

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

14 January 2016 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mrs Duncton (Chairman)

Mrs Bennett	Mrs Jupp	Mr Oppler
Mr Blunden	Mrs Le Rossignol	Mr Parsons
Mr High	Mrs Mullins	Mr Smith
Mr Hillier	Mr R Oakley	Mr Wickremaratchi

In attendance by invitation: Mr Burrett (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills), Mr Catchpole (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health), Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life) and Mrs Field (Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing).

Members of the Health and Adult's Social Care Select Committee in attendance by invitation: Mrs Evans, Mr Griffiths Mrs Jones, Mrs Smith and Dr Walsh.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Cloake and Mrs Ryan. Dr Holt was absent.

Declaration of Interests

112. In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following personal interests were declared (see also minute 117): -

- Mrs Evans - Item 4 (Draft Budget including savings proposals) as her husband is the Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life
- Mr Evans - Item 4 as his wife is the Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Services Select Committee

Minutes

113. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Draft Budget including savings proposals 2016-17

114. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

115. Peter Lewis, Executive Director Corporate Resources and Services, introduced the report and highlighted that raising Council Tax by 3.95% would equate to an additional £14 million for the 2016-17 year. In addition funding had been set aside in a budget management reserve in order to provide a contingency for unexpected financial expenditure. He also explained that, in the light of the removal of the council tax freeze grant, officers had been asked to do some modelling work to assess what the financial position would have been if council tax had been raised in previous years and this information would be available to members shortly.

116. Avril Wilson, Executive Director Care, Wellbeing and Education, provided a presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes), the following points were highlighted:-

- The County Council welcomed the announcement by government that social care authorities could levy a 2% premium on council tax to finance additional spending on adult social care provision as this would raise an additional £7 million. However the impact of the National Living Wage coming in to effect on 1st April 2016 would cost the authority an additional £6.3million leaving a minimal balance from the £7 million to invest in improvements to services.
- It was proposed that savings from within the Adults' Services portfolio would come from the following areas:-
 - Assessment and review of Care packages – ensuring Social Workers were allocating the most appropriate and cost effective package to suit the needs of the individual.
 - Housing support – limit to core service – seeking to avoid duplication of service with District and Borough Councils and reviewing the level of Sheltered Housing provision within the County to encourage more independent living.
 - Focus on prevention – identifying opportunities where levels of demand on the service could be reduced through preventative measures.
 - Customer contributions – additional income is expected to be available to the authority through increases in customer contributions towards their social care.
 - Disability-related expenditure – ensuring more equality in the provision of disability related expenditure by matching this more appropriately to level of need.
- It was proposed that savings from within the Children – Start of Life portfolio would come from the following areas:-
 - Placement of Children Looked After – a Category Manager had been employed to ensure that the Council were obtaining the most competitive rates when purchasing agency foster care or specialist residential placements.
 - Early Childhood Service – a review of the Children and Family Centres and other Council property would be undertaken to assess whether there could be better, more joined up provision of services within County Council owned buildings.
 - Life pathways – improving the management of the transition for a young person who accesses child disability services as they reach the age where support will be provided by adult disability services.
- It was proposed that savings from within the Community Wellbeing portfolio would be achieved as follows:-
 - Re-procure school nursing/family health – a new contract to cover both services to be let thereby leading to efficiency savings
 - Sexual health contract – to procure a new contract more accurately based on expected future demand
- It was proposed that savings from within the Education and Skills portfolio would be achieved by reviewing and reprocuring the Special Educational Needs school transport service

117. Mrs Smith and Mr Griffiths both declared a personal interest as having caring responsibilities. Mr Griffiths also declared a personal interest as being a governor of Chailey Heritage School.

