum meetings which are regularly attended by fifty local VCSE organisations.

**Somerset Voluntary and Community Sector – general comments on SCC funding proposals**

The sector is obviously aware of the extremely difficult financial circumstances faced by Somerset County Council. However many Forum Members would like to express

deep concern at the budget proposals being considered by Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and Cabinet on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

At a VCSE meeting on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September it was agreed that the Strategic Forum would collate comments on the budget proposals from across the community sector. The time-scale has been very short to consider the proposals in any detail or offer a considered response as the papers were not made public until three days ago. However colleagues from across the VCSE sector would like to urgently raise the following points:

### **1. Proposed cut to Advice Services funding**

There is a strong feeling from the sector that the proposed funding cuts to advice services are 'short sighted and short term' and will result in more people reaching crisis point, seeking support from statutory services and ultimately costing the system more money as well as damaging their own life chances. To many organisations the proposal does not align with the current stated aims of SCC to promote preventative services.

For many organisations Citizens Advice /WSAB are seen by them and their service users as a vital 'emergency service' and they comment that no other Somerset agency has the expertise and knowledge to deal with such a broad range of highly complex issues or with the numbers of people attending their services – 23,000 people last year.

'The proposed funding cuts to advice services across Somerset will be extremely detrimental to some of the most vulnerable people in our Society.'

'We regularly refer people living with long term conditions to CA for advice and guidance on benefits. We know that CA advisors give a consistently high level of service. If this service is put at risk, it would leave a large hole in support that would directly affect the people who are in most distress.'

'the service Citizens Advice South Somerset provides is a key part of the social prescribing system in South Somerset and will be a key feature of the Health & Care Strategy, of which SCC is a lead partner.'

'We have worked hard to support young people to access CABs in the absence of IAG services for young people that were previously cut. With this threat to CAB yet again young people will have significantly less access to services that can help them make well-informed decisions about their lives'

*Response to be provided by Cllr Giuseppe Frascini / Stephen Chandler*

## **2. Proposed cuts to Get Set and Youth Services**

'The cuts to these services will result in worse outcomes for children and young people and the expectation will be that the voluntary and community sector will pick up the pieces with no funding'

'the question is whether SCC have considered the impact of removing the small Youth & Community Grants (£3500 each) which communities use as match funding for either providing directly or commissioning third sector organisations to deliver services for young people in their communities. The leverage of having SCC funding is massively useful when applying to other funders. Removal of this funding will reduce the ability of groups to source additional funding and compromises their ability to draw in significantly larger grants to support youth work in areas of significant need'.

The point is made that there will be further impact on young people in the future as getset and early help work saves significant amounts of money and that if this is removed vulnerable young people will suffer in the long term.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

### **Summary**

Many voluntary and community organisations comment that they are deeply concerned not only for vulnerable people who they believe will suffer as a result of these proposed cuts but are also fearful that they will be unable to cope with the resulting increased demand on their own services with no additional resources.

Additional letter also included:

Dear Liz,

Many thanks for further highlighting the potential impact of cuts to Citizens Advice funding at the VCSE Health and Care Strategy Consultation today. I had only this morning been talking to Jon Shoesmith at Taunton Citizens Advice about these cuts as seen by me here in the Gazette,  
<http://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/16685820.very-sharp-end-ofausterity-hits-in-somerset-in-plans-to-cut-28m-from-council-spending/> .

Ironically tomorrow I am due to talk at Taunton Citizens Advice AGM on the 'relationship between mental health and debt.' Mind works very closely with Citizens Advice across the county and it is with great dismay I heard of this proposal being considered by SCC. It would be a real step backwards for the county if these cuts were to be actioned. Already we see many challenges in our society with the changes that have been implemented to save money and budgets. While these may be a necessity to curb spending to keep within budgets, it seems absurd to me in this

instance to remove funding services that in all the evidence are known to save the tax payer money elsewhere, and improve the wellbeing of our community the very thing we are trying to achieve.

Mind knows first hand that many health problems are not caused by medical needs, but far more often by social circumstances. Many of which the valuable support and advice offered by Citizens Advice seek to alleviate. It is always hard in the voluntary preventative sector to truly demonstrate money saved, as often we have removed the factor that would have caused the expenditure by the work that we do.

