

# **LATE BUSINESS SHEET**

**Report Title: Budget Report and MTFS update**

**Addendum containing comments/ recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the invest to save proposals from Children's services**

**Committee/Sub etc. Cabinet**

**Item 14**

**Date: 9 July 2019**

## **Reason for lateness and reason for urgent consideration**

This addendum is considered urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. That provision states "*An item of business may not be considered at a meeting of a principal council unless ... by reason of special circumstances, which shall be specified in the minutes, the chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency*".

In keeping with the role of Scrutiny, consideration of item 14, the Budget report and MTFS update, was an important opportunity for the Committee to discharge their responsibilities in relation to reviewing a proposed strategy, improve the transparency of decision making and help to ensure local public services are delivered effectively, efficiently and in the best interests of residents. Early consideration of the Council's latest's budget position will also assist in developing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's understanding of key issues when undertaking their scrutiny of the budget , later in the year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a special meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July to consider and comment on this report and in particular the invest to save proposals for Children's services. This was after the publication of the cabinet agenda and therefore these comments could not be available at the time of publication. They have now been compiled and are included below as an addendum to be considered with the report.

**Concurrence of the Acting Democratic and Scrutiny Services Manager to the submission of this late item of business in accordance with Part 5 Section D – Protocol for Decision-Making - Paragraph 1.4.**

## **REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE No. 1, 2019/20.**

### **CABINET 8 JULY 2019**

Chair: Councillor Lucia Das Neves

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report to Cabinet arises from the report on the proposed Invest to Save Programme in Children's Services, considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on the 4 July 2019.

### **SUMMARY**

#### Invest to Save Programme in Children's Services

- 2.1 We considered a report on the proposed Invest to save programme in Children's Services. In considering these proposals we have been asked to provide feedback and/or recommendations for Cabinet's consideration. We noted that there are significant pressures on the Children's Services budget and that these proposals sought to utilise flexible capital receipts to reduce demand pressures on the Council's revenue budget.  
The proposals consist of six projects:
- SEND transport
  - In-house foster care
  - Family centres
  - Edge of Care
  - Pause
  - Additional foster care rooms
- 2.2 Overall we were impressed with the team's focus on tackling these budgetary issues, and would commend the thought and creativity that had been applied.
- 2.3 Overview and Scrutiny was pleased to engage in a process of reviewing these budget items and felt that this was a move towards using Scrutiny effectively as part of the budget process. However, the tight timescales has meant that the Committee has not been able to fully review detailed material about the proposals.
- 2.4 We sought assurances from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families about whether Haringey could realistically recruit the number and calibre of staff required. The Cabinet Member advised there were currently 424 Children in Care, some of whom required extensive, and often costly, levels of support and care. We were advised that without undertaking a different approach, nothing would change and those cost pressures would increase. Aside from the financial aspect, the Cabinet Member set out that it was important to try and bring those children with placements outside of the Borough back to Haringey and that having an in-house foster team would support this. As part of proposals for developing an in-house

foster care service, there would be an investment in skills and training to improve staff skillsets.

- 2.5 We also sought assurances about the safeguards in place to protect the Council's investment in creating additional rooms in the houses of foster carers. Officers advised that this project would be for HfH managed properties in the first instance, and privately owned homes second. We were advised that each case would require a thorough business case and each application would be considered on its own merit. As part of the fostering process, potential foster carers underwent a thorough assessment programme, which included assessing their motivations for fostering as well as their financial position. In addition, any investment would be safeguarded by a legal agreement protecting the Council's investment.
- 2.6 We welcomed the insourcing of foster care services and the expansion of good quality social work employment opportunities, as well as the focus on quality of training and retention.
- 2.7 We welcomed the proposal to set up a dedicated Family Centre to undertake the necessary parenting assessments when children are subject legal cases or to care proceedings. The provision of specialist in-house staff such as a clinical child psychologist would provide a higher standard of support and, ultimately, help ensure that the correct outcomes were reached in court. In response to a question about some of the risks involved, officers advised that there was always an element of risk from conducting assessments within a contained environment and that it did not always reflect 'real life'. It was important to ensure that the centre was well managed with strong supervisory roles in place. Management also needed to be clear about caseloads and the management of those caseloads. The Committee were advised that Enfield had significant success with a similar model at Moorfield Road Health Centre and that the Council would be working with colleagues in Enfield to ensure best practice and build confidence in the service.
- 2.8 We also welcomed the provision of intensive intervention team, consisting of social workers, family support workers, a CAMHS worker and an administrator, to target young people between the ages of 13-16. The Committee sought assurances about the length of the three month intervention period and whether this was adequate. The Committee requested that further consideration be given around what happens after the end of the three month period and whether a step-down package could be offered.
- 2.9 We raised concerns with some of the ethical issues involved with the Pause programme and in particular with preventing women from becoming pregnant. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the programme operated on the basis of informed consent and that it also had a robust evaluation process undertaken by the DfE. The Cabinet Member agreed to share the DfE assessment and some case studies with the Committee. The Committee agreed that it would like a further detailed discussion on this proposal to come back to the Children's Panel. The Committee also requested that the report be amended to make it clearer and to better set out some of the benefits involved. Officers agreed to provide an updated note to Cabinet on this.
- 2.10 In response to a question around whether SEND transport could be provided in-house, officers advised that the scoping review that was undertaken clearly set out

that it was not feasible to conduct the service in-house, given the investment and expertise involved. Officers advised that the expectation was that the winning bidder would be able to bring in additional resources to transform the service. It was anticipated that these resources would be in place for around two years. The Committee raised concerns about the use of consultants and the Council's ability to manage contracts effectively, and requested some assurance that the Council had learnt lessons from the past. The Committee also sought assurances that the families of SEND users would be engaged with on the future service design. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the views of users would be integral to any consultation process. The Cabinet Member also assured the Committee that she would be seeking a clear demonstration of the value of any consultants that were employed.

- 2.11 We requested further consideration of building capacity within the existing SEND service. Officers agreed to include the outcome of the scoping review into the information given to Cabinet. The Committee also felt that there were some long-running issues within the Council around contract management and that any further outsourcing would have to demonstrate robust contract management.

## WE RECOMMEND

1. That Cabinet note the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. That Cabinet assures itself that targets and clear points for review are set for each of these proposals, and that it commits to report back to the Children and Young People's Panel on these, in liaison with the chair.
3. That Cabinet assures itself that adequate safeguards are in place to protect the Council's financial investment in creating additional rooms in the houses of foster carers.
4. That Cabinet assures itself that there is a plan in place to deliver quality of service through effective management and staff ratios in the Family Centre, given the acknowledgement that the service will only succeed if it is of a high standard.
5. That Cabinet give consideration to offering a step-down package to users of the Edge of Care service.
6. That Cabinet assures itself that adequate safeguards are in place, in relation to the ethical and human rights issues raised about the Pause programme.
7. That further details be provided to Cabinet around the Pause programme and that a further discussion of this issue come back to the Children and Young People's Panel.
8. That the families of SEND users are fully consulted on the future design of the SEND transport service.
9. That Cabinet be provided with the scoping review for SEND transport to assure itself that capacity cannot be built within the existing in-house service.