



2017/18 Budget Proposals

Scrutiny Report of People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

January 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

A dedicated 2017/18 budget proposals workshop for Members of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held on the Tuesday 10th January 2017. This provided the committee members with the opportunity to examine in greater detail a number of budget proposals affecting services that fall under the remit of the committee. All of the budget proposals within the remit of the Committee were selected for further examination by the Chair and Party Spokespersons. This report summarises the proposals scrutinised and the comments and suggestions of Members attending the workshop.

2. SPECIALIST TRANSPORT

Summary of Proposal

The annual combined transport budget for the Integrated Transport Unit in 2016/17 is £6.8m, of which the children's transport budget is £5.4m and adults of £1.4m. The aim is to reduce demand for specialist transport and related costs for the Council and to improve the quality of life and outcomes for residents by encouraging increased levels of independent travel. This will enable a planned budget saving of £500k in 2017/18. This proposal relates to Wirral Council provision only; not Liverpool City Region (LCR).

The detail of the project is currently being developed although the scope of the work will include:

- In and out of borough SEN / LAC to special and mainstream schools;
- Adult transport services;
- Travel training;
- Mainstream school transport;
- Post 16 to 19 transport.

Commissioning / Contracts: SAVING	17/18 £m	18/19 £m	19/20 £m	20/21 £m	TOTAL £m
Specialist Transport	0.50	-	-	-	0.50

Source: Wirral Borough Council, Cabinet report, 8th December 2016

Committee Members' Comments

- The principle of independent travel training is supported. However members expressed concern about the potential for this to contribute to the savings target given the reluctance by some parents / carers to participate in the scheme. Members were reassured that the travel training service has worked very well enabling greater independence for service users and providing a number of excellent case studies.
- It is appreciated by Members that this service review is likely to lead to concern from service users and carers. It is important that the views of service users and carers are incorporated into the review and there is evidence of user involvement in the review.
- There is a risk in agreeing that the service review will produce a saving of £500k without having sufficient detail available to confirm that the saving is achievable.
- Given the amount of work that will be required in the project, Members queried whether the full saving of £500k would be achievable in the first year (that is, 2017/18).

- Although some of the proposals were described as “quick wins”, greater detail regarding the impact of those specific proposals would be beneficial.
- Members were reassured that a full impact assessment will be undertaken before any proposals are implemented.
- An assessment needs to take place to split the potential savings between contractual value and care packages as savings relating to packages of care will be accounted for elsewhere (within the Adult social care budget). There is, therefore, a danger of double-counting an element of the saving.
- Members expressed concern regarding the likely impact of the proposals on staff and urged the involvement of the trade unions at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

3. PUBLIC HEALTH (RENEGOTIATED CONTRACTS)

Summary of Proposal

The public health grant is allocated to local authorities to support the delivery of public health outcomes. The grant is ring-fenced and cannot be used to make savings. However, it can be used to invest in public health activity which might release savings elsewhere within the Council. The funding identified under this budget proposal falls into that category and decisions will need to be made as to where the £3m should be invested. The investment will be aligned against those pledges which have a public health outcome component.

A significant element of the reduction in spend contained in this budget proposal comes from commissioning new models of delivery of public health interventions during the past two years.

Commissioning / Contracts: SAVING	17/18 £m	18/19 £m	19/20 £m	20/21 £m	TOTAL £m
Public Health (Renegotiated Contracts)	3.0	-	-	-	3.0

Source: Wirral Borough Council, Cabinet report, 8th December 2016

Committee Members' Comments

- A member commented about the positive impact of the Get Into Reading programme. It was explained that the programme is now delivered in a different way with an increased role for volunteers. A retained investment of £25k will support the future delivery of the programme.
- A member commented that, as the value of some contracts are reduced (for example, the 3% savings per annum agreed as part of the drug and alcohol tender), there is a risk that either the same level of service is not achievable or additional funding is requested by providers to uphold service levels.
- Members were informed that there was an absolute cut in the public health grant for 2016/17 and there will be an additional reduction for 2017/18. It is prudent in the current climate to expect further reductions in future years.
- It was noted that the £50k contribution from the public health budget for the School Hub project had ceased in 2016/17. Members were informed that this had previously been short-term pump priming funding. Members welcomed that alternative funding, albeit at a lower level, had been made found from within the Children's Services budget.

4. DELIVERY OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Summary of Proposal

There are budgetary pressures within the Adult Social Services budget for 2017/18 relating to:

Inflation	£1.8m
Fees-related	£2.5m
Demographic – older people	£1.8m
Demographic – learning disabilities	£0.7m
Total	£6.8m

This is partly offset by additional income:

Adult Social Care Precept 2% per year	£2.5m
Improved Better Care Fund	£1.4m
Total	£3.9m

Net saving required **£2.9m**

Delivering Differently: SAVING	17/18 £m	18/19 £m	19/20 £m	20/21 £m	TOTAL £m
Adult Social Care Integration (Saving)	2.90	4.00	3.50	4.00	14.40

Source: Wirral Borough Council, Cabinet report, 8th December 2016

Members were further informed, that subsequent to the Cabinet report (8th December), the Government had announced that local authorities will have the option to re-profile the Adult Social Care Precept. In addition to the original option of implementing a 2% increase in Council Tax for each of three years (as agreed by Cabinet on 8th December 2016), there is now an alternative approach of a 3% increase for the first two years. Using the second option would result in the £2.9m spending gap for 2017/18 being further reduced. This is now subject to a further Cabinet decision. An additional transformation project to review provision of learning disabilities and mental health services is also due to be launched.