It is further naïve for us to think that voluntary sector organisations will be able to carry out their work with little funding. In fact if these services were to disappear it is the statutory services and tax payer who would end up having to provide the support at far greater cost, and in all likelihood in situations that could have been prevented at a lower level and will have escalated increasing overall cost.

Therefore I feel the proposal is short sighted and short term and not considering the longer term costs that will be incurred and indeed far likely higher and more difficult to resolve.

I am very happy for you to put this letter forward as part of collecting together the voice of the VCSE sector. More than happy to talk/discuss with anyone you feel needs to hear.

I sincerely hope that SCC will reconsider this proposal.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Giuseppe Frascini / Stephen Chandler*

### **8) Lyn Goodfellow / Amy Jones**

What are your financial plans for clients who attempt to access your services with statutory care needs when Citizens Advice can no longer avert crisis and could have intervened earlier?

Citizens Advice in Somerset statement

**Citizens Advice bureaux in Somerset - Sedgemoor, Mendip, Taunton and South Somerset working in partnership with West Somerset Advice, independent advice agency in West Somerset**

ASC-03 Reduction in funding for Citizens Advice services (Core Funding, Local Assistance Scheme)

**For each district's Citizen's Advice services:**

## End Adult Social Care Core Grant and Local Assistance Scheme Administration Grant and Assessment Fee

This will consist of:

- Removing 50% (£25k) from the Local Assistance Scheme budget for Assessment Fees from **October 2018/19**.
- Remove all other funds from **April 2019**:
  - 100% (£252k) of Adult Social Care Core Grant
  - 100% (£167k) of Local Assistance Scheme Administration Grant
  - Remaining 50% (£25k) of Local Assistance Scheme Assessment Fee

**Reduce funding for Local Assistance Scheme purchases by 10%** (saving of £12k per year) – this funding is supporting by contingencies and is therefore not part of the net change to service budget

<b>Adult Social Care Core Grant – Citizens Advice in Somerset &amp; West Somerset Advice – 2017/18</b>	
Unique clients helped	22,953
Advice issues	78,800
Benefit income generated	£7,195,873
Value of debts managed	£5,596,349

<b>Local Assistance Scheme Administration Grant and Assessment Fee – Citizens Advice in Somerset &amp; West Somerset Advice – 2017/18</b>	
Number of applications processed	2,030

<b>Income and Impact - Citizens Advice in Somerset &amp; West Somerset Advice</b>	
Combined income for 2017/18	£1,943,669
Average % reduction in income based on 2018/19 budgets	25%

<b>Public Value - Citizens Advice in Somerset</b>	
Value of volunteering in 2017/18	£1,256,444
Public value generated in 2017/18 (including the value of volunteering)	£30m
Potential reduction in public value based on 25% cut to income	-£7.5m

### Impacts

**Impact of the average 25% reduction in income means :**

- 5,738 people not helped
- 19,700 issues not addressed
- £1.7m of benefit income lost :
  - Taken out of the local economy
- £1.3m of debts unmanaged



- Decreased ability to deliver and administer the Local Assistance Scheme placing additional strain on Somerset County Council's reduced staffing level
  - Assessing support required in addition to food vouchers i.e. providing a fridge for a client needed to store diabetes medication

**Losses to Somerset County Council :**

- Adult Social Care :
  - enabling individuals to remain independent through income maximisation and debt management resulting in older people able to pay for their own care needs
  - specialist advice for clients with mental health needs
  - practical and financial support for clients with a cancer diagnosis
- Children's Services :
  - maximising household income and providing debt management to prevent ill-health and improve the mental wellbeing of children and young people
  - enabling stability through providing relationship and advice about family life
  - empowering parents and children through financial education
- Reputational risk :
  - increased hardship and requirement for public, community, voluntary service to meet statutory demand
  - Public and organisational perception who have a legitimate expectation that the provision of independent, quality assured advice services are met through the public purse and are free at the point of use

**Other organisations impacted :**

NHS, district councils, DWP, town & parish councils, police, Probation Service, mental health services, landlords, solicitors, Courts & Tribunal services, social housing providers, drug and alcohol services

**Associated relevant key issues :**

- Hinkley Point C Development
- Ongoing welfare reform including Universal Credit migration in 2019

