

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2018

PRESENT:

Councillors: Mahir Demir (Chair), Dana Carlin, James Chiriyankandath, Julie Davies, Josh Dixon and Tammy Palmer

Co-opted Member: Yvonne Denny (Church representative) and Luci Davin (Parent Governor representative)

25. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to item one on the agenda in respect of filming at the meeting. Members noted the information contained therein.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr Chapman.

27. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

29. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

30. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 8 November 2018 be approved.

31. SCRUTINY OF THE 2019/20 DRAFT BUDGET/5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2019/20-2023/24)

Councillor Weston, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, stated that she felt that the proposed budget savings were both deliverable and achievable. Of particular note was the fact that they strengthened early help and protected front line services.

Anne Graham, the Director of Children's Services, reported that all service areas had been looked at for savings but the priority had been on deliverability. They had been very conscious that a number of previous savings proposals had proven to be non achievable and a lot of work had taken place to ensure that the current proposals avoided this. Paul Durrant, Senior Business Partner from Corporate Finance, reported that it had been acknowledged that some more recent savings proposals had been unrealistic. Any proposals that were not considered to be sufficiently robust had been taken out during the current exercise. A more collaborative approach had been followed that acknowledged the true cost of running the Children's Service. The Panel noted that only 20% of proposed savings in previous years had actually been achieved.

Ms Graham felt that the proposed savings in social work staffing carried some risk but greater stability in the workforce was more efficient. Councillor Weston stated that the budget for children and young people's services had been reduced by about one third due to the government's austerity policies. It had become progressively more difficult to identify savings. Ms Graham reported that savings were also intended to be realised through improved recruitment and retention of foster carers. However, it was also important to ensure that children were allocated to them and care plans were reasonable. The proposals had left some space for manoeuvre. There would always be unforeseen circumstances but the service aimed to ensure they met their savings targets.

The Committee noted that the Finance Service had been required to sign off all of the proposals. Ms Graham stated that the service would not break placements just for the sake of making savings. However, they were happy to agree to children returning home if the service was able to work successfully with the family and if it was safe to do so. Only three such cases had been identified so far as the service was taking a cautious approach. Councillor Weston reported that the service had a moral and legal responsibility to meet the needs of children. A large amount of work went into ensuring that they were placed in the right setting for them. They sought to be as realistic as possible in their projections but the service was ultimately demand led.

The Panel noted that the Staffing and Remuneration Committee had considered a report on the recruitment and retention of social workers within the Children's Service at its meeting on 17 December and it was agreed that this would be circulated to Panel Members.

The Panel considered in detail the proposals relating to its terms of reference as follows:

- *P1; Reducing Agency Spend on Social Work Staff;*
In answer to a question, Ms Graham reported that the posts that were most difficult to recruit to were those that were front line. These were demanding and often stressful posts. There was a lot of mobility amongst staff and a significant number were choosing to work for agencies now. In answer to another question, she stated that the service was seeking to strengthen learning and development for staff and work was taking place with partners to progress this so that learning could be undertaken together, which had the added benefit of building stronger relationships.

- *P2: Reducing Operational Costs;*

In respect of the reducing the management costs of running Children's Centres, the Panel noted that these would affect the three centres that were directly run. The aim was to rationalise management costs across them whilst improving the quality of practice. The Cabinet Member reported that consultation had taken place with relevant trade unions. Gill Gibson, Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention, agreed to provide further details of the proposed reductions. The reductions in management staffing were intended to be achieved through voluntary redundancies and there had already been a number of applications. Council Policies for organisational change would be followed

Panel Members commented that voluntary redundancy had a cost and those who might wish to take advantage of it often had specific skills that the Council should be looking to retain.

In respect of the proposal to deliver more support to less complex cases through the greater use of family support workers, the Panel noted that there would still be some social worker input as appropriate.

- *P3: Reducing the Cost of Placements;*

The Cabinet Member reported that targets for the recruitment and retention of foster carers had been achieved for this year. In answer to a question, Ms Gibson reported that promoting independence amongst SEND children was a priority. However, independent travel training would only be offered to those young people placed out-of-borough where this was appropriate. Training was already being offered successfully for those placed in-borough.

In answer to a question, Ms Gibson reported that promoting independence amongst SEND children was the priority. However, independent travel training would only be offered to those young people placed out-of-borough who were felt to have the potential to benefit from it. Training was already being offered successfully for those placed in-borough.

In respect of the proposed savings in supported housing for young care leavers, Ms Graham reported this proposal was concerned with managing the market better and commissioning at a cheaper rate. In reference to the timely provision of adaptations, Ms Gibson reported that there was evidence that these were taking too long at the moment and the aim was to address this. In answer to a question, she stated that consideration was being given to using independent occupational therapists (OTs). It was noted that a lot of work was taking place in Adults Services to improve the speed in which adaptations were undertaken and Children's Services were working closely with colleagues in Adults Services to ensure that adaptations took place in a timely way in future.

- *P4: Reducing the number of Looked After Children;*

In answer to a question, Ms Graham stated that there were currently no plans by the Council and other boroughs to replace the London refuge for young runaways that had closed. It was nevertheless an interesting idea and could be considered at a later stage. She stated that where young people were at a very

high level of risk, consideration could be given to moving them out of the borough.

