

Education, Children and Families Policy Committee

Meeting held 27th September 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Dawn Dale (Chair), Mick Rooney (Co-Chair) Brian Holmshaw (Deputy Chair), Mary Lea, Peter Garbutt, Anne Murphy, Colin Ross, Ann Whitaker.

1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Gail Smith.

3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

3.1 The Chair stated that item 8, Budget Proposals 2023/24 would be moved to item 14 as it was a restricted item, and therefore this section of the meeting would be closed to the press and public.

3.2 It was agreed that the public, press and attendees be excluded from the meeting before further discussion takes place on Item 8, Appendix 1 on the grounds that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if those persons were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 Councillor Ann Murphy stated that she was a consultant Social Worker and a rest-bite Foster Carer.

4.2 Councillor Colin Ross stated he was a member of the Education Advisory Board.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 The minutes of the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee meeting held on the 8th of June 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 No public questions or petitions were received.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 Sarah Bennett outlined the purpose of the Work Programme and highlighted changes to the work programme, detailed at the beginning of the document. She asked that the Committee consider whether any further items should be added.

7.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1, be agreed, including the additions and amendments identified in Part 1 of the report.

8. BUDGET 2023/24

8.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's Services. It set out the budget pressures and risks facing the services which fell under the Education, Children and Families committee area, and began to develop a budget action plan to mitigate these as far as possible. It provided recommendations for approval which would allow the service to contribute to Sheffield City Council's budget pressure. The introduction to the report was provided in open session. When Appendix 1 was discussed the Policy Committee the meeting was closed to the public, press and attendees, as outlined in item 3 – Exclusion of Press and Public.

8.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee: -

- Note the financial pressures 2023/24 detailed within this report.
- Acknowledge the recommendation approved at the Strategy and Resources Committee on 5 July 2022 that "Policy Committees will be asked to develop savings / additional income options that cover their own pressures – in effect cash standstill" and to "require Policy Committees to report at their meetings in September on how they can balance their budgets."
- Note, as this Committee's initial response to the Strategy and Resources Committee's request, the set of budget proposals set out in this report and in appendix 1.
- Note that Officers will now work with Members to consult with relevant stakeholders (including with partners, trades unions and in respect of equalities and climate change) on the proposals in this report so as to inform final budget proposals.
- Note that Officers will work to develop any necessary detailed implementation plans for the proposals in this report so that the proposals, if ultimately approved, can be implemented as planned before or during the 2023/24 financial year.
- Ask to receive a further report in November that will set out the final budget for this Committee following consultation and any adjustments requested by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

8.3 Reasons for Decision

The recommendations put forward in this paper and appendix 1 are recommended for approval on the basis that they : -

- Are consistent with our agreed approach to demand management, sufficiency, and meeting our obligations to provide quality statutory services which meet the needs of the child or young person

- Are consistent with our vision/strategy to provide services and opportunities which support each child and young person within Sheffield to meet their potential.
- Support the ongoing improvement of Education, Children and Family services in Sheffield
- Are guided by an evidence base, benchmarking and/ or trend data which identifies areas of spend where disinvestment, subject to individual review, can most likely be made without detriment

Enable the Council to continue to meet its legal duties.

8.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 8.4.1 Do nothing - By undertaking none of the proposed actions, we would be unable to contribute to delivering a balanced budget.

9. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT, MONTH 4**

- 9.1 Ryan Keyworth, Director of Finance and Commercial Services gave an overview of this report. He stated the 2022/23 pay award was a contributing factor in the overspend.
- 9.2 Councillor Dale stated that there would be a future agenda item on Social Work recruitment. She suggested that a working group around this could be formed. She asked that a report on the rate of sickness be included in this.

10. **SPECIAL FREE SCHOOL BID TO SUPPORT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY SUFFICIENCY**

- 10.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Commissioning Manager seeking approval to submit a joint bid with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, for a new special free school in Sheffield, ahead of the deadline on 21st October 2022.

This school would provide additional special school places for children and young people with needs relating to autism spectrum condition and communication/interaction.

To highlight the wider special educational needs and disability sufficiency position, ahead of a further report at a following committee date on this topic.

- 10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee: -

(a) Approval of joint bid with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council for new 200 place (100 places for Sheffield) primary-secondary special free school in Sheffield

(b) If a joint bid falls through ahead of the deadline on the 21st October 2022, a Sheffield only bid is submitted instead

(c) The committee endorses the principle of funding any abnormal site costs as a result of a successful bid from the High Needs Capital Allocation

(d) Further report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities sufficiency to be presented at later committee

10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

The recommended option will deliver the following outcomes:-

- It is proposed that the joint bid is submitted as a new school will help meet forecast demand. A joint bid maximises chances of success. Through the special free school opportunity, the school can be delivered at a lower capital cost than it would be if reliant on Sheffield funds only
- Intended outcomes include increased availability of special school places, reduced inequalities and reduced reliance on high-cost independent placements.
- It is also proposed that a further special educational needs and disability sufficiency report is presented at a following committee meeting.

10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 **Option One: No Bid**

Not submitting a bid was considered, however this was discounted due to the level of need that is forecast, the limited existing space that is available, and the opportunity to secure additional capital funding.

10.4.2 **Option Two: Sheffield Only Bid**

A Sheffield only bid was considered, this would have the benefit of a higher number of places. However, this would also increase costs for the Local Authority. The chances of success of a Sheffield only bid would also appear to be significantly lower than a joint bid with Barnsley.

Therefore, whilst submitting a joint bid is a risk itself, as this has not been done before, it would appear to be a risk worth taking to increase chances of success.

If a joint bid falls through ahead of the deadline on the 21st October, it is proposed that Sheffield only bid is submitted instead.

10.4.3 **Option Three: Post-16 Bid**

A bid for a special free school to provide post 16 places was considered. However, this bid was not developed as concerns were identified in relation to whether it would be successful.

Concerns included whether the Education Skills Funding Agency would support the bid, as they typically support use and development of relationships with existing post 16 providers, rather than development of new providers.

It is also less clear where the school would fit into Sheffield's post 16 landscape, and more work is needed locally to improve this position. This links to the Accelerator Progress Plan following the local area re-inspection for special educational needs and disabilities in February 2022.

Further development of post 16 will be part of the wider sufficiency plan, presented to committee at a later date.

11. MEDICAL NEEDS POLICY

11.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which presented a policy statement to ensure a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

11.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families Committee:-

(a) approves the proposed policy statement

11.3 Reasons for Decision

It is a requirement for the local authority to have a policy statement in place. By approving the statement, the local authority will meet this statutory duty.

11.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

The Local Authority is required to have a policy statement that is compliant with statutory guidance. The policy articulates practice in place for the local authority to meet its statutory duties.

12. ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS

12.1 Sally Williams was in attendance to provide an overview of the

12.2 Councillor Rooney stated that there was a mechanism in place for adopters to raise any issues they might be having. Councillor Dale suggested a small working group could be created to gain feedback from adoptive families on how they felt the experience was going.

13. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS

13.1 Sally Williams outlined the report.

14. SEND ACCELERATION PLAN

- 14.1 Kevin Straughn was in attendance to outline the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan briefing report.
- 14.2 Councillor Dale stated that she would hope that young people are moved into independent living only when appropriate. Kevin Straughn stated there was a briefing taking place the following day to discuss independent living.