

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 1 February 2018

Comments to the Cabinet - Budget process and Public Engagement

Budget Process

Long Term Strategic Planning

The Committee recommends that the Council puts in place a long term strategic approach to budgeting, and highlights the importance of the bringing the medium and long term financial planning in line with the Corporate Plan and demands from government legislation.

Within this strategic approach, it is **recommended** that the Council should set out:

- How the strategic budget plan would support the Council in meeting the statutory obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act;
- How the strategic budget plan will accomplish the aims and objectives set out in the Corporate Plan;
- The financial planning should take into account new and existing partnerships and how the Council will work collaboratively;
- How the stakeholders, communities and citizens in Newport are engaged throughout the process.

Reviewing what information is presented to the public

In considering the specific proposals, both of the Performance Scrutiny Committees raised the issue of insufficient information within the business cases that were published for public consultation.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee **recommends** that in future years, a robust process be put in place to ensure that the business cases contain more consistent information to reflect how the savings would be made, and contain all of the information that a member of the public would need to fully understand the impact of the proposal.

Contingency planning

The Committee discussed contingency planning with the Officers and were informed of a £1 million pound contingency within the budget, to account for any unforeseen budget pressures during the year. Members commented that it was difficult to assess whether this amount was sufficient, as it was not clear how this this million pound each year is calculated.

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The Committee **suggests** that the Cabinet ensure that a robust contingency plan is in place for the medium to long term, to review regularly whether this amount is sufficient in the short to medium term.

Achievability

The Committee commented on the need to ensure that savings are achievable at this stage of the process, to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on the Councils ability to deliver within its budget next year. The achievability of annual savings needs to be better evidenced in the proposals and the impact outlined if the savings are not made. The Officers assured the Committee that the savings had been delivered at 90% within this year's budget, and that this was not an area of concern.

Whilst acknowledging these assurances, the Committee comments that there is a risk for the Council if these proposals are not achieved. The Performance Scrutiny Committees have commented that the information within the business cases were often insufficient to fully understand how some of the proposals were to be achieved.

The Committee **recommends** that this risk should be closely monitored if these decisions are taken and implemented, to mitigate this risk of unachieved savings impacting on next years budget.

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Public Engagement

Public Engagement Process

The Committee discussed how the public consultation should be an all year round process rather than limited to the statutory consultation in the December / January period on proposals that have already been fully developed. By allowing the consultation to be held all year, citizens would be able to contribute to all stages of the development and implementation of the savings.

Performance Scrutiny Committee's recommendations highlight for that several of the business cases, the people who would be directly affected by the proposed savings were not consistently and adequately consulted upon prior to the proposals being developed.

The Committee **recommends** that in future years, the Council;

- Ensures that in depth consultations are held with those most affected by the proposals are completed prior to the proposals being fully developed and published in December / January. Work to identify effected groups should be done at the earliest possible opportunity to ensure those effected can be included in the development when a proposal is being considered.
- Develops the plan for public engagement on savings part of a wider strategic budget plan, to think more long term and strategically about how the public can be involved.
- Works towards making consultation on the budget proposals more meaningful through making it an ongoing, yearlong process rather than consulting at the end of the process when the proposals have been developed.

The Committee **recommends** that more is done to consult with the employees working in the areas that the savings are made. Utilising their knowledge and expertise in these areas could assist with identifying and potentially minimising any impact / risk within the proposals.

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Feedback to consultees

The Committee **recommends** that mechanisms to provide feedback to the participants in the consultation be developed and implemented.

The Members felt that it was important that the information was provided in a number of different mediums to ensure it was available and accessible to all. The information should inform the consultees how the proposals had been informed by the information gathered during the consultation.

It is suggested that this could be achieved through holding a public forum at the end of the consultation period, and invite stakeholders and consultees to attend. A detailed press release could also be used as a feedback tool, providing it summarised how the results of the consultation had been used.

The Committee were advised that the results of the consultation would be reported to the Cabinet. It is **recommended** that this report is made public, and provided enough information for the Cabinet to analyse and inform the decision on the proposals.

Public Accessibility

The proposals were not easily accessible to members of the public in this year's budget consultation. The Committee commented that the information was not presented in the most effective way to encourage public participation:

- The online presence of the consultation - The Committee stated that it was difficult to find the proposals, and the form was onerous to use. The form could be simplified and better signposting to the consultation on the website.
- Newport Matters advertisement for the consultation was small and easily missed. Members felt that this could have been more effectively utilised and was important element in encouraging participation as it went to every household in Newport.

The Committee **recommends** that this is looked at for next year's budget round and that this made easier for the public to access the information and comment on the proposals.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 1 February 2018

Comments to the Cabinet - Budget process and Public Engagement

Strategic Planning of Public Engagement

The Committee felt that the