**Alternative provision :**

- No other organisation offers a universal, open-door, free service that has the ability and expertise to deal with 78,800 different problems across Somerset
- Citizens Advice volunteers are accredited to deliver advice
- In the current financial climate, there is no replacement for local authority core funding

*Response to be provided by Cllr Giuseppe Frascini / Stephen Chandler*

## **9) Jane Snow**

Is the council simply setting itself (and its residents) up for a whole load of trouble by making cuts to the Crisis Service, Dementia Day Care and Pathway to Employment? What contingency plans has Somerset County Council put in place to ensure that services already struggling to cope, help the most vulnerable in our society?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Giuseppe Frascini / Stephen Chandler*

### **Children and Families proposals**

## **10) Alison Campbell**

My question is about the proposed cuts to children's services. My child had support prior to starting school. This support was invaluable in helping prepare my child for school. My child also has ongoing support at school that very much needed. My child has a life long disability. I want my child to have a effective education, get a job, live independently and more. Surely we all want every child to achieve and aspire to their full potential? Already I have a legal document (ECHP) in place to ensure my disabled child has support to get a good education. It is a constant struggle to ensure my child's NEEDS are met. The cuts proposed to children's services will affect my child, and any child in need, to reach their full potential. To me this is so wrong. How do you propose to ensure any child that needs pre school support , support from services such as short breaks , speech therapist, SEND and more will get these NEEDS met?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

## **11) Sarah Baker**

The 600 page documents for families, workers and businesses are not true representations of life and living in Somerset.

Over the last 6 years we have been promised help, it starts it stops, it is resigned at great cost, we reach crisis points, we get passed to another organisation, we get help, it gets redesigned and it stops.

The isolation and the emotional abuse and vulnerability is increasing at a vast rate. Residents are more house bound, refused an education, refused knowledge and strategies to live (social care) and gain employment to be in control of life and housing.

Most of not many of the families I meet in Somerset are victims of the county councils law department:

elderly adults have DOLs used to prevent access in to care homes,

Children's legal costs are escalating.

I am not proud for having to give up employment to patch up my children from the persistent knock downs and fights for them to access the right for life,

an education,

a home,

Medicine

Travel

an employment,

leisure activities

Community groups

Young Carers

Therapies

Early years strategies.

I am not proud to say these cuts over the last 6 years have made my children suicidal statistics because of education, leisure, youth groups cuts.

I am not proud to say I've had to fight 2 yrs and 5yrs for life saving medication for my children.

I am not proud to say I have children who are described as disabled because we are living in a system that is disabling them and segregating them from the rest of society.

My only question to cabinet is: are cabinet members actually aware of the locks authorities duties?

Are cabinet members aware that the council can be tried for manslaughter under the care act?

Why are cabinet members allowing more money to be spent on law suits in care and education than service delivery actually costs?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

## 12) Victoria Barrett

My question will be asked by an advocate as I am unable to attend in person  
Caf-10a reduce the cost of providing transport to specialist provision.

My daughter Abigail, who lives in Wells has a primary diagnosis of Autism, and anxiety disorder.

Abigail was issued with a statement in 2014 and attended an Autism base till July this year.

Abigail's statement to EHCP transfer started in July 2016, it has taken until March 2018 to complete the transfer process to EHCP and even now her EHCP is not fit for purpose.

Before Christmas, Abigail applied for a specialist course at Bridgwater and Taunton college choosing to study an extended diploma in art and design, focused on Fashion. They have a unique to Somerset specialist Fashion Academy. This highly specialist course would help Abigail to progress her chosen field of study in Further Education and fulfil her lifetime career aspirations,

Abigail's EHCP caseworker decided that a more local college would be appropriate and named this in her EHCP, 12 miles closer to home, but does not offer the same course syllabus although the it sounded similar.

This course by a different college would deny Abigail's progression to Further Education.

The named college made objections to the placement, categorically stating they were unable to meet Abigail's needs. The Local Authority would not accept the objections.

I made a formal complaint to Julian Wooster on 6th August 2018 about failings in the transfer process. Autistic children need certainty, extra time for transitions. To not complete the process in a timely fashion causes undue anxiety at a key point of transition. I was distraught to read the reply from An interim caseworker on the 17th August 2018,

"I have been informed that Abigail's EHCP was finalised naming xxxxxxxx College, which is the college that the Local Authority deem to be the correct placement to meet Abigail's needs, and whilst recognising that the College has made objections these have not been accepted by the Local Authority. The Local Authority has no objections to Abigail attending Bridgewater & Taunton College but transport will not be provided to this provision as this will be parental preference.

