

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 26th November, 2012

Present:- Councillors: Sally Davis (Chair), Ian Gilchrist (Vice-Chair), Liz Hardman, Mathew Blankley, David Veale and Sarah Bevan

Co-opted Voting Members:- Sanjeev Chaddha

Co-opted Non-voting Members:- Chris Batten, Peter Mountstephen, Mike Fidanoglu and Kelvin Thomas

Also in attendance: Ashley Ayre (Strategic Director, People and Communities) and Tony Parker (Divisional Director, Learning and Inclusion Service)

53 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

54 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst, David Williams and Andrea Arlidge had sent their apologies to the Panel.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

57 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

58 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Councillor Nathan Hartley and Alex Raikes from Support Against Racist Incidents (SARI) had given notice of their intention to make a statement to the Panel. Councillor Hartley wished to speak directly before Agenda Item 9.

Alex Raikes from SARI addressed the Panel regarding the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan, a copy of her presentation can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

She asked if the Panel knew exactly which services were being cut.

She asked if they were aware of the true impact and consequences of the loss of those services that were proposed for axing.

She stated that to many SARI was considered to be a front line service.

She explained that SARI gave excellent value and that cutting their funding of £8,232 would not solve the Council's deficit.

She informed them that SARI had an excellent track record for meeting the targets set by the Council and for achieving very positive outcomes. She added that she believed it would be very difficult to re-establish such a service once they had gone.

She spoke of the services that SARI provides to schools, these include; Assemblies, Classroom Sessions, Workshops, School Projects and advice on policies and procedures on tackling racism. She added that they also support Children, Young People, Parents and Carers with re-building relationships with school staff, school complaints, transfers / appeals, referral to play therapy and counselling.

She stated that SARI now has permission to change its Charitable Objectives to cover all Protected Characteristics and all strands of Hate Crime.

Councillor Sarah Bevan asked if it was true that there was a general assumption being made that Polish people within B&NES would be returning to Poland.

Alex Raikes replied that this was not true as many see that there is nothing to go back to. She added that some may return on occasion for health care or dentistry work.

Councillor Liz Hardman wished to commend the sessions she had seen from SARI in the classroom.

Peter Mountstephen commented that he had seen the work of SARI over the last 10 years and felt their service should be retained.

The Chairman asked for the presentation to be passed to the Resources Panel.

59 MINUTES - 24TH SEPTEMBER 2012 AND 22ND OCTOBER 2012

Councillor Sarah Bevan asked the Democratic Services Officer to check his notes to see if he had recorded a question from her regarding accessibility at the meeting on September 24th 2012. She asked that if he had it within his notes could it be added to the minutes.

The Democratic Services Officer replied that he would check his notes after the meeting and respond to Councillor Bevan.

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

60 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SCHOOL FUNDING

The Divisional Director for Learning and Inclusion Services introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was to be divided into three streams (schools block, high need block and early years block), and the Local Authority (LA) will set the budget it gives to schools according to a much-simplified formula, keeping back cash for a limited number of specified central functions. He added that the LA has to outline its formula to the Educational Funding Authority (EFA), which can act if it thinks the LA's budget is wrong or unfair.

He stated that the Government's reform agenda "aims to encourage the development of high-quality provision", to "improve transparency", to "empower young people and their families" and to "increase choice". The document says the current funding system is insufficiently responsive and may create perverse financial incentives which prevent pupils getting the right educational experience.

The new approach will see provision for high needs pupils and students funded on a mixture of a place- and a pupil-led basis. Under a place-plus approach high needs funding will comprise of three elements, which can be applied across all provision for high needs pupils and students.

- Element 1 or “core education funding”: the mainstream unit of per-pupil or per-student education funding. In the school sector for pre-16 pupils, this is the age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU), while for post-16 provision in schools and in the FE sector this is the mainstream per-student funding as calculated by the national 16-19 funding system.
- Element 2 or “additional support funding”: a clearly identified budget for providers to provide additional support for high needs pupils or students with additional needs up to an agreed level. This is identified as the ‘notional budget’
- Element 3 or “top-up funding”: funding above elements 1 and 2 to meet the total cost of the education provision required by an individual high needs pupil or student, as based on the pupil’s or student’s assessed needs.

