



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

20 JANUARY 2014

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2014/15 TO 2017/18

MINUTE EXTRACT

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services and the Director of Corporate Resources on the proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2013/14 to 2016/17 as it related to the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS). A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Young People, Mr I. D. Ould CC, and the Cabinet Support Member, Mr G. Hart CC, who attended for this item.

The following points arose from discussion and questions:

Overall Context

- i. The Children and Young People's Service had already made savings of £30m since 2010 and was now required to find a further £12.7m from a budget of £59m;
- ii. Savings proposals had been developed in consultation with service managers. Focus had been given to ensuring that Child Protection Services were not adversely affected. Also, wherever possible, frontline Child Care Services would be protected. However, this would not mean that such services would continue as at present, they would be subject to review to ensure that where possible any additional efficiency savings were realised;
- iii. Some of the savings proposals outlined were aspirational, particularly efficiency savings arising from item S2 (Supporting Leicestershire Families Programme) which were dependent upon the programme continuing successfully to reduce pressures across the Department;
- iv. The budget proposals made no provision for additional national service pressures that were likely to arise from changes to the Special Educational Needs assessment process. There were also some uncertainties; for example, an analysis of the financial implications of the change to enable children to stay within the foster care system up to the age of 21 had been

undertaken, but this was an estimate and the true costs would be unclear for some time;

Growth

- v. Recognising the difficult financial situation the growth included in item G4 (Quality of Education) was particularly welcomed;

Savings

- vi. Item S2 (Supporting Leicestershire Families Programme), S17 (Safeguarding Services) and S18 (Early Help/Early Intervention) – An assurance was sought that savings arising from these proposals would not adversely impact on the quality of safeguarding services or undermine the good work that had been achieved by the Supporting Leicestershire Families Programme in reducing demand for CYPS services. The Cabinet Lead Member indicated that he was relatively satisfied that current standards would be maintained, but there were some uncertainties which meant that the budget and priorities proposed would need to be monitored and reviewed throughout the year;
- vii. Item S4 (Homeless 16/17 year olds) – There would be no reduction in services arising from this saving. The savings had been achieved as a result of joint re-commissioning by the Children and Families and Adults and Communities Department of the existing Supporting People contract for care leavers;
- viii. Item S5 (Short breaks for disabled children) – This budget had been underspent in the previous two years and the saving of £300,000 was the proportion of the budget that had not been used;
- ix. Item S7 (Voluntary Sector Support) – A discussion had taken place at an early stage with Voluntary Action LeicesterShire and other voluntary groups regarding pressures on the Council's budget and the need for the Council to re-focus grant support for the voluntary sector which would realise a majority of the savings. The remainder of the savings could potentially be achieved by voluntary sector service providers coming together, thereby reducing overheads;

Dedicated Schools Grant

- x. Leicestershire continued to be a low funded authority. The committee noted the work of F40 (The Campaign Group for Fairer Funding in Education) which had been seeking to engage with all political parties at a national level to address this issue;

Free School Meals

- xi. Concern was expressed that no announcement had been made for revenue funding for free school meals. Whilst capital provision had been

made, it was not known whether schools would be able to plan for the delivery of this new requirement in time for its planned roll out in September 2014;

Free School Meals and impact on Pupil Premium

- xii. The Pupil Premium was currently calculated using eligibility for free school meals. As the Government's intention was to provide free school meals to all primary school children, how this would impact on the calculation of the Pupil Premium remained uncertain, as the Department for Education (DfE) had not yet addressed this issue;

Academies

- xiii. Concern was expressed at the delay at DfE level in arranging for schools in special measures to be converted into sponsored academies. This had an impact on the Council's budget, particularly in relation to those schools which were in a budget deficit position. The Committee requested that a letter be sent on its behalf to the DfE which supported the comments previously submitted by the Director and Cabinet Lead Member about this issue;

Capital Programme

- xiv. The Committee welcomed the Capital Programme, but expressed concerns in relation to the two issues, namely:
- That no announcement had been made regarding the allocation of the capital maintenance grant;
 - That the allocation for Basic Need whilst welcome, should not be seen as a means of meeting the additional school places that would be required from new developments. There were already concerns regarding the operation of section 106 (developer contributions) arrangements. The Committee noted that the Chief Executive had convened a meeting in February to discuss this issue at officer level which was welcomed. The Committee also noted that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on the strategy for school place planning.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the comments made at this meeting be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 29 January 2014;
- (c) That a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to the Department for Education supporting the comments previously made to it by the Director and Cabinet Lead Member for Children Services regarding delays in arranging for schools in special measures to be converted into sponsored

academies;

- (d) That the comments now made by the Committee regarding the need to secure section 106 development contributions for future school places be noted and that, following the planned officer meeting arranged by the Chief Executive to discuss issues surrounding section 106 agreements, a letter be sent, if necessary, to all District Council's advising them of this Committee's concerns regarding the need for educational provision to be made in relation to new developments.