Abigail has a confirmed placement at xxxxxx College from September 2018, and therefore the Local Authority has made appropriate provision for her."

Abigail did not have a confirmed placement at that college and they had no knowledge of her until mum called them to discuss.

28th August 2018, Two days before Bridgwater college enrolment day , the local authority conceded on naming the placement

We are still attempting access to transport. Abigail has not had any access to help using public transport. It is currently costing £156 in fuel payment each week to have her taken to college or I lose 3 hours of each working day. We have, so far, been denied access to a personal transport payment. There are questions if we can apply for Bursaries.

The course that Abigail has chosen allows for progression into further education and employment , The local Authority are not thinking beyond the end of this course and to what Abigail will do until she is 25. The cost of naming a placement where the provision objects will ultimately cost more with extra intervention services and likely that the Abigail will not be able to complete the college course. What a waste of money!

It is disingenuous to suggest you are proposing to save money by reducing the cost of transport when your plan is to achieve this by placing young people in settings that do not meet their needs and discriminate in a misguided attempt to save transport costs and ultimately causing further harm to the child.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

### **13) Neil Richards**

- First of all may I state Carers' Voice Somerset Partnership Board is a strategic group, and an influencing body and voice for unpaid carers in Somerset, this board was setup by Somerset County Council and the CCG to debate issue that effect Carers, I am incredibly disappointed that we have had no official invitation/notification to discuss this issue prior to this meeting.
- The issue of Young Carers is very important to me, my 3 children are all young carers having at times to help support both My wife and my own health issues, the service offers support, Respite and counselling to those who need it, how will these carers/children get the support they need? Their time is more limited than our own, they juggle education and caring during the day.
- How will Young Carers receive the support they need, an adult is expected to call during business hours to get support, a time when children/are at school Whislt it is very important to limit Young Carers roles (the statutory obligation) I can not see how this can be done without the support of paid professionals.

- Social workers are already under extreme pressure and may have to prioritise what is deemed urgent/higher priority above the need of Young Carers.
- Whilst I know in these time of austerity cuts will have to be made, sadly I believe the cost of neglecting the need of these carers in the short term will be more costly in the long term

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

#### **14) Ruth Hobbs**

1- The proposals being discussed today are over 600 pages in total and cover a vast range of provision. The agenda and proposal for significant cuts to services across the council was on the Council website only, which many families in Somerset find difficult to access due to a variety of reasons. Due to the use of jargon, commissioning terminology and acronyms many families have reported they do not understand what is being proposed. The Children and Families Act 2014 section 19 shows that Councils have a duty to ensure children, young people and their families are supported to participate in decisions about the things that affect them. Do you feel that the council have complied with the legal duties on them in this regard?

2- On the 19th April 1990 the United Kingdom signed up to the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. Through doing so this country agreed to comply with Article 12 and article 13, to respect children's views and allow them to express their thoughts and opinions. How has the council fulfilled this duty to our Somerset Children and young people especially in relation to cuts to services that directly affect them eg, school transport, Early Help, Young Carers service, Youth Offending and Youth services (CAF 01-20)?

3- Do you feel that the proposals are robust and fair considering; • The data used in some cases is over 2 years old • impact assessments undertaken in many areas indicate either red and/or amber risks • The impact assessments indicate high risks for our most vulnerable groups • Impact assessments are based solely on data without discussing with services users to ascertain the real impact on them. • Some of the impact assessment have not even been signed off? (ASC 01, 02, 03, CAF-10a, ASC 10, CAF 18, Corp 01, ECI 06) • The Council does not appear to have followed its own democratic procedures allowing for these proposals to be effectively scrutinised

Supporting Evidence:

United Nations Convention on the rights of the child 1989

Article 12 (respect for the views of the child)

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right

applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

Article 13 (freedom of expression) Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 23 (children with a disability)

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community.

Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.

