

## **Public Questions**

### **Scrutiny for Policies and Place – 11 September 2018**

#### **Item 5 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report**

##### **Adult Social Care Proposals**

###### **Citizens Advice proposals**

###### **Lyn Goodfellow**

How does Somerset County Council propose to cope with the impact of cutting core funding from Citizens Advice services in Somerset?

*Response from Cllr Giuseppe Frascini and / or Stephen Chandler*

###### **Bob Ashford, Chair and on behalf of the Trustees of Fair Frome**

(Statement to be read out by the Council's Monitoring Officer)

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.

## **Children and Families proposals**

### **Young Carers proposals**

#### **Sarah Baker**

What evidence is there for the VCISO to make the sustainable and continue provisions for the young carers services? The pilot commissioned years ago struggled to meet the criteria of the care act and those of the children. Is the council aware of the true safeguarding concerns and also that the statistics on young person school attendance is also a result of schools not supporting the children's need, send difficulties, bullying through being a carer, young carers time off for bereavement of families and their own ill health.

*Response from Cllr Frances Nicholson and / or Julian Wooster*

#### **Alison Adlam**

I would like to challenge the proposed cut to funding for the Young Carers Project run by SCC and would ask if the consequences of closing this service have been fully considered?

*Response from Cllr Frances Nicholson and / or Julian Wooster*

#### **Ruth Hobbs**

1) The proposals being discussed today are over 600 pages in total and cover a vast range of provision. The council website was misleading to members of the public by indicating 2 submission dates namely Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> at 5pm and Monday 10<sup>th</sup> 12 noon (as of 9am on September the 5th).

The agenda and proposal for significant cuts to services across the council was published just before 7pm on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September on the Council website, with questions to this committee needing to be submitted by a 5pm deadline on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September.

Does the scrutiny board accept that less than 48 hours is sufficient time for members of the public to be able to read and comment on the proposals being made today?

*Response from Cllr Anna Groskop and/or Scott Wooldridge*

2) Parent carers and young carers save the local authority a large sum of money by the services they provided. A survey currently being conducted by the forum shows that 84% of the respondents felt their wellbeing was being negatively impacted on by caring. The survey also indicated that parent carers do not feel they get the support they need early enough. By removing support for young carers and the early help services, there is a massive risk that we will push families into higher tier children's social care services, which is currently struggling to recruit staff at a level to manage the current demand. With over 7 million spent on Locum social workers last years does this committee feel the removal of these services will actually in the long run make any savings?

*Response from Cllr Frances Nicholson and / or Julian Wooster*

3) Does the committee feel that the proposals are robust 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)
- Is the local authority solicitor happy with the assessments in light of these not being signed off.

*Response from Cllr Frances Nicholson and / or Julian Wooster*

### **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 ?

Whilst 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 from Cllr Frances Nicholson and / or Julian Wooster*

### **GetSet Services**

#### **Poppy Sparkes**

In regards to the proposal to cut get set level 2 services and given that it is well acknowledged that a child's early years are crucial to their life chances what provision will there actually be for families that need extra support but are not a crisis point requiring intervention from social services?

*Response from Cllr Frances Nicholson and / or Julian Wooster*

## **Gem Salter**

CAF-14a- Having ran a 0-5 year old's weekly play session specifically for children with additional needs and disabilities in Bridgwater for over 2 years, and with my own child having special needs, I have several major concerns regarding the proposed cuts. The special needs play session was run by me on a voluntary basis, but took place at a Get Set centre, which they allowed me to use free of charge, and with a Get Set support worker present. Some of the families with disabled children who attended the group had never been to a toddler group before, never spoken to other families in their position, and did not feel able to access standard toddler groups due to their child's additional needs. Most of the families were isolated and were on long waiting lists for various therapies from already overstretched and underbudgeted services. We often had professionals such as Area SENCos and speech therapists attend to give generic advice to those waiting on personalised support.

Q1) So my first question is-by reducing or getting rid of Get Set, alongside reducing Early Help, how will you ensure that vulnerable and isolated families of children with special needs and disabilities are able to access their community, allow their children to socialise, build a network of support and also gain advice from professionals whilst they're on long waiting lists?

Q2) The Portage Home Visiting service, run by the Educational Psychology service, has provided invaluable support to countless families with preschool children with additional needs. The service has been drastically cut, with many families waiting for many months to receive help, only receiving support for 1 or 2 terms when it used to be 3 or 4, and some families not receiving the service at all purely down to how overstretched it is. If Get Set services are also being closed or drastically reduced, how will you ensure that these vulnerable children will receive the early expertise and therapy that they need?

Q3) CAF-10a-Reducing SEN transport. I am concerned that by, "making sure children are placed in appropriate provision as close to home as possible" and, "manage parental expectation," children will be placed in the closest SEN school, even if the parents do not feel that this is the most suitable school for their child, just so these financial transport-related targets are met. How will you ensure that this doesn't happen?

Q4) ASC-01- A reduction in the short breaks service. This service is a lifeline for families raising a child with disabilities. My own child receives support from this service in the form of a Somerset Supporter. Can you please explain how you will ensure that these families receive the respite they desperately need, and how the young person with disabilities will still have opportunities to access activities in mainstream society if their families are unable to support them in this? The short breaks service also arrange outings for families supported by them- how will you prevent these families from being isolated and segregated from mainstream society?

Q5) CAF-12 and CAF-14a- It is widely known that for many disabilities such as autism, early intervention is one of the largest factors in predicting the individual's future. By cutting the funding for early intervention and support, the cost of school support and placement, disability and carer's benefits and future adult social care will all be greatly increased. This is an extremely short-sighted cost saving measure. What is the justification for making so many cuts to so many areas involving disabled children when all evidence and research suggests that investing in these areas will save money in the

## **SEND services**

### **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 from Cllr Frances Nicholson and / or Julian Wooster*

## **Covering report**

### **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 or 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 from Cllr Mandy Chilcott and / or Peter Lewis*