He explained how SEN Funding would work in Bath and North East Somerset?

Special schools and units - regardless of whether the school is an academy or not, the school/unit will be funded by the EFA at the rate of £10,000 per commissioned place. This is the place element of the funding. It is important to note that this is not new funding - it will have been removed from our grant. The LA is then responsible for providing any ‘top up’ funding based on the pupils individual needs from the high need block. This will be determined by the SEN team through assessment and a banding mechanism. Other LAs placing pupils in our schools will deal direct with the school as recoupment arrangements will cease.

Mainstream schools – The Government has determined that each school has within its formula budget £4,000 core funding (element 1) and £6,000 additional support funding (element 2) and this funding must be used to support pupils with additional or SEN needs. If the school is unable to meet the needs of each pupil with SEN, within the core and additional support funding, they can ask the LA to provide ‘top up’ funding (element 3) from the high needs block. Any request will be assessed, as now, through a request for a statutory assessment. The difference to the current system is that as the Government have introduced a financial threshold, the LA will be asking schools for details of how they have spent the additional needs funding to the value of £6,000.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if this provision had been financially assessed by the Council.

The Divisional Director Learning and Inclusion Services replied that it had and that funding had been set aside using historical data.

Peter Mountstephen commented that he and colleagues had concerns about these reforms. He added that it was difficult not to see them as un-inclusive and he felt that it militated against the needs of young people.

The Chairman commented that she was aware of some Governors who had expressed a similar view.

The People & Communities Strategic Director commented that the Teaching Associations and the respective Unions should challenge the Department for Education as he believed it was a fundamentally flawed process.

Councillor Sarah Bevan commented that Local Authorities should not be put in this position and questioned the introduction of a financial threshold from a Human Rights point of view.

The Chairman thanked the report author and his colleagues for the work they had done.

61 MEDIUM TERM SERVICE & RESOURCE PLAN

Councillor Nathan Hartley addressed the Panel. He spoke of his passion for the Youth Service and said that he was pleased that it would be retained as it provided a valuable support to young people. He added that the Council had one of the best services in the country.

He questioned whether £200,000 should be saved by way of management restructure in 2013 / 14 as the directorate requires a support mechanism.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she was concerned as she had interpreted the plan to read that the Youth Service would be reduced to a mainly targeted one.

The People & Communities Strategic Director introduced the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan to the Panel. He explained that the plan was set over three years to give a sense of clarity.

He informed them that the directorate was required to make savings of £4.345m and would only see a re-investment of £1.2m and that this would particularly be in Children's Social Care. He advised that the savings would be split across Children's Services (84%), Voluntary Sector (4.7%) and Connexions (11%).

The savings proposals totalling £4.345m set out in Appendix 3 can be summarised as follows:

- Management and service re-structure to remove a range of posts as some service areas reduce in size and scope.
- Discontinue the current Connexions Service contract and create an integrated, mainly targeted Youth/Young People Service combining Youth and Connexions Services.
- Reduced commissioning of additional services for certain groups of children, young people and families. This aligns with Government announcements in further reductions in the Early Intervention Grant.
- Reduced Children's Centre and Early Years Services leading to a whole-service re-structuring and consideration of new models of service delivery to be fully implemented from April 2015.

He then highlighted the areas within the plan where savings would be made.

£100,000 - School Improvement & Achievement Services: Further re-structuring of our support to schools and consequential restructuring of administrative support.

£60,000 - Children Missing Education Service: In 2013 / 14 cease remaining activity to secondary schools. In 2014 / 15 a £26k reduction is planned, plus income target of £4k.

£13,000 - Post 16 Education Training and NEET: Reduce staff FTE working on raising participation.

£480,000 - Connexions – Discontinuation of current form of service

£178,000 - Reductions in commissioned services. (i) 2013-14 Remove additional funds to commission extra CAMHS type services and cuts. £148,000 of this figure is accounted with no impact upon the 3rd sector.

£100,000 - Reduce Youth Service to a mainly targeted service.