Committee Members' Comments

- Members were reassured that the anticipated £700k saving on commissioning which was part of the Social Care Integration project have been largely achieved in 2016/17.
- Members welcome the relative increase in social care funding compared to recent years although recognise that this is likely to be offset by increased demand for services.
- Members acknowledge that there is uncertainty in the proposal to review the learning disabilities and mental health services. Once the project has been developed, members look forward to receiving further detail in due course. The review will focus on the elements of services provided by health and by social care; and who pays for what. The emergence of new services such as mobile nights will also be incorporated.
- Members acknowledge that pay levels are a significant issue in the care sector. Members welcome the proposed increase in wage for staff, particularly in domiciliary care.

5. LCR INTEGRATION OF ADULT SAFEGUARDING

Summary of Proposal

Four local authorities from within the LCR (Sefton, Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral) have agreed, in principle, to create a single Adult Safeguarding Board. This will enable the development of one set of criteria and standards. An Executive Board will remain within each local authority to review local performance and, in particular, to link with local partners. The new Safeguarding Board will be serviced by staff from Wirral. Therefore, a re-charging process (with the other three boroughs) delivers a saving for Wirral.

Commissioning / Contracts: SAVING	17/18 £m	18/19 £m	19/20 £m	20/21 £m	TOTAL £m
LCR Integration of Adult Safeguarding	0.20	-	-	-	0.20

Source: Wirral Borough Council, Cabinet report, 8th December 2016

Committee Members' Comments

- Members were reassured that there is no risk relating to the monitoring of safeguarding in the borough. Expertise and knowledge will be shared with the neighbouring authorities.

6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES – MANAGING DEMAND

Summary of Proposal

The Medium Term Financial Plan identifies Children's Services savings, to be achieved through managing demand for services and providing a total saving of £10m over four years. The initial saving is £1.4m in 2017/18.

These savings do not take money out of the budget; instead they contain increased pressure from:

- Inflation (fostering and other allowances)
- Increases in the number of children supported / allowances paid (for example, Special Guardianship Orders)
- Temporary support from contingency

Given the current budget position and the forecast overspend of £5.3m in the current year this is a challenging target.

The current pressures highlighted to Members included:

- Increasing numbers of children looked after, currently 749 (compared to 705 on 4th July 2015);
- Increasing numbers of children with a child protection plan, currently 447 (compared to 393 on 4th July 2015);
- Increasing overall numbers of children in need, currently 2909 (compared to 2712 on 4th July 2015);
- and increasing numbers of children who are supported financially.

The response to the Children's Services Ofsted report to transform children's services is being finalised. This will underpin the Improvement Plan which was submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education on 23rd December 2016. This will improve services through focusing on:

- Prevention, earlier intervention and early help;
- Children's plans, placements and permanence;
- A strong, qualified and experienced, stable workforce.

The Improvement Plan will require significant investment from the Transformation Fund and capital receipts. The investment is made on the basis that it will secure lasting improvement and reductions in the cost of services.

Delivering Differently: SAVING	17/18 £m	18/19 £m	19/20 £m	20/21 £m	TOTAL £m
Children's Services – Managing Demand	1.40	3.70	3.70	1.20	10.00

Source: Wirral Borough Council, Cabinet report, 8th December 2016

Committee Members' Comments

- Members concluded that the ability to deliver the savings were fundamentally dependent on the Council being able to effectively implement the Improvement Plan for Children's Services. It is critical that the demand for services in children's social care is reduced
- A Member commented that Children's Services is, and will continue to, undergo considerable cultural change. There is a concern regarding the level of change that can be achieved quickly.
- A Member raised the tension between having to bid for money from the Transformation Fund in order to enable change, yet some reduction in the demand for services is also required in the short-term.

Appendix 1 – Workshop Attendance

Members of People Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Moira McLaughlin (Chair)
Bruce Berry
Alan Brighthouse
Wendy Clements
Angela Davies
Treena Johnson
Chris Meaden
Tony Norbury
Walter Smith
Tom Usher
Warren Ward

Councillors also in attendance:

Phil Gilchrist
Tony Smith
Janette Williamson

Officers:

Clare Fish	Executive Director of Strategy
Fiona Johnstone	Director of Health & Wellbeing (DPH)
Graham Hodgkinson	Director for Care and Health
Julia Hassall	Director of Children's Services
Andrew Roberts	Senior Manager, Finance
Julie Barnes	Lead Commissioner – Transport and Technology
Patrick Torpey	Scrutiny Officer
Alan Veitch	Scrutiny Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Cherry Povall