

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3 DECEMBER 2012

47. BUDGET OPTIONS

The Committee received a presentation from Jane Morgan, Corporate Policy Manager, Chief Executive's Department, on the process of the consultation and the progress made on Stage 2 of the consultation to date. Jane Morgan reported that over 70 budget options had now been published and outlined the role of Overview and Scrutiny members.

The Chair proposed that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee work through the budget options and for each option the relevant officer would outline the proposed budget option.

Officers gave details and responded to members questions on each of the budget options in respect of the following areas in turn;

1. Transport Policies for Adults and Children

Nancy Clarkson, Strategic Services Infrastructure, introduced the option. Responding to comments from members she stated that the Council currently provides transport for well over a thousand people across the borough every day. The option involved a full review of that transport, with a view to stopping providing transport to some or all Council services and instead requiring those using the services to either contribute to the cost or find alternatives. Some members expressed concern about the levels of transport that would be available for severely disabled children and adults and Nancy Clarkson noted that there was statutory provision for the most vulnerable children and for adults there were packages of care that would still be retained for the most vulnerable adults.

2. Area Teams for Family Support

Tracey Coffey, Strategic Service Manager Children and Families introduced the option and informed the Committee that Area Teams provided preventative services for vulnerable children and families. Due to the number of teams there was some duplication and the option in this area was to reduce the number of Area Teams from 11 to 4, working across the borough based on need. Members were informed that this was a good way forward and that while savings could be realised the outcome would be a better service provision.

3. Schools Music Service

Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, Early Years and Primary Education introduced the option and commented that the Schools Music Service had been restructured and would not now need the subsidy from the Council.

4. Oaklands Outdoor Education Centre

Vivian Stafford, Strategic Service Manager- Post 16 Commissioning and Economic Generation introduced the option that was to reduce the Council subsidy and ensure that the Centre brought in enough income to break even. The aim was for this done through increased marketing and by seeking sponsorship. Vivian Stafford commented that there were risks to this business model but there were grounds to feel confident - alternative options were outlined if there was a view to mitigate risks

5. Educational Psychology Service

Julia Hassall, Acting Director of Children's Services, introduced the option and commented that savings would be achieved by not filling a vacant post. The service would be reduced but would continue to meet statutory requirements.

6. Foundation Learning

Vivian Stafford, Strategic Service Manager- Post 16 Commissioning and Economic Generation introduced the option that was to stop the programme currently offered to schools that developed and then delivered Foundation Learning for those young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). The option in this area was to target support from the Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance Service. Vivian Stafford informed members that schools had been piloting work around young people who were at risk of becoming NEET and that funding was currently used in schools mainly to provide off site learning.

7. Universal and Targeted Commissioning of Parenting Services

Steve Pimblett, Head of Universal Youth Support Service, introduced the option and outlined how the Council currently invests money with organisations in the community and voluntary sector to provide parenting family support and advisory services, including families affected by poverty and disadvantage. The option was to reduce and target these services at those families most at risk of poor outcomes. A great deal of duplication had been identified and there was potential for the VCF sector and the Council continues to work together. Some members were concerned for risks in the future e.g. if domestic violence increased in 3-5 years time. Julia Hassall commented that work would have to be done on how these services could be provided and recognised that there would be a need to be proactive in this area.

8. Schools Budget - PPM and PFI Options

David Armstrong, Deputy Director CYPD and Assistant Chief Executive, introduced the option that proposed to transfer costs currently met by the Council to the Schools Budget. David Armstrong noted that there was currently extensive consultation being conducted with Secondary and Primary Headteachers.

9. School Improvement and Income from Academy Schools

Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager, Secondary and Lifelong Learning introduced the option that proposed to reduce the level of non-traded school improvement support and training and to increase income for those services provided to Academy Schools by increasing what the Council charges. He stated that there were currently no Wirral schools in a category and Sue Talbot commented that Wirral schools were in the top quintile of OFSTED inspected schools in the country which was welcomed by Members.

10. Youth and Play Services

Steve Pimblett, Head of Universal Youth Support Service, introduced the option that proposed to review the provision of Play Schemes, reduce the outreach service and integrate all youth clubs in the 4 main Youth Hubs. It was further proposed that the Youth opportunity fund that provides opportunities for organisations to bid for funding to deliver projects for young people would be stopped. Steve Pimblett commented that the service would be aligned with the new Youth Zone planned for Birkenhead and that currently Wirral spent more per head on services for young people compared to statistical neighbour averages. Some members raised concerns regarding accessibility in terms of distance and costs and Julia Hassall, Acting Director of Children's Services, commented that the 4 area Youth Hubs would be retained and the possibility of improved transport to the hubs could be explored.

11. Youth Challenge

Steve Pimblett, Head of Universal Youth Support Service, introduced the option that proposed that the budget for services to young people – outreach, risk taking behaviour, Big Nights, Arts and Drama – be reduced.

12. Children's Centres and Sure Start

Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, Early Years and Primary Education, introduced the option that proposed the option to reduce universal services from children's centres and charge for most universal services which are provided. This would further include the release of a number of satellite children's centres to schools. David Armstrong commented that all 16 Children's Centres would remain in situ and there were no proposals for closure.

13. Careers, Education Information, Advice and Guidance

Vivian Stafford, Strategic Service Manager- Post 16 Commissioning and Economic Generation introduced the option to redesign and reduce services to ensure the targeted work still took place at the level defined by the Council's statutory duties. Vivian Stafford commented that the aim was to work in a more peripatetic way e.g. in libraries.

14. Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities

Simon Garner, Strategic Service Manager- Childcare, introduced the option that would be to reduce the number and range of the short breaks which were funded for children with disabilities. He commented that the change would mean the budget could be planned more effectively without compromising services

15. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Simon Garner, Strategic Service Manager- Childcare, introduced the option which was to reduce the service by a third. Simon Garner commented that staff had developed to offer a range of services and that it was an area that was being looked at prior to the consideration of budget options.

Some members expressed concern that provision services for the most vulnerable must not be compromised and that the Council needed to ensure that a good service continued to be provided. Members suggested that there would be a need, in the future, for a review of all budget options undertaken to ensure the most vulnerable were being protected.

Resolved – That

1) the officers be thanked for their hard work in the preparation of the budget options and their contributions at the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

2) the Committee offers thanks and best wishes to Tracey Coffey, Strategic Service Manager, who would shortly be leaving the Authority to take up a new post in Halton Borough Council.