
MEETING	DECISION SESSION - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
DATE	1 FEBRUARY 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLOR RUNCIMAN (EXECUTIVE MEMBER)
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLORS D'AGORNE AND POTTER

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. Councillor D'Agorne declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 (minute 38 refers) – "2011/12 Children & Young People's Budget Proposals" as a careers adviser at York College.

36. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 11 January 2011 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

37. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION/OTHER SPEAKERS

A trade union representative from Unison spoke on item 4 on the agenda – "2011/12 Children & Young People's Budget Proposals". He stated that Unison appreciated the difficult situation facing the council but was nevertheless very concerned that the proposed cuts were not incremental and could not be achieved without resulting in fewer services for children and young people in York. He stated that those services which were non-statutory but which had proved to be very valuable, would be particularly hit. He also raised concerns at the impact on the early intervention work that was taking place and which was cost-effective in the longer term. He stated that he appreciated that every effort would be made to avoid redundancies but he believed that the outcome would be the loss of skilled staff, which would mean that it would not be possible to rebuild to provide the same level of service in the future.

The trade union representative raised issues in respect of specific proposals including:

- ACES 12 and 13 - attention was drawn to the written representation that had been submitted by Unison regarding these proposals. Concerns were expressed that the cuts would impact on front-line delivery and that insufficient account had been taken of the possibility of income generation. Attention was drawn to issues in respect of careers guidance services which were currently being

debated in Parliament. A request was made that ACES 12 and 13 be referred back for further work.

- ACES 49 – a request was made that the proposals be given further consideration.
- Strong objections were raised to the proposals in respect of early years provision, particularly children’s centres. A request was made for more work on equality impact assessments to be carried out and that, in view of their impact on families and communities, more consultation take place.
- ACES 16, 43 and 99 – concerns were expressed regarding the lack of clarity as to the impact on staffing.
- ACES 10, 30 and 88 – concerns that had been raised at the previous meeting in respect of the Front Door proposals were reiterated.
- ACES 87 – concerns raised as to how the Family Intervention Service could continue to deliver the support that it was currently providing if staffing was to be reduced.
- ACES 33, 63 and 91 – concerns expressed regarding impact on staff and on users.
- Proposed cuts to staffing at Mill House – concerns that this would impact on frontline delivery.
- CANS 29 and 14 – concerns expressed that the importance of the arts was not being recognised. Unison would wish to be closely involved in mitigating the impact of the proposed cuts.

The trade union representative stated that Unison had grave concerns about all of the proposed cuts and would wish to be involved in the consultation. They particularly requested that ACES 12 and 13 were referred back for further consideration and that ACES 14 was either referred back or a commitment given that there would be a longer period of consultation.

Councillor D’Agorne had submitted written representation to the Executive Member drawing her attention to an Early Day Motion on the Careers Service. He expressed concern about the proposed cuts to the service and the impact that this would have on young people in the city. He stated that the current proposals would result in a loss of skills and would make it difficult for the Authority to respond to arrangements that they may be required to put in place in the future.

38. 2011/12 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Executive Member received a report as part of the consultation on the 2011/12 budget process. The report presented the 2011/12 budget proposals for Children & Young People’s Services and included:

- 2011/12 Base Budget, as set out in paragraph 17 of the report;
- Savings proposals, as set out in Annex 2 of the report;
- Fees and charges, as set out in Annex 3 of the report;

- Residential Homes and Foster Carers, Sharing Care, Adoption and Residence Order Weekly Allowances, as set out in Annex 4 of the report.

The Executive Member was invited to consider whether the budget proposals were in line with the council's priorities and to comment on the budget proposals for savings and growth, which had been prepared by officers and contained in the report. The proposals were intended to form part of the council's budget to be considered by the Budget Executive on 15 February 2011. Budget Council would be held on 24 February 2011 and would make decisions on the overall budget for the council.

The Executive Member requested that officers respond to the issues raised by the Unison representative earlier in the meeting. Officers stated that there had been a constructive dialogue with the trade unions and that they were committed to this continuing. The financial circumstances that the Authority was facing were unprecedented and were particularly challenging because the cuts to funding were front-loaded and could not be introduced incrementally. Attention was drawn to the consultation that had taken place, as detailed in paragraph 13 of the report, and of residents' views that funding for children's social care should remain the same. The proposals that had been put forward did not include any reduction in social workers or core child protection capacity. There remained a commitment to preventative work, as evidenced by the funding that it was proposed be allocated to the family intervention project. There were no proposals to close youth facilities or children's centres. The directorate would embrace the opportunities for new partnerships and was looking to integrate and restructure service delivery whilst maintaining the focus on providing high quality and safe provision for children and young people in the city.

