

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL - BUDGET 2013/2014
12.00pm 17 DECEMBER 2012
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor K Norman (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Deane, Fitch, Robins and Wealls

Other Members present: Co-optee Joanna Martindale

PART ONE

10. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Cllr Norman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded everyone of the date of the next meeting, 8 January 2013 in the Council Chamber, HTH

This was the third budget scrutiny meeting and was a single issue meeting, focussing on Children and Young People's Services

Procedural Business

- Subs – Cllr Alan Robins for Cllr Anne Pissaridou
- Apologies from Julia Chanteray, Business Sector Co-optee and Cllr Ollie Sykes
- Cllr Andrew Wealls said that he had a declared interest as he was a trustee of Impact Initiatives
- It was agreed not to exclude the press and public.

11. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Cllr Sue Shanks, Chair of the CYP Committee, introduced the item, along with Heather Tomlinson, Interim Director of Children's Services and Rosalind Turner, Caroline Parker, Jo Lyons, Louise Hoten, Peter Chivers and Rima Desai.

Councillor Sue Shanks gave a brief overview of the service:

- She began by saying she wanted to congratulate all of the CYP staff for contributing to an amazing underspend, largely due to reviewing the placements for children. The dept was also looking at other savings to help the overall council budget position.

- Pleased that BHCC can keep all its children's centres open.
- Schools have been doing really well (there has been a change in support offered due to central govt legislation but still working well)
- Most of the budget savings were highlighted last year and have been agreed by Cabinet/ Committee

A number of issues were highlighted as areas of concern:

- Provision of nursery places for 2 year olds is still an issue, with funding for this still uncertain due to late government announcements
- Savings will be made on the music service budget

The Interim Director of Children's Services advised that the latest projected underspend for 2012/13 is £3.058 million largely delivered through VfM initiatives. This is an immense achievement, especially compared with other local authorities and should be recognised as such.

The underspend can be projected forward (although it cannot be completely guaranteed and does have an element of risk attached).

For 2013/14, seeking £3.7 million savings made up of three main areas - £2.6 million VfM savings which are mainly savings on agency placements, £0.6 million through Early Years provision and £0.4 million on Home to school transport

Questions and comments

Youth offending/ Stronger Families, Stronger Communities

- From 2013, councils will have financial responsibility for YP on remand as they will be classed as Looked after children; this is outside our control but what steps have been put into place to help minimise numbers? Have links been made with Youth offending service etc?
 - *A small amount of money has been attached to the new duty. It's containable at the moment, but it does certainly add an incentive to keep YP out of remand. The Youth Offending Service has relatively low numbers of service users, although there is less success at dealing with repeat offenders. The YOS is being restructured to help address this.*

It is a budgetary risk and BHCC needs to keep on top of it, working to keep YP out of care and out of remand. There is also a target to reduce time in remand to 26 weeks, from current average of more than a 1year.

- Can services work with YP whilst they're in custody to address re-offending likelihood?
 - *This is a flaw in the system currently, YP don't get support whilst they're in a young offender's institute, and currently little planning for what happens after custody. It's a national issue and needs to be addressed.*
 - *Also need to take into account the YP who re-offend without having been in custody, there are potential new re-offenders coming into the system all the time.*
 - *Steve Barton oversees the Stronger Families, Stronger Communities (SFSC) project and also has responsibility for VfM so there are clear links between the two*

workstreams. One of the key SFSC outcomes is reducing re-offending so there's a strong focus (other priority areas are increasing school attendance and tackling worklessness)

SFSC has an element of payments by results – over a three year period. Budget for the SFSC programme has not been predicated on achieving funding by results element so any resources gained through this will be a bonus which will be spent on identified priority areas, however criteria are very high. We are unlikely to achieve 100% results,.

SFSC is currently working with approximately 50 families, will assess outcomes achieved for these families and based on this will make budget plans for results money.

- The CVS sector is well placed to support SFSC outcomes. Has any money been allocated to CVS for commissioning? – *yes some has been earmarked but can't confirm commitment to fund CVS or final amounts at present.*

Early Intervention Grant

- There have been cuts to the Early Intervention Grant – how has this been addressed in the budget? – *The reduction has been taken as a corporate funding issue, savings don't all come from CYP. The EIG funded lots of services, some of which have been cut. No further cuts are being proposed.*

Youth Services

- p97, the section on Engaging People who live and work in the city. Can you clarify the thinking? Is there a role for the CVS? – *There is a commitment from the administration to keep services inhouse as far as possible, with CVS and third sector provision too. It's a very important service for YP who don't qualify for other services, believes it's important to have some universal services for all YP not just for YP in crisis.*

A review of Youth Services ended in a decision to commission a collective of CVS providers. There is a period of capacity building and support being given to the collective, to deliver grassroots youth work. There is a commitment to youth work in the city although it's a non-stat service

- BHCC is unusual in its commitment to youth services and helping YP before problems arise, this is very welcome. Can the CVS be used to provide other YP services in a different, more resource efficient way? – *there is a danger that youth work will be cut nationally – its an easy target as it's a non stat service. If services are contracted out they tend to cut funding and provision. Providing youth services is tiny part of total BHCC budget, only £1 million overall.*

Whilst there is political commitment to maintain youth services, there are huge ongoing budget pressures. A 'task and finish' group is to look at youth services across the city. Some services could be better joined up, some may be duplicating services. Current system of reducing budgets by asking individual teams to make cuts is unsustainable, and it will be possible to offer better services by seeking a more holistic unified service. This will build upon learning from the VfM placements programme.