£141,000 - Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Support Services. Review the 117 Service and redesign overall provision of Family Support Services with reducing staffing capacity.

Growth

£234,000 - Increases in allowance paid to B&NES foster carers.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked why a lot of the planned savings were back loaded within the plan.

The People & Communities Strategic Director replied that following a debate with the Cabinet it was recognised that the directorate had taken a large reduction in previous years. He added that a profound redesign was required to secure the integrity of the services and therefore the savings were planned for the later years.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she felt that frontline services were not protected in this budget and that the most needy and vulnerable would be affected by it. She added that she had noticed from another plan that no cuts were to be made within the Major Projects department.

Kelvin Thomas asked when consultation would take place with Young People and Children on these proposals.

The People & Communities Strategic Director replied that consultation would take place with the Children's Trust Board and other groups.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if there was a possibility to generate any income from commissioning support to schools.

The People & Communities Strategic Director replied that the department had developed a brochure of services and that it was now with the schools to decide which services they would like to purchase. He added that the service would need to be cost effective.

Mike Fidanoglu asked if the Youth Service was to become more targeted would that mean that access to it would be by referral only.

The Divisional Director for Learning and Inclusion Services replied that greater emphasis would be put on schools to aid in this area. He added that it was recognised that some young people attend centres and receive support on an ad hoc basis. He explained that more Youth Workers would be working with an allocated workload.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that if the Children's Centres and Early Years Services were not universal they would be very restrictive.

Sanjeev Chaddha asked why a high impact of risk was set against the area of Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Support Services.

The People & Communities Strategic Director replied that the risk was set as high because officers were working with children on the cusp of going into care and therefore there was a risk to budget levels in that area.

Sanjeev Chaddha commented that if the cost of a placement was between £20,000 - £40,000 it wouldn't take many placements to outweigh the planned savings.

The People & Communities Strategic Director replied that a number of scenarios had been analysed and that they were trying to protect the core of the service.

Chris Batten added that he was concerned about this proposal and highlighted that early intervention would be the key.

The Panel wished to show strong support for retaining services which have a high impact on budget implications. They added their intention to identify in years 2014 / 15 / 16 where this loss could be mitigated across other service areas.

62 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Youth, Councillor Dine Romero addressed the Panel. On the subject of the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan she stated she would look to fight her corner as much as possible. She added that she hoped to maintain service provision as much as possible and said that conversations were still required on the matter of Children's Centres and the Youth Service.

The Chairman thanked her for her comments.

63 PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

The People & Communities Strategic Director addressed the Panel on the following items.

Independent Review Service – The Service has been notified by Ofsted of a thematic inspection on 23rd and 24th January 2013. The inspection will involve a review of randomly selected cases, discussions with children and young people, IRO's, social work staff and managers. B&NES is one of ten local authorities selected and Ofsted will provide a summary report on the effectiveness of Independent Reviewing Services nationally.

Sector Led Improvement – During January B&NES will visit Swindon Council to carry out a Peer Challenge of their Safeguarding thresholds. Also Dorset County Council will visit B&NES to carry out a peer challenge of our services for diverting children and young people from care.

This system has been established across England to help the sector support its own improvement. It is estimated that the time requirement will be approximately 5 days per officer from the 'donating' local authority.

Children's Centres – Ofsted have requested that we allow them to trial a new inspection framework for Children's Centres that are managed on a 'cluster' basis. B&NES has managed on this basis for some time and I am minded to agree given that all Centres are due to receive an inspection over the next 12 – 18 months.

Children's Social Care Improvements – The Improvement Plan continues to be implemented with very close management of key improvement activities. The emphasis on timeliness of assessments is bearing fruit as timescales have improved

significantly. We are also addressing issues of quality and a report will come to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Chairman thanked him for his update.

64 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. She asked if any Member had an item they wished to add to the workplan.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist proposed that following their discussion on the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan the Panel places the general topic of the Budget under its 'Future Items' column.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if a chart could be produced for the School Performance Data relating to Looked After Children. She added that this was in response to the Panel receiving an offline report.

The Divisional Director for Preventative Provider Services replied that this could be arranged.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to agree with both of these proposals.

The meeting ended at 6.25 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services