



## **SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.**

#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor T. Parry - Chair  
Councillor B. Miles - Vice Chair

#### **Councillors:**

E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, P. Cook, D. Cushing, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Gordon, T. Heron, A. Leonard, J. Roberts, and J. Simmonds.

#### **Cabinet Members:**

Councillors C. Andrews (Education and Communities), and E. Forehead (Social Care).

#### **Together with:**

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), G. Jenkins (Interim Director of Social Services), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), M.J. Jones (Financial Services Manager), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

#### **Also in attendance:**

Councillor J. Pritchard (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change).

### **RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), Councillors S. Skivens, J. Winslade, and K. Woodland, and Co-opted Members M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative), P. Ireland (NEU), K. Cole (NEU), and D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

## **3. 2024/25 SOCIAL SERVICES REVENUE BUDGET.**

The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Councillor E. Forehead introduced the report which provided Members with details of the 2024/25 revenue budget settlement for Social Services. The report provided details of the 2024/25 revenue budget for service areas within Social Services and outlined the reasons for movements in the revenue budget since 2023/24.

Members were advised that the report also set out the corporate context within which the 2024/25 revenue budget has been set and considered how the 2024/25 budget has been shaped by the Directorate's financial performance in 2023/24.

A Member sought clarification on the aggregate external funding and queried whether this was included in the budget. Members were advised that these figures are known at the start of the year and the budget is set within those parameters. The Member also requested an explanation on 'inescapable pressures.' Members were advised that the £10.4m of inescapable pressures included £7.7m to enable an increase on fees to independent care providers, and £2.7m to meet the increased demand for care packages for both adult and children's services.

A Member queried whether there was any indication of an earlier settlement from Welsh Government this year and noted that last year's settlement was not received until December. Members were advised that there were no indications as yet and last year's settlement amount was duly noted.

A Member queried whether any contingency plan was in place if the budget was late this year. Members were advised that reserves are held for Social Services with a current balance of circa £2.5m. Members were also advised that CCBC has an obligation to set a balanced budget by the end of the financial year, regardless of how late the settlement figure is received.

A Member clarified that the 4% pay award for all staff included 'in house' care staff. The Member also queried whether any cost saving strategies had been considered with regards to statutory services in social services and linked to the Mobilising Team Caerphilly project. Members were advised of current strategies being reviewed which would affect services within Social Care. The Member also clarified that the Performance and Improvement Framework Grant of £40,000 was used for an additional post to support Children's Services.

A Member sought clarification on the £446,808 for drug and alcohol services and whether the client contributed to the service and how payments were made. Members were advised that the budget was specifically for Social Work Staff and clients do not contribute towards those costs.

A Member requested an explanation of 'wanless income' and whether this included 'promoting independence.' Members were advised that the figure provided for 'independent living' was to cover the Social Work Team and were provided with an explanation of 'wanless income.'

A Member clarified that Section 28a income was for services provided on behalf of the Local Health Board.

A Member sought further information on the Gwent Frailty Programme funded by £3m, and queried how it is administered and controlled, and how residents benefit from this programme. Members were advised the programme had run for a number of years and consisted of emergency response for health and social care, with CCBC acting as 'bankers' for the scheme.

A Member sought clarification on 'Families First' and the 'other contracts.' Members were advised that Families First is WG grant funded and provides early intervention with families to avoid the need for statutory services. Members were advised that they would be provided with a link to the Families First programme following the meeting.

A Member noted the low administrative costs in relation to the emergency duty team for adult services. Members were advised that this was the 'out of hours' team that Caerphilly CBC provide on behalf of the other five Local Authorities in the Gwent region. It is operated with minimum staffing levels and other staff can be called upon when needed. Members were also advised that the administrative costs included in the report only referred to the contribution made by CCBC.

A Member sought clarification on the funding by WG for the consequential allocation and queried whether this had been fairly distributed. Members were advised that WG used a formula to determine the amounts allocated to Local Authorities, and any further information required would need to be directed to them. The Member also clarified that no future changes were planned for Ty Pawb or Ty Graddfa.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and the 2024/25 budget for Social Services set out in appendix 1.

#### **4. SOCIAL SERVICES GRANTS 2024/25.**

The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Councillor E. Forehead introduced the report which informed Members of grant funding available for social care in the 2024/25 financial year. Members were advised that during the financial year further grants are often made available subject to new funding being identified and successful outcomes for bids.

Members were also advised that the report is provided to ensure that Members are aware of the social care grants available to fund services that fall under the responsibility of the Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing, along with their intended purpose. Any additional awards of grant funding made available throughout the 2024/25 financial year would be identified through the regular budget monitoring information reported to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

A Member queried the funding received from the Police and Crime Commissioner. Members were advised that the PCC always partly funded the Youth Offending Service, together with funding from the Police, CCBC, Blaenau Gwent, Social Services, Education, Probation Service and the Youth Justice Board.

