

# Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held on Friday 27 January 2017 at 10.00 in the Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton.

## Present

Cllr L Redman (in the Chair)

Cllr S Coles (Substitute)

Cllr A Dimmick

Cllr D Huxtable

Cllr J Hunt

Cllr J Lock

Cllr D Yeomans

**Apologies:** Cllr M Adkins, Cllr J Dyke and Cllr D Hill.  
Helen Fenn – Church rep; Richard Berry – Schools Forum.

**Church representatives present:**

**Parent Governor representatives present:** Mrs Ruth Hobbs.

**Schools Education Partnership Board & Schools Forum representatives present:**  
Eileen Tipper.

**Cabinet Members present:** Cllr D Hall, Cllr Le Hardy, and Cllr F Nicholson.

**Other Members present:** Cllr Davies.

## **164 Declarations of Interest – agenda item 2**

164.0 Cllr Coles, Cllr Hunt, Cllr Redman, and Cllr Yeomans, all declared a personal interest as a District and/or City/Town, Parish Councillor.

164.1 Eileen Tipper declared a personal interest as a lay member of the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and as a trustee of CHYPPS.

## **165 Public question time – agenda time 3**

165.0 There were no members of the public present.

## **166 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2016 – agenda item 4**

166.0 The Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting were accurate, and the Chairman signed them.

## **167 Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee work programme – agenda item 5**

- 167.0 The Committee considered and agreed its own work programme and the future agenda items listed. The Chairman requested an update on the status of Members Disclosure and barring Service (DBS) checks, and this was provided by the Scrutiny Manager.
- 167.1 The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months including Cabinet meetings up to 15 March 2017.
- 167.2 The Committee also accepted the updated outcome tracker and the Scrutiny Manager reminded Members that once an outcome had been agreed as complete (Green) and reported to the Committee, it would be retained on the master copy but not reported again.

**168 MTFP – Revenue Budget update – agenda item 6**

- 168.0 The Committee received a report from the Director of Finance and Performance which gave an overview of the 2017/18 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement as well as the 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 168.1 The Committee heard that the Financial Settlement was broadly in line with expectations and this included a new Adult Social Care Support Grant of £2.5m. The Settlement confirmed the continuing reduction of Revenue Support Grant which would reduce from £42m last year to £26m this, a loss of £16m. The settlement meant that based on current projections there would be a budgetary shortfall of £18.1m next year.
- 168.2 The Committee then received a report confirming the MTFP approach for 2017/18. The new approach meant that the search for savings to balance the budget has been led much more by the Commissioning Managers across the Council than by Finance Officers and the work of the Council had been distilled in to 7 themes to manage costs, demand and resources.
- 168.3 The 7 themes are: Technology and People (TAP); Productivity & Culture; Commercial & Third Party Spend; Stronger Communities; Partnership & Integration; Service Redesign; and Transport. The report contained a specific appendix with further details about each of the 7 themes. In total these propose savings targets of £18.1m for next year with the majority coming from service redesign. It was explained that the savings proposals would become decision reports over the next few months and would then follow the normal governance process.
- 168.4 The Committee discussed the new approach with some Members expressing that they found the new approach more difficult to scrutinise. Attention turned to each of the 7 themes with Members asking questions and receiving answers and some Members indicated that they would prefer to look at each decision in full as it goes through the decision-making process.
- 168.5 The Committee accepted the report and there were no specific recommendations regarding the proposed savings. There was a discussion

about the amount of money the Council had spent on agency staff and the Director of Finance and Performance and how those had differed from information provided in a freedom of information request and he undertook to provide further clarification.

- 168.6 The Committee considered and discussed the approach to setting the Council's budget, as it differed from the method previously used and Members sought and received reassurance from the Director of Finance and Performance that the savings targets were achievable and he confirmed he had confidence in the overall budget setting approach and that he savings it outlined would be achieved.
- 168.7 The Chairman concluded that the new process seemed reasonable but that the Committee would wish to see more detail around individual decisions, particularly those affecting Children's Services and areas of Council activity that currently enabled or provided services for children, young people and families in Somerset.