118. The following points were raised in discussion; Members: -

- Highlighted that the assumption by government that high property value equates to capacity to raise higher levels of council tax was flawed given that many West Sussex residents are asset rich purely due to the increase in property prices but are actually income poor. In this respect the settlement from government should take account of actual levels of income.
- Raised concern regarding the feasibility of achieving the level of savings proposed by an increased focus on prevention. *Mrs Wilson indicated that it was believed the savings could be made, however it was not possible to accurately predict where within the services these savings would be realised at this stage.*
- Requested clarification as to whether the County Council was able to swiftly deal with patients being discharged from hospital thereby preventing bed blocking. *Mrs Wilson explained that there were relatively few delays in initiating appropriate care to support discharge but that monitoring was also in place to verify this and ensure people were being moved on from hospital promptly.*
- Queried how the skills of the social workers would be improved so they were better able to prescribe appropriate care packages. *Mrs Wilson explained that the service was looking at providing suitable training for staff and ensuring they had appropriate supervision and support from managers to assist them in robust decision making. She proposed that HASC be provided with the opportunity to scrutinise the effectiveness of these improvements to working practice once they'd become embedded in the service.*
- Requested clarification regarding the approach to be taken in assessing the revision to Sheltered Housing provision. *Mrs Wilson advised that this would be carried out by assessment of needs of the residents on a scheme by scheme basis as, at each property, some residents had greater care requirements than others and these would be catered for accordingly.*
- Welcomed the news that the County Council were liaising with District and Borough Councils to investigate whether planning powers could be used to retain plots for housing older people on sites where nursing homes or sheltered housing close.
- Cautioned that where increases in customer contributions towards their care were proposed these needed assessing appropriately to ensure they were fair and equitable.
- Queried what was being done to assist parent carers who may start to struggle with their caring duties as they got older. *Mrs Wilson explained that the intention of the Life Pathways proposals was to work in conjunction with the parents in earlier planning for the child's journey to adulthood and exploring options for independent living. In addition the practicalities of an appropriate care package would be discussed with the parents to ensure realistic expectations of what the County Council could provide.*
- Asked for clarity in relation to the continuation of the Children's Social Work Academy. *Mrs Wilson explained that funding for the Academy was secure for the next year only. There was evidence to indicate improved staff retention amongst those practitioners who had progressed through the academy as they valued the training opportunities available to them and the management support in place. In addition Adults' Services were looking at lessons learnt by Children's Services from using the academy and assessing whether these could be applied to those social workers employed in Adults' Services.*

Agenda Item Number 2

- Welcomed the proposals to procure a Sexual Health contract that better reflected present and future need.
 - Raised concern about proposed future savings for the youth service. *Mrs Wilson explained that a review of current service provision across the voluntary and community sector would occur over the next year to provide a clearer picture of available services across the County. The Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life highlighted the valuable skills of youth workers and the importance of these not being lost.*
 - Welcomed the commitment to maintain access to universal services for families across the County and that practitioners would be targeting those families not already accessing Children and Family Centres or Think Family to ensure they received the support they required.
 - Raised concern about the reductions proposed in relation to the short break service. *Mrs Wilson stressed that these breaks were very important in line with the focus on prevention. In this respect the intention was not to reduce the service but improve efficiencies in procuring the short breaks.*
 - Suggested that opportunities be explored for generating income by promoting the expertise of the County Council as a service that could be bought. *Mrs Wilson acknowledged that there were examples of services that could be made chargeable to provide some income, such as weight loss advice services and certain activities provided by Children and Family Centres which it may be appropriate to make fee paying in more affluent areas.* Members urged caution in ensuring that this did not discriminate against those vulnerable families without the necessary financial means to purchase these services.
 - Sought clarification on the position of the County Council regarding the Government's request for Local Authorities to accommodate some of the Syrian refugees. *Mrs Wilson explained that, due to pressures on services caused by existing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving via Gatwick, the County Council had indicated they would only be able to accept Syrian refugee families and not additional unaccompanied children.*
 - Stressed that in considering a review of the Special Educational Needs transport service the needs of individual children must be at the centre of any proposed changes.
 - Highlighted concerns about the County Council continually seeking changes to contracts and the emphasis on driving down costs could mean that providers would consider withdrawing from the market leaving little choice in provision.
119. Resolved that: the Committee identifies the strategic and service specific issues detailed in the appendix to these minutes for referral to both the Performance and Finance Select Committee and the Cabinet for consideration at the meetings of 21 January 2016 and 2 February 2016 respectively.