A Member sought clarification on the impact of the Shared Prosperity Fund on the third Sector and whether the settlement for children of asylum seekers also covered all educational costs. Members were advised that all costs for these children would not be covered, although accommodation costs would be included.

A Member queried how the fifteen unaccompanied children were being housed. Members were advised that those who were under sixteen were placed with foster parents, which may not be within Caerphilly County Borough in order to meet the child's cultural and religious

needs. Those that were over sixteen would be housed in private social landlord's properties currently in Risca and Pontllanfraith, with a third property due to open in Caerphilly.

A Member sought further information on the grant for advocacy. Members were advised that there is a national framework which was originally for 'Children Looked After' and now included children who were going through the child protection process and also any child who is known through Social Services.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

## **5. FINANCIAL PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2024-25.**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, Councillor C. Andrews introduced the report which provided Members with details of the Financial Plan for Education in 2024-25. The Financial Plan (Appendix 1) is the key document for budget monitoring in this new financial year.

Members were advised that the Financial Plan provided details of how the Directorates available budget has been allocated for the financial year 2024-25. The Directorates budget totals £170m, of which circa £138m relates to the Authority's Schools and is distributed through the school funding formula. In addition, a budget of £9.67m for Home to School/ College Transport is managed by the Authority's Infrastructure Division.

A Member requested further information on the distribution of money to schools and how the schools would be advised of the savings requirement. Members were advised that money is allocated to schools based on a formula which includes the savings requirements, and the Headteachers will set their own budget plans for the year ahead based on the allocation of funding received. The plan was then implemented along with any required support from Education Finance. Members were also advised that the 'per pupil' budgeted spend for Caerphilly schools is currently above the Wales average.

A Member clarified that schools with less pupils would receive less money and may not be viable to continue. The Member also noted the reduction in the use of library services and Members were advised on the reduction of books spend. Members were also advised that libraries are being considered in the Caerphilly Transformation programme.

A Member sought clarification on the deadline of the current review on Home to School/ College transport and queried when the report would be referred to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Members were advised that the consultation was due to start in September 2024 and was expected to be finalised early in the New Year, together with a review of the school transport policy, which could result in changes to current transport provision by way of a shared taxi or minibus.

A Member sought clarification on the schools' requirement savings and queried whether any schools had not been able to balance their budgets, and whether these schools would also be expected to make savings. Members were advised that all schools are expected to submit a balanced budget and, where this is not possible, a maximum of three to five years is allowed to complete a balanced budget. Members were advised that information relating to the schools which had not produced a balanced budget would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

A Member sought clarification on the 20% reduction in training spend for the directorate and requested the total amount prior to the reduction. Members were advised that the figures show 20% of the designated budgets however, if there are training requirements that cannot be met in the training budget, funds for training will be allocated from elsewhere in the budget. Members were also advised that training was an area considered in the recent Estyn inspection and a positive outcome was expected when the Estyn report is published. The

Member also clarified that there are no plans to change school catchment areas.

A Member queried the temporary savings in relation to the 50/50 repairs maintenance fund and how this would be affecting schools. Members were advised that this was a saving from the education core budget, however the service would still be available as it would be funded from reserves.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report and the Financial Plan that followed approval of the Authority's budget 2024-25 at Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

## **6. EDUCATION GRANTS 2024-25.**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, Councillor C. Andrews introduced the report which provided Members with details of grant funding available to the Education Directorate in 2024/25. Members were advised that this funding is already significant and is likely to increase over the course of the year as additional funding becomes available and or due to the successful outcome of funding bids.

The report provided a brief description of the intended purpose of the grant funding (the terms and conditions of the awarding body) and these details were included in the Appendix 1, and Members were advised that more detailed information on individual grants could be made available to Members, if requested. Members were also advised that some formal grant offer letters were currently awaited and consequently, some of the funding values contained in the appendix 1 were indicative.

A Member queried what impact the integration of some EOTAS pupils into schools would have on the future education budgets. Members were advised that the allocations to schools would increase depending on the number of EOTAS pupils who were attending the schools.

A Member wished to note thanks for the financial support being given to schools.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

The Chair wished to congratulate Mr Richard Owen from Idris Davies School for his 'Headteacher of the Year' award and noted thanks to all staff involved in the recent Estyn inspection and also thanked all the Officers and Directors for their contribution to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services thanked the Chair and Members for all their support.

The meeting closed at 6.41 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024.

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CHAIR