- *P5: Providing Educational Psychology and Advisory Teacher services to schools;*

In answer to a question, Ms Gibson reported that Haringey's services in these areas were well respected and valued by schools and a good level of interest had been expressed by them already.

- *Capital Programme;*

In respect of the proposal concerning Fortismere School, the Panel noted that the proposal was to assist the school initially with the sale and development of a portion of their land. Any capital used for this would be recovered from the development in due course. A full business case would be developed. The Cabinet Member reported that no decision had been taken on the proposal yet but including this in budget enabled one to be taken at the appropriate time should the Council decide to go ahead. In answer to a question, she stated that Fortismere was probably in a unique position compared to other schools in the borough due to the higher projected land values.

Panel Members commented that this appeared to be a disproportionately high amount of money to invest in a single school, particularly in the light of its foundation status. Concern was expressed at the potential impact of the further expansion of the Sixth Form at Fortismere on other schools within the borough. As it was a foundation school, it had been able to expand several times whilst community schools were not. It was also the case that the consent of the Secretary of State for Education was required for the disposal of any surplus land that was currently used for education purposes.

The Cabinet Member responded that the impact on other schools of any further increase in the size of the Sixth Form at Fortismere would be considered as part of any process leading to a decision on the proposal. However, a large number of young people went outside of the borough for post 16 education. The capital funding proposal was nevertheless focussed on regeneration rather than sixth form expansion and it was being led by the Cabinet Members for Strategic Regeneration and Corporate Services and Insourcing. She did not know whether an initial approach had yet been made to the DfE regarding the possible disposal of surplus land.

The Panel requested further information about the proposal and, in particular, the amount that would be required next year.

The Panel stated that they had a high level of confidence that the proposals within the MTFS would be deliverable. They also appeared to be achievable and realistic. They also welcomed the transparent and collaborative approach and the income generation that was proposed.

AGREED:

1. That the report on the recruitment and retention of social workers within the Children's Service that was considered by the Staffing and Remuneration Committee at its meeting on 17 December be circulated to Panel Members (**Action – Rob Mack**);
2. That further details of the proposed budget reductions arising from the rationalisation of the management of Children's Centres and the capital proposal in respect of Fortismere School, including the amount of funding that would be required next year, be circulated to the Panel (**Action – Gill Gibson/Eveleen Riordan/Paul Durrant**).

32. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - COMMUNITIES

Councillor Mark Blake, Cabinet Member for Communities, reported on key developments within his portfolio as follows:

- A bid from Haringey to the Mayor's Young Londoners fund had been successful. More details on this would be provided in due course;
- A successful bid for funding had also been made for the Project Future initiative to the Big Lottery fund. This was a community based, youth led mental health service aimed at young men aged 16-25 who were involved in offending and affected by serious youth violence and run in partnership with the Council, Mind in Haringey and Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health;
- Reports on the Serious Youth Violence strategy and Children at Risk were due to be considered by the Cabinet in March. Consultation had been undertaken with young people in developing these. This had been facilitated by the Godwin Law Foundation. There had also been a fruitful meeting with local MPs;
- The Council's Corporate Delivery Unit was currently looking at school exclusions and alternative provision. He would welcome input from the Panel on these issues;
- He congratulated the Director of Children's Services on the outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection. Although the outcome had been good, there were nevertheless areas where the Council acknowledged it needed to improve. He was delighted that Bruce Grove Youth Centre had been praised by the report, particularly after it had previously been threatened with closure. One key area that needed to be developed further was the strategic response to criminally exploited children. A seminar on reducing the criminalisation of children was being planned as part of the development of this.

Panel Members expressed concern at the increase of violent crime. It was felt that there might be a lack of awareness of its impact in the west of the borough. Young people often did not report crime. There was a lack of youth provision in the west and it was difficult for young people to find safe places to socialise. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that a significant number of young people had been victims of muggings and other crime. There was a need for schools to acknowledge the problem. Although there were now new resources for youth provision, there was nowhere near as much as was required. Whilst the Police had an important role to play in addressing violent crime, he wanted to see earlier engagement with young people.

In answer to a question, Ms Gibson reported that the Bridge Renewal Fund had just completed a mapping exercise of existing youth provision provided by the voluntary and community sector. It was intended to improve signposting of services for young people that currently existed. In respect of the successful bid for Young Londoner funding, the successful evaluation of the impact of the project was critical.

Panel Members highlighted the fact that secondary schools had all received Building Schools for the Future (BSF) via the Council and there had been an expectation that facilities would be available for community use in the evenings. However, many schools had diminished their commitment to this. Schools had been badly affected by the growth in violent crime and a conversation needed to take place with them regarding how they could collaborate with the Council in responding to it by making their buildings more available.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member stated that the £3 million that had been earmarked for the Onside project had been capital rather than revenue funding. In answer to another question, he stated that there was a need to galvanise a community response to the increase in violent crime. This needed to involve a range of partners and the Council would use its leverage to encourage involvement. There was a particular need for youth provision in areas of the borough other than Tottenham, such as Wood Green and Hornsey. He acknowledged that there were particular issues with the involvement of schools that needed to be addressed.

33. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

AGREED:

That the work plan for the Panel be noted.

CHAIR: Councillor Mahir Demir

Signed by Chair

Date