Article 31 (leisure, play and culture) Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

Article 32 (child labour) Governments must protect children from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development or education. Governments must set a minimum age for children to work and ensure that work conditions are safe and appropriate.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

### **15) Tom Kennedy-Hughes**

The proposals have taken in to account the information provided through the dashboard, which is incorrect. The figures are based on statistics which are incorrect which show case-loads that are far less than the reality. This is due to the data being skewed by staff who have a reduced case load or are part-time staff. Furthermore, the percentage of individuals at risk does not take in to consideration the parenting programmes which are fundamental to the work offered within getset such as Tuning in to Kids; Triple P and MyChange (SIDAS) programme. What scrutiny is cabinet giving to the evidence that has been presented to them? Can the cabinet investigate this so they are making informed decisions?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

### **16) Eileen Tipper**

Question 1 The Democratic Process

I am concerned that a number of the proposed cuts are within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee for Children and Young People which has both the expertise and a statutory responsibility to scrutinise the Council's performance in relation to Children's Services. This Committee is due to meet on September 14th 2018. Were all members of that Scrutiny Committee informed of the relevant proposals and offered the opportunity to attend the pre-meeting and the Scrutiny Committee for Policies and Places ? What is the Council's justification for pre-empting the statutory role of the Scrutiny Committee for Children and Young People and is this action

compliant with the regulatory Governance framework for the local authority's Democratic process.

*Response to be provided by Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer*

#### Question 2 The Young Carers Service

There has been historically a previous attempt to remove support for this service which was abandoned because further inquiry revealed:- a)that the savings to Adult Social Care provided by the activities of Young Carers far outweighed the costs of the service and that, in addition,the Council had a moral duty to support those making such a massive contribution to the public good.

b)that removing support from Young Carers would also lead to additional costs in other sectors: we might expect a rise in mental health issues in Carers and cared for, the possibility of increased health care costs for the cared for, a decline in academic achievement levels in the Young Carers (leading to a long term impact on their employability ), and a rise in referrals to Adult Social Care. In addition if a Young Carer under the age of 18 is caring for a parent there is a risk that this will result in them and any siblings going into the Children's Social Care system if their needs are not met.

What evidence can the Council provide of completing a robust impact assessment and cost benefit analysis based on up to date intelligence.

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

#### Question 3 Get Set

This service is founded on the evidence based assumption that Early Intervention can prevent escalation of a child's emerging problems to higher tiers of provision which are inevitably more expensive.

The depletion of this service will also impact adversely on schools who are struggling to provide services because of financial constraints. The consequences of a more limited service include:- a decline in levels of academic achievement, an increase in behavioural problems leading to an increase in exclusions, a rise in teacher stress leading to difficulties in staff recruitment and retention and, in some instances a breakdown in family relationships leading to referrals to Children's Social Care, a service already facing recruitment,retention and performance issues.

As with Question 2 I would ask what is the Council's evidence of a robust impact assessment and cost benefit analysis based on up to date intelligence ?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

17)**Nigel Behan** (Children's / General – only first 3 questions to be answered at meeting)

Q1 Relates to Proposal **CAF-14a Children's Services**



## **Proposals for the alteration and/or reduction of early help services provided to children and their families – getset**

“Reduce staffing levels in the getset service in response to falling number of level 2 referrals and by increasing caseload targets across the service.”

Will removing these preventative early intervention services result in further pressures (including financial-“consequential costs down the line”?) elsewhere in Children’s Social Care, increased Social Work activity and more reactive responses to more crisis situations (Similar to the response on BBC Radio Somerset by the Chief Officer of Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) who said a cut to their budget by SCC will lead to extra pressure on other public services including the NHS and will cost more)? Has an Equality Impact Assessment been completed?

## **Q2 Relates to Proposal CAF-14b Children's Services Proposals for the alteration and/or reduction of early help services provided to children and their families - getset**

“Cabinet approval is being sought to launch a consultation exercise to review provision of SCC early help services. The specific changes that will be proposed in the consultation will include the proposal for SCC to no longer provide level 2 services; further proposals will be developed through an appropriate analysis and initial assessments of needs and potential equalities impact. The proposed change will be further developed through analysis of consultation feedback and presented to cabinet for decision.”

