

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL  
MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2014**

Councillors M Blake, Hearn (Chair), Ibrahim and Morris

Also present: Councillors Adje, Arthur, Barbara Blake, Bull, Connor and Ejiofor

**CYPS17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Akwasi-Ayisi, Berryman and Hare and Mr Taye.

**CYPS18. URGENT BUSINESS**

The papers in relation to agenda item 6 (Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy) were admitted as a late item of urgent business as they needed to include information regarding proposals for consideration by the Cabinet which were not available for release until after the agenda for the Panel had been circulated.

**CYPS19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**CYPS20. DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS**

None.

**CYPS21. SCRUTINY OF THE DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The Panel considered the budget proposals contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) relating to the terms of reference for the Panel as follows:

**Corporate Priority 1**

*Reference 1; Early Years:*

Panel Members expressed concern at the possibility that current in-house provision might be subject to externalisation. They were also of the view that more detail needed to be provided as to how the savings would be achieved.

The Assistant Director for Commissioning reported that no decision or view had been taken regarding externalisation and it was not specifically being looked at. Provision was currently undertaken by the in-house service and external providers. A review was being undertaken on future provision and this would include engagement and consultation with a range of stakeholders and the local community. The Interim Director of Children's Services stated that there would be challenge in making specific proposals regarding where the savings would be achieved. In such circumstances, there might be particular difficulties in maintaining the current number of Children's Centres.

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL  
MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2014**

**AGREED:**

1. That the reassurances received regarding the potential for externalisation of in-house provision be noted; and
2. That the Panel recommend that no final decisions be taken on this proposal until after the review of provision and full consultation has been completed.

*Reference 2; Services for Young People including Young Offenders*

Panel Members were of the view that it was important that the risks associated with the proposals were evaluated fully. In particular, it needed to be ensured that they would not lead to additional cost pressures on other services in the longer term. They also requested clarity on the specific parts of the services that the savings were intended to come from as well as details of which service areas were statutory. The Panel were of the view that youth services could positively support young people in making a good start in life, becoming good citizens and fulfilling their aspirations. Concern was expressed that the removal of part of the non YOS budget would mean that services would necessarily be focussed around the prevention of offending.

**AGREED:**

1. That a risk assessment of the proposals to be undertaken to ensure mitigation of any potential unintended impact on spend elsewhere in the system;
2. That reassurance on the balance between targeted and universal provision be reviewed;
3. That further input be obtained from young people on the proposals; and
4. That clarity be provided on the breakdown of where the savings are intended to be made between the YOS and Youth Services, including detail on the specific functions which are statutory, and that concern be expressed at the proposal to reduce the budget by £1.7 million in the first year of the MTFs in the absence of this information.

*Reference 3; Public Health – 5-19*

Members of the Panel expressed concern at the potential use of pupil premium funding by schools to fund public health initiatives. In particular, the borough had serious health inequalities that needed to be addressed. It was noted that the intention was to work with Headteachers and suggest to them that funding might be utilised to address public health related issues that might impact positively on the academic performance of pupils. It would not be possible to insist on the areas where they spent the funding though. The use of the pupil premium was monitored by OFSTED.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Culture commented that the Council had been setting three year budgets for the last decade and it facilitated better long term planning. He was nevertheless happy to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL  
MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2014**

Committee on the approach followed by other London boroughs. There would be opportunities to review progress with the implementation of decisions that had been taken and the role of Overview and Scrutiny within this would be vital. The strategy was long term but also flexible.

**AGREED:**

1. That the concerns of Panel Members at the potential use of the pupil premium to address public health issues be noted; and
2. That the Assistant Director for Finance be requested to circulate information to the Committee regarding the approach followed by other London boroughs in their budget planning processes and specifically the length of time covered within it.

*Reference 4; Impact of Early Help on Demand*

Panel Members expressed concern at the risk of the savings outlined not being achieved. Careful monitoring of progress would be required in order to provide reassurance that children remained safe. It was noted that the successful implementation of the Early Help offer was anticipated to lead to a lower number of children entering the social care system and would therefore reduce costs.

**AGREED:**

That concern be expressed regarding the achievability of the savings included in the proposals.

*Reference 5; New Delivery Model for Social Care*

The Panel noted that there were currently 154 established social worker posts within the Children and Young People's Service. There were currently 32 vacancies and 42 agency staff. There was particular challenge in recruiting and retaining permanent staff. The savings would be achieved by reducing agency staff and vacant posts.

**AGREED:**

That concern be expressed regarding the potential risk of the savings arising from this proposal not being achieved.

*Reference 6; LAC and Sufficiency*

The Panel noted that the savings arising from this proposal would come from reducing the use of external fostering provision and residential placements

**AGREED:**

That the report be noted.

*Reference 7; Special Educational Needs and Disabilities*

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL  
MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2014**

Panel Members expressed concern that the proposal might impact on the level of respite that families received. The Assistant Director of Commissioning reported that the proposals were not about cutting services but using facilities to their best effect. It was noted that the savings would arise from a number of different areas. It was possible that Haslemere Respite Centre would be affected as a number of options would be considered.

**AGREED:**

1. That the proposal be noted with concern; and
2. That additional information on the proposal be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee including a breakdown of where the savings are planned to be achieved.

*Reference 8; Enablers*

The Panel noted that it was intended that this saving would be achieved through a review of systems and processes and greater rigour in their implementation and interpretation.

**AGREED:**

That the proposal be noted.

*Reference 9; Services to Schools*

The Panel noted that the intention was to safeguard services by making them more attractive to schools. Panel Members emphasised the importance of school improvement services in delivering positive outcomes for young people.

**AGREED:**

That the proposal be noted

*Reference 10; Pendarren*

The Panel noted that this saving proposal concerned the delivery of services and was not based on the sale of the site. A range of options would be considered and this would include in-house provision. The facility was well liked by schools and the intention was to safeguard its future. However, more commercial ways of operating needed to be considered.

The Interim Director of Children's Services reported that a report outlining the range of options would be available shortly.

**AGREED:**

That the report outlining potential future options for the development of Pendarren be submitted to the next meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel.

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL  
MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2014**

**Clr Kirsten Hearn  
Chair**

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