**169 Children and Young People Plan 2016-2016 – agenda item 8**

- 169.0 The Committee considered this report that provided details of progress made up to quarter 3 and invited Members to identify barriers to progress for quarter 4 and beyond. The reports also contained an executive summary of progress to the end of December 2016. Each of the 7 improvement programmes were also detailed in a highlight report with demonstrated progress made since the last update with details of current performance and direction of travel.
- 169.1 The Assistant Director, Commissioning and Performance introduced the report and Lead Officers provided an overview of progress made against each of the 7 improvement progress with explanatory details of direction of travel and likely prospects for change.
- 169.2 Attention of the Committee turned to consideration of performance in each of the 7 programmes. The Chairman noted that 5 of the 7 programmes now benefitted from having a Committee Champion and those Members were able to explain and provide more information about where progress had been made and what measures were being used to bring about further improvement for the improvement programme they were supporting.
- 169.3 In respect of Improvement Plan 1 an update report was requested a future meeting on the West Somerset Social Mobility project.  
In respect of Improvement Programme 3 an update report was requested a future meeting regarding the vacant posts in the Children Looked After Team, including the Psychologist posts.
- 169.4 The Committee accepted the report.

**170 Impact of proposed financial changes to Schools – agenda item 7**

- 170.0 The Committee received a presentation that provided Members with an update

about proposed changes that national funding formula for schools. It was stated that the National Funding Formula (NFF) would be implemented from 2018/19, the forthcoming financial year being a transition year with local flexibility on setting the formula.

- 170.1 From 2019/20 there would be a hard NFF with the DfE setting the values and factors, although it was envisaged there would be some continued local flexibility for premises related to school costs. It was reported that the funding formula had been designed in such a way as to ensure that no school would face an overall reduction of more than 3% per pupil.
- 170.2 Several charts were shown to demonstrate the design of the fairer funding system and the factors taken in to account to calculate how much each local authority area would be allocated. It was noted that overall in Somerset 243 Schools would benefit from higher funding, 9 would have lower funding, meaning an overall net increase in funding of £12.958m a 4.85% increase.
- 170.3 Members welcomed the positive news and hoped that the long awaited fairer funding for Somerset would go some way to redress the balance for school age children in Somerset after years of funding allocations that were much less than the national average. The Committee encouraged Officers to continue to lobby for these proposed changes to be made so the higher funding materialised.

## **171 Young Carers Task and Finish Review – agenda item 11**

- 171.0 The Committee considered this report that provided an overview of a proposed review in to the service provision for Young Carers. The aims of the proposed T&F review were listed as being:
- 171.1
- To put the voice of young carers at the heart of the findings and recommendations;
  - To scrutinise the services and support available to young carers and ensure they are fit for purpose;
  - To establish the effectiveness of integrated working between adult carers service, education, adult's & children's social care, health, and the voluntary sector in identifying and working with young carers aged 0-18, and ensuring young adult carers are supported between 16 and 25;
  - To identify methods to improve empowering young carers to approach the authority for help and increase identification of young carers;
  - To identify methods to improve transition of young carers to adult services.
- 171.2 The Committee agreed to proceed with the Task and Finish Group and the Chairman and Eileen Tipper volunteered to sit on the Group.

## **172 Team Around the School – Implementation update – agenda item 9**

- 172.0 The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this report to the March meeting, due to other agenda items over running.

**173 School Performance 2016 – agenda item 10**

173.0 The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this report to the March meeting, due to other agenda items over running.

**174 Any other business of urgency – agenda item 12**

174.0 The Chairman, after ascertaining there were no other matters arising, thanked all those present for attending and reminded Members that immediately after the meeting there would be a briefing by Ann Reeder from Centre for Public Scrutiny providing feedback following observation and workshop sessions last year.

**The meeting closed at 12:35.**

**Cllr Leigh Redman  
Chairman – Scrutiny for Polices, Children and Families Committee**