Are the Cabinet Decisions in February 2018 -

### **Development of a Family Support Service for Somerset - Phase 1**

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=2631> and

### **Family Support Service - Phase 2 Delivery April 2019 onwards**

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=2632>

- now, in effect, outdated by these proposals and will the Business Cases require significant amendment with corresponding Equality Impact Assessments and will Somerset Partnership and SCC jointly review the TUPE Transfer of Health Visitors from the NHS to Somerset County Council?
- Q3 Relates to Proposal **ASC-01 Adults Services Discovery**  
“The planned use of an element of the Better Care Fund in 2018/19 to support the Discovery Learning Disability Contract. This is in line with the year 2 contract profile. Additional savings will be generated, mainly in 2019/20, through the removal of an element of the current Crisis Service (Oak House) and a reduction in the short breaks service.”

The external auditors reported in July that: “Earmarked reserves by definition are set aside for specific purpose or a particular service or type of expenditure. As a result, they may be called on in year even if not

included within the original budget. At Somerset, however, these reserves appear to be being used in an unplanned way to reduce any overspend. For

example, a £4.9m Learning Disabilities equalisation reserve was utilised in 2017/18 despite there being no opening balance.”

- (How) Is this related to the new savings (Summary of Additional Savings Proposals) of £3.394m and the forecast Transformation costs prior to the start of the contract in April 2017?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

### **18)Kirstie McCrory**

I would like to address my question to Frances Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Children and Family and it refers to item 5, The Revenue Budget Report and proposals for change, CAF-05 DSG Reserve contribution for project work related to the SEND Independent Placements. I applied myself for an EHCP for my daughter who has autism, on the 15th of March and in desperation at a point at where her mainstream school place had repeatedly broken down. I informed JW that my daughter was on a significantly reduced timetable and had been for a very long time, spanning several academic years. We are now 26 weeks in to a 20 week process which should have been triggered many years ago, and my daughter is without a school that can meet her needs, effectively without a place. We still do not have a finalised plan and a school has not been named. We are told there is not a single available suitable place in the county. Imagine my dismay, when I read “The Schools Forum agreed on 11th July 2018 to fund 2 posts as an invest to save opportunity to reduce the costs of independent SEND placements.” Because that situation could be read another way, because there is a perfectly good school, just a mile down the road, it has places and can meet her needs, and could today, this minute, put an end to our educational misery. But quite simply the council doesn’t want to spend the money. It does not want to spend the money to the extent that it would rather pay salaries in excess of £117, 000 to ensure that children like her are denied those places. And that the council has the gaul to take money from the designated school’s budget high needs funding block, rather than pay those salaries from the local authority budget in inexcusable, it’s like asking them to pay for their own executioner. I would like the cabinet member to explain to my child, why you have taken her school funding to pay somebody to ensure she has no school funding, because that is what it looks like. Furthermore, I notice the decision contained within this proposal has already been taken by the Schools Forum on 11th July 2018, without

consultation. I also notice that in your impact assessment, that if the costs of these posts can not be mitigated the impact will be passed on to the children with SEND, which is obviously wrong as they are already impacted by it. Do you want this decision to become famous for the Somerset Review.”

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

**19) Tim Cutting and Stuart Sheppard (to be read by Ruth Hobbs)**

I am well aware of the financial pressures on the County at present, and I am not making any particular political statement, but the situation at Wadham School will not improve, in fact it will get worse, if all involved seem to 'bury their heads in the sand'.

We have been informed by Hadleigh Wells of Futures for Somerset that the Council are likely to avoid making any decisions to change the structure of Education in the Crewkerne/Ilminster area until post September 2020. In the meantime Wadham will continue to make substantial losses even with all the cuts that we have made over the last few years. I repeat what I have said for some time, the school is not sustainable as an 13-18 Upper School. All the officers that have been involved have indicated that that the change from a 3 tier to a 2 tier system is a given. The headteachers of the feeder middle schools are beginning to stir the communities into a frenzy that does not help the situation.

For the sake of Secondary education in this community it is essential that an early decision is made.

I think the maintaining of our 6th form may be a problem, but if that provision is withdrawn, the school will be even less sustainable, although I believe the Governing body at Wadham are realistic about that prospect.

Any decision on the provision of education will be controversial, but if years 7 and 8 from Ilminster and Crewkerne were sent to Wadham, it would make the school viable, and enable the school over time pay back our deficit to the County council.

We have a new headteacher, and I would hope that he can be encouraged to move the school forward without the constraints that we have had over the last few years.

I look forward to your early response.