Service Structure

- Intelligent Commissioning was meant to be a way of looking across services – is this going to be scrapped or revisited?

– From CYP perspective, Intelligent Commissioning has been a useful discipline through which to deliver results – e.g. the £3 million savings in placements. Modern councils need to work intelligently to engage and work in partnership, understanding why and where they are prioritising resources. The new Chief Executive doesn't see IC as a principle for organisational structures. It has led to an unhelpful split between commissioning and service delivery. It looks like commissioning and delivery will be more closely joined up in future.

- It seems from p93 that youth services will be re-shaped, are any other service areas similarly affected? – *'Early Help' services need to be re-thought, its not just a service for early years but for early help in a variety of areas, before someone's problem becomes critical (and more resource-intensive). The full range of services that contribute to Early Help are not fully understood or joined up.*
- On p102 there is mention of £71K back office savings? – *The Connexions team used to cover all of Sussex/ B&H, but now it's a much reduced service. £71K comes from management and staff costs, to protect front line services. Do need some back office function though to support services. In Youth Employment Services, back office costs cover marketing, training resources and universal access to a shared IT system. All this has been reviewed.*

Dedicated Schools Grant/ 2 year old nursery provision

- What does the Dedicated Schools Grant cover? – *the DSG is always under pressure, but there are clear guideline with regards to what this can be spent upon. BHCC works with the schools forum to agree expenditure and reviews its spending frequently.*

The SEN strategy comes from the high needs block of the DSG; BHCC has saved £2 million by not sending YP out of area, and by reducing agency placements from 221 to 61 placements. It has been reinvested in prevention and other services.

- Members felt that in future it would be useful to see the details of the DSG to better understand which elements of the budget are allocated to each part. *DSG figures are included in TBM figures but more information could be shared.*
- BHCC now had notification of the position on funding nursery places for disadvantaged 2 year olds. Currently funding 220 places, it will now have to fund places for most disadvantaged 20% for 2013, which will be approx 500 places. In 2014 this doubles to 40%.
- There has been some additional funding to pay for 2 year old places, it's not been ringfenced in the DSG but has been labelled as for 2 year olds. £1.4 million has been given to pay an hourly rate for care, with £0.5 million trajectory funding.

Home to school transport

- There are concerns about the Home to school (H2S) transport cuts, they've already made savings last year and parents have reported a worsened service as a result. How will the £0.4 million impact upon services? – *please could parents share concerns with her so they can be addressed? BHCC has been benchmarking H2S spending, there was a high spend and high number of users so it's all being reviewed.*

There are less children who need high cost transport. Through the SEN strategy, the numbers of children going to specialist placements has reduced, so less demand for H2S. For some children, independent travel may be an option. Taxi contracts are being reviewed to re-group children more appropriately. Also working with schools and headteachers to use their own transport e.g. minibuses where appropriate.

They understand some families do have difficulties, and they will work with those families who really need assistance.

Cllr Shanks clarified that the reduction is more of a budget adjustment, as its been underspent and some costs have been reduced. Also reductions in Looked after children means less demand for H2S. Gil Sweetenham is meeting with individual parents to resolve their issues and has also arranged to meet with the charity Amaze.

- Will there be coaching available to help YP become independent travellers? How many have taken it up? Glad that BHCC recognises its not just about transport, its also about care. Also pleased to note that no additional savings are planned – *can get figures for independent travellers circulated*

Service Pressure Funding

- On p57, there is service pressure funding money of approx £0.5 million to be reallocated, is this for inhouse services only or could some come out to CVS who are also under pressure? Many CVS groups use BHCC funding to draw down other central funding to benefit all YP. – *'pressure funding' relates to council budgets currently under pressure, BHCC is holding a central pot as a reserve in case of difficulties.*

Music and Arts funding

- The service had a funding reduction last year too, how was it managed? The Music and Arts service is such an important service for the city. – *The funding base is 62% funded by parental/ school fees, 24% Arts Council, 14% local authority. There has also been reduction on Arts Council funding. Has taken a multi-stranded approach, increased some fees, reshaped leadership. Some staff have retired, others moved on, and service has been remodelled accordingly.*
- the schools also provide music support. She feels the music and art service is very successful and strong and would like to build on its success.

Family Information Service

- The FIS offers telephone and web advice, it has been proposed to move this to a web-based service. With welfare reform agenda and Digital by Default, easy to assume that people are digitally literate but would like to see some cross council thinking to help people become digitally able. Digital exclusion and financial exclusion are closely linked, FIS priorities should be aligned with ASC, Housing and others. – *there is no intention to end the telephone service. But promoting the web information and making sure its comprehensive. There has been 100% increase in web hits this year. FIS are targeting their face to face service on the most disadvantaged families and have piloted case work, looking at wider information needs on eg fuel poverty. In some cases FIS staff can get a better deal than individuals.*

12. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be on 8 January 2013. Cllr Norman brought the meeting to a close, thanking all members and officers for a constructive meeting. He wished everyone a merry Christmas.

The meeting concluded at 2.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of