Appointment to the Business Planning Group

120. The Chairman advised that a nomination had been received from Mr R Oakley to appoint Mr High to the vacant position on the Business Planning Group. The nomination was seconded by Mrs Dunction and agreed by the Committee.

121. Resolved that the Committee: -Agree that Mr High be appointed to the vacant position on the Business Planning Group.

Forward Plan

122. The Committee considered the Forward Plan, February – May 2016 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

123. Mrs Shipley, Senior Advisor, highlighted the decision within the Community Wellbeing portfolio in relation to the Healthy Child Programme - Service redesign and commissioning and explained that options were being explored for appropriate joint scrutiny of this item by both the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee and the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee.

124. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

Suggestions for Scrutiny

125. The Committee considered a report that detailed a number of suggestions for scrutiny that had been received via the County Council website (copy appended to the signed minutes). Mrs Shipley introduced the report and highlighted that the Committee had previously indicated that proposals in relation to the Storrington area schools should be considered in light of the outcome of the public consultation during the spring. A date of 18th April had now been proposed for this meeting.

126. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills stressed that the proposal set out in the consultation document may change depending on feedback received during the consultation process.

127. The Committee indicated that they were content with the suggestion to hold a meeting on the 18th April to consider the proposals in relation to the Storrington area schools and that Mrs Shipley should contact those individuals that made a suggestion via the website to explain this accordingly.

128. Resolved – That the Committee agree no changes are required to the work programme as a result of the suggestions for scrutiny received via the County Council website.

Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

129. No items were raised.

Date of next meeting

130. The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 3 February 2016 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm.

Chairman

Children and Young People's Services in consultation with the members of Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee present – comments referred for consideration by Performance and Finance Select Committee and Cabinet

Overall financial settlement – the assumption by the government that high property value equates to capacity to raise higher levels of council tax is flawed, given that many West Sussex residents are 'asset rich' purely due to increasing property prices, but are 'income poor'. Settlements need to take into account actual levels of income.

Directorate wide issues

- Members support the use of County Council assets to support services across the Directorate (eg exploring options for use of libraries as a base for support from Children's Services)
- Members support work to improve cost effectiveness of contracts for service provision across the Directorate
- Members welcome work to make best use of the positive lessons learnt through the existing Children's Social Work Academy being applied across the wider service sector including Adult Social Care.

Service specific issues

Adult's Social Care and Health

- Members support the focus on prevention, but are concerned about the high level of savings expected to be achieved via prevention and raised concerns about the achievability of these savings and where they would be realised within the Health and Social Care systems.
- HASC should actively monitor the impact of the work to improve the quality of assessment and care package review and, through this process, will also be able to assess whether front line staff have been provided with the training and support they need to deliver these savings appropriately.
- Members welcome the statement that proposals for savings will not impact negatively on those being discharged from hospital who need packages of care to be able to do so, and will therefore have no detrimental effect on the level of delayed transfers of care within the County.
- Members welcomed the assurance that any proposed changes to the level of support to service users in supported housing and those in receipt of other forms of support including occupational therapy services, would be tailored to the individual needs of service users.
- Members emphasised that any additional charges for services must be carefully assessed so as to ensure they are fair and equitable.

Children – Start of Life

- Members welcomed the commitment to maintain universal service access for families across the County, regardless of any potential changes to the

location of Children and Family Centres.

- Short breaks for children with special education needs and disabilities – potential savings should not affect the level of service provided to families with children who have special needs in West Sussex and members welcomed assurance that the proposal to reduce the budget by £50,000 will not result in a reduction in access to this service.
- Members encouraged the cabinet to explore potential income streams, but in doing so, any charges introduced as a result should not discourage vulnerable families from accessing important services.

Education and Skills

- When reviewing transport services, the needs of individual children must be at the centre of any proposals for change.