Tim Cutting

Chair of Governors - Oakfield Academy

And

I cannot hide or contain my anger at these proposals to make reductions in both Childrens' and Adults Services. In my view the only question for the Cabinet, and especially the signatories of the letter sent to us on Sept 4 is:

In all good conscience, as decent and caring human beings, how can you continue to support the policy of Austerity, which takes resources desperately needed to help and support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society and hand them to those at the very top of the financial pile? On behalf of the people of this county please show some leadership and join with others to refuse to inflict these cruel policies on the communities that you represent.

Stuart Sheppard

Chair Wadham School

*Response to be provided by Cllr Frances Nicholson / Julian Wooster*

## **Corporate Services**

### **20) Kris Black – Unison**

Somerset County Council has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment into the proposal for employees to take 2 Days compulsory unpaid annual leave, plus one working day from home/leave/flexi to be taken over the Christmas period.

UNISON has reviewed the Equality Impact Assessment (EQI) and highlights the following:

1. Page 13, Section 14 of the EQI is incomplete. The final paragraph and sentence states “ But that younger” with no further detail.
2. Page 13, Section 14 of the EQI fails in its methodology to properly assess the impact on protected groups. For example; protected groups should be consulted in order that the County Council can fully understand the impact of these proposals. A failure to carry this analysis out properly will leave the council without enough information to remove or mitigate any identified impact.
3. Page 14, 15, 16 and 17, Section 16 of the EQI identifies a negative impact for 5 of the 9 protected characteristics and a negative impact for staff on a low income.
4. Page 16, Section 16, suggests that carers may see the proposal as positive. This is without foundation - see point 2.
5. Page 18, Section 17, fails to mitigate the negative impact identified on low paid employees (Mostly women and young people) and employees with a disability.

Q1. As a result of our observations, UNISON believes that the EQI fails to assess the impact properly and where an impact has been identified regarding employees who are women, young and/or have a disability, does not mitigate or eliminate the negative impact. It is our view that should Somerset County Council proceed with the proposals, they cannot be confident they have met the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. We therefore suggest that Cabinet requests a fresh EQI to be carried out that applies the correct methodology and approach. To give just one example: the proposal to reduce the Council's salting network (ECI-07L) will clearly impact on the Council's statutory duty to ensure road users are not endangered by icy conditions, however the proposal states that there are no legal implications to this decision. Isn't this clearly wrong?

Q2. Given the haste with which these savings proposals have been drawn up and the unprecedented number of proposals, have officers been given sufficient time to properly advise members of the legal implications of these proposals, in particular the risk that the Council may fail to meet its statutory duties? To give just one example: the proposal to reduce the Council's salting network (ECI-07L) will clearly impact on the Council's statutory duty to ensure road users are not endangered by icy conditions, however the proposal states that there are no legal implications to this decision. Isn't this clearly wrong?

Q3. In relation to the compulsory unpaid leave proposal for staff, are members aware that UNISON has conducted a thorough survey of Council employees and that of the 530 responses received so far, 80% of employees considered the proposal unfair and many have said they will experience financial hardship as a result, particularly part-time employees (the majority of whom are women)? Have members considered the impact on staff morale of this decision and the potential unintended consequence that those employees who routinely work more than their contracted hours will cease to do so if this proposal is implemented?

*Response to be provided by Cllr Mandy Chilcott / Chris Squire*

## **Highways and Transport proposals**

### **21) David Redgewell**

We are very concerned about proposals to cut public bus services and would welcome the Council retaining supported bus services such as those between Radstock - Frome, Bath - Frome, Cheddar - Street, Shepton Mallet and Frome, Wells - Burnham -On - Sea, Minehead town service/Porlock, Shepton Mallet - Castle Cary station - Yeovil, Castle Cary station - Wincanton - Street.

Over the last two years Somerset CC with BANES and the parish council's have saved many bus routes an example we have given to the Government on rural buses and in fact will be giving to the Transport Select Committee on 22nd September 2018 submissions.

We hope that Somerset CC does not cut bus services or close Taunton Park & Ride which serves Musgrove Park hospital at a time when we are also trying to reopen the Taunton - Bishops Lydeard rail link from Minehead in 2018.

We urge council to lobby Central Government for public transport support and work with the new RTB's (Peninsular and Gateway) for more bus/local rail public transport funding.

*Response to be provided by Cllr John Woodman / Alyn Jones*