In respect of youth services and Connexions, attention was drawn to a reduction in the area-based grant which had not been passed on. Officers had prepared a paper outlining initial thoughts as to how the savings in this area could be achieved. A more detailed paper, outlining options, would be presented to the Executive Member in the Spring. Consultation would take place with staff and with schools regarding the options. It was acknowledged that there was uncertainty about future arrangements in view of the debate that was taking place nationally on this issue.

Referring to the proposals in respect of youth services, officers stated that the intention was to retain universal services, including localities, but that there would be cuts. The network of youth provision was valued and there would be a greater emphasis on more targeted provision.

In respect of children's centres it would be possible to achieve significant savings without impacting on current levels of service. A comprehensive review was taking place to identify how the savings could be found. The focus was on retaining all nine children's centres and the Toy Bus Service and to minimise the impact on frontline delivery.

Officers confirmed that in preparing the proposals for savings, they had been looking at a two-year period so that they did not find themselves in the same situation next year. This would also enable the changes to be

introduced in a planned and phased way. Further reports would be presented to the Executive Member in May or June.

The Executive Member stated that it was important that youth centres were kept open and she asked officers if there had been interest from organisations wishing to partner the authority in the provision of youth services. Officers confirmed that there had, including approaches from faith groups and voluntary organisations. The Executive Member stated that it was important that such dialogue took place.

The Executive Member stated that children's centres were very important and were valued. The Authority would wish to keep them open. It was, however, important that they were targeted at families in most need.

At the request of the Executive Member, officers gave assurances that the proposals would not result in cuts to safeguarding arrangements or in the number of social workers.

Referring to ACES64 and ACES65, the Executive Member asked officers how the removal of the posts would impact on the service provided. Officers stated that the 0.5fte post within the Speech and Language Team was currently vacant. A review of the service had achieved efficiencies and hence the loss of the post would not lead to a reduction in the support provided. The 0.4fte post in the specialist teaching for the deaf team was not currently occupied. Although there would be a reduction in capacity, officers would be working to ensure that this was carefully managed.

The Executive Member sought further information as to the implications of ACES64. Officers stated that the proposals in respect of short breaks for disabled children would not result in a reduction in the number of children and young people receiving short breaks. Details were given of the provision that would be in place. The proposed budget would sustain the provision that was currently in place but would limit the capacity to extend further the number of short break activities, which had been an aspiration of the Authority.

The Executive Member stated that she was pleased to note the proposals in respect of foster carers allowances and she paid tribute to the work that foster carers carried out.

Officers informed the Executive Member that there would be a need to give further consideration to the new relationship with the voluntary sector. Consideration would also need to be given as to transitional funding for those projects that were having the greatest impact.

The Executive Member was updated on the position in respect of the Schools Budget. Officers reported that proposals were now in place to bridge the budget gap that had been referred to in paragraph 28 of the report. The proposals were due to be considered by the Schools Forum.

The Executive Member stated that she appreciated the way in which the trade unions were engaging with management regarding the proposals

and she stressed the importance of ensuring that meaningful consultation was ongoing.

- RESOLVED: (i) That it be confirmed that the budget proposals are in line with the council's priorities.
- (ii) That the recommendations be accepted by the Executive Member and forwarded to the Budget Executive for their consideration.
- (iii) That officers be thanked for their work in preparing the report.

REASON: In accordance with consultation on the budget.

39. THE BETTER PLAY GRANT - FUNDING ALLOCATION

The Executive Member received a report that sought approval for the purchase of play services through service level agreements for the funding period 2011-2014 and the reallocation of some funding in the current funding period.

Officers gave details of the projects that were recommended for approval, as outlined in the written report.

- RESOLVED: (i) That, subject to the outcome of Budget Council, the following allocations of funding be made:
- Bell Farm Adventure Playground to be allocated £20k on a one-year agreement in the first instance.
 - Officers to be delegated the authority to extend to a further two-year agreement, at no more than £20k per annum, following a full organisation review by CVS which ensures that the organisation continues to develop and provide evidence of robust governance arrangements.
 - A reallocation of £15k to be made to the Bell Farm Adventure Playground Playbuilder scheme (capital funding) to contribute to the redevelopment of the site.
 - SNAPPY to be allocated £35k per annum for a three-year period.
 - Playspace to be allocated £24k per annum for a three-year period, which would look to support two Chill Out Zones.

- Space 109 to be allocated £6k per annum for a three-year period.
- The Council for Voluntary Service to be allocated £12k per annum for a three-year period to work with targeted play organisations.

(ii) That, should funding remain once the allocations have been made, further funding be allocated to the Playspace Chill Out Zones.

REASON: To continue funding quality play provision across the city in line with the Taking Play Forward policy priorities.

Councillor C Runciman – Executive Member
[The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.10 pm].