

Minutes of the meeting of the BUDGET AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 15 JANUARY AT 7:00 PM

Present: Councillor R Bradburn (Chair),
Councillors Cannon, Darlington, Ganatra P Geary, Gilbert, Rankine,
C Wilson and K Wilson

Apologies: None

Officers: P Simpson (Corporate Director (Resources and Commercial Development)), S Richardson (Service Director (Finance and Resources)), N Hutchin (Strategic Finance Business Partner), V Collins (Acting Director of Social Services), M Scott (Director of Public Health), M Heath (Acting Director of Children's Services) and E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Also Present: Councillor Nolan – Cabinet Member (Children and Families)
Councillor O'Neill – Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing); and
Mr C Williams, Independent Advisor to Residents of Regeneration Estates (RoRE)
5 members of the public

BR46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

The detailed notes on individual reductions and income generation proposals are included as Annex A of these minutes.

BR47 SUBMISSION FROM RESIDENTS OF REGENERATION ESTATES (RoRE)

The Committee received and noted a submission from Mr C Williams, on behalf of RoRE, supporting the request from the Scrutiny Management Committee for additional resources to support scrutiny of the Council's major Regeneration Programme.

RESOLVED –

That the submission from RoRE in support of the Scrutiny Management Committee's request for additional resources to support scrutiny of the Council's Regeneration Programme be considered at the next meeting (22 January 2019) when the Committee would be reviewing all the evidence heard at the Challenge Meetings.

BR48

PEOPLE DIRECTORATE: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Committee discussed with Councillor Nolan, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the one identified reduction and the one plan for income generation in her portfolio.

The Committee then scrutinised and commented upon these proposals and discussed them with Councillor Nolan.

These items would be further considered at the meeting scheduled for 22 January 2019 and any recommendations included in the Committee's report, which would be submitted for consideration by Cabinet on 5 February 2019.

BR49

PEOPLE DIRECTORATE: ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor O'Neill, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, setting out the proposed reductions and income generation plans in her portfolio.

The Committee then scrutinised and commented upon the reductions and income generation plans in relation to Councillor O'Neill's portfolio which had been identified during the preparation of the 2019/20 draft budget.

These items would be further considered at the meeting scheduled for 22 January 2019 and any recommendations included in the Committee's report, which would be submitted for consideration by Cabinet on 5 February 2019 as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process.

RESOLVED –

1. That Councillors Nolan and O'Neill be thanked for discussing the proposed reductions and plans for income generation in their portfolios identified as part of the 2019/20 draft budget preparation process.
2. That officer colleagues attending the meeting be thanked for the support offered to the Cabinet Members during the budget setting process and for the clarification of various issues raised by the Committee.
3. That any recommendations the Committee may have arising from the evidence taken at this meeting be included in the report on its work which will be presented to Cabinet on 5 February 2019.

BR50

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON PRESSURES

The Committee reviewed the additional information on those pressures that had not been included in the draft budget which had been supplied by the Finance Team and noted that of 78 possible pressures:

- 27 had gone into the draft 2019/20 budget;
- 30 had been withdrawn;
- 4 were one-off items;

- 1 related to election expenses;
- 1 to domestic homicide;
- 2 to payments from reserves;
- 1 was a matter of report;
- 5 were moved to the Medium Term financial Plan.

During discussion of these items the Committee further noted the following points:

(a) Recoveries for Litigation - £299k

Local authorities were not allowed to budget for income from the proceeds of crime. Actuals for both 2016/17 and 2017/18 had been below budget;

(b) All savings which were the result of a reduction in FTEs had been brought to the attention of the Committee;

(c) Bus Subsidies - £312K

Subsidy on an unidentified route would expire once the existing S106 funds had been used up. Route would be withdrawn as it unlikely to be unviable without the subsidy.

Reductions in bus subsidies would be of concern to all councillors and thought needed to be given how these were reported in future so that councillors of affected wards were aware.

(d) Gully Cleansing - £160k

Current 3 year cycle of cleansing to be maintained.

This was a small amount of money in real terms but failure to clean gullies properly could lead to localised flooding and have a big impact on residents.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:50 PM

People Directorate: 15 January 2019

a) Adult Social Care and Public Health: Councillor O'Neill

**(Reductions [Adult Social Care and Public Health]: R10 – R13; R15: R39;
Income Generation [Adult Social Care]: R29 – R30;)**

R10 – Service Redesign (-£175k)

- Redesign of assessment arrangements in community-based social work teams.

R11 – Reduction in use of Residential Care (Learning Disabilities) (-£380k)

- Reduced reliance on residential care for those with learning difficulties – saving can be as much as £2000 per week per person;
- Currently 70 people with learning disabilities in residential care, much of it out of area, which is difficult for families and friends to maintain regular contact;
- 25 service users identified as possibly being able to move out of residential care into supported living but saving is based on 10 people moving into supported care;
- Cost of council services to support those who do move on is less than the cost of residential care;
- 2 dedicated members of staff working with families on the transition to supported living
- Most clients in supported living do need wrap around care, but this is cheaper than residential care and can be provided locally, where clients still have the additional support of family and friends;
- Move is particularly beneficial for younger people moving from Children's to Adult Social Care;
- Accommodation is often in shared house with others with similar disabilities;
- Committee urged caution about how families are dealt with;
- VC advised that budget savings were not the priority. This was about establishing a form of living which maximised the potential of those involved and was right for them, which has produced a budget saving, but no-one was working to a target. It was outcomes based to produce a progression model to maximise life chances;
- There had been no complaints from service users or their families in phase 1 and they had recently held a celebratory event to mark the success so far.

R12 – Learning Disability Review (-£135k)

- Savings arising from Learning Disability Review which was completed in 2018/19.

R13 – Increase in Take up of PIPs (-£20k)

- Staff saving due to more of those eligible opting for Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) to manage their own care and support.

R15 – Public Health Reductions (-£300k – covering 8 individual savings)

- Committee would have liked to have seen these as individual lines in the main spreadsheets;
- Government imposed reduction of 2.6% in the Public Health allocation to MKC;
- Being managed by renegotiation of various service contracts as they come up for renewal;
- Public Health transferred from NHS to MKC with a range of contracts already in place;
- Service is reviewing how it can deliver services more efficiently, transform existing contracts and save money, including bringing services in-house in the future;
- Other resources are available which tie-in and can be used;
- Service is looking to a central role for Public Health within the Council;
- Public Health budget is still ring-fenced although likely to be subsumed when the proposed Business Rates retention scheme is rolled out;
- However, Council could top up the budget if the resources were available;
- Committee queried whether these were the right priorities for Public Health given the 2.6% cut in the grant. Advised that the Council needed to invest in Public Health services to produce a health population in MK;
- MK receives one of the lowest Public Health allocations from Central Government in the country;
- Savings needed to be made across the board and public health can't be exempt.

R39 – Internal Management Redesign (-£31k)

- Not commented on by the Committee.

R29 – Recuperation Bed Charge (-£17k)

- Used by frailer, older people whose level of function was not good enough for them to benefit from the Council's re-ablement at home programme but who were not ill enough to stay in hospital;
- Everyone who came out of hospital was entitled to 6 week free re-ablement support if they needed it, which included up to 6 weeks residential care if necessary. This was a charge to those who stayed on longer than the first 6 weeks;
- Some people were reluctant to move out after 6 weeks and these needed to be encouraged to move on, but the number who were physically unable to move out was very small;
- MKC had access to 10 beds for this service at any one time and very few overstayed their placement.

R30 – Increase Service Charge – Internal Homecare (-£12k)

- Increase is modest and still less than that charged by private care providers.

b) Children and Families: Cllr Nolan

(Reductions: R14; Income Generation: R31)

R14 – Service/Admin Savings (-£236k - covering 6 individual savings)

- Savings already made were listed in the business case.
- For clarity, the Committee would have liked to have seen these as individual lines in the main spreadsheets;
- Savings on reduced use of agency staff;
- Vacancies need to be managed consistently across the Council, reducing need for temporary or agency staff;
- Department was monitoring and managing its budget more effectively rather than getting into an over-spend and falling back on the use of reserves;
- Budgeting for a worst case scenario was not a particularly efficient use of resources;
- Council as a whole spent £7.5m on agency / temporary staff last year. A proper recruitment process was needed to attract the right people into MKC;
- Agency staff were 25% more expensive to employ than permanent staff;
- £200k pressure for additional staff to support anticipated number of Looked after Children had been put into 2018/19 budget. Number of Looked After Children didn't increase as expected, therefore not all the additional staff were required = £100k reduction;
- Demographic increase in Children's Social Care now put into base budget;
- Co-ordination of getting right number of school places in right areas was a difficult balancing act. Growth money from DfE for extra school places went straight into the Direct Schools Grant;

R31 – Charges for Room Hire at Children's Centres (-£32k)

- Increased income from hire of rooms / provision of services at Children's Centres.
- Centres are able to rent out spare capacity or hire equipment to external clients.
- Wider demand than just those referred to the Centres for help. Schools are starting to run their own family support programmes and are particularly interested in using (and paying for) the services offered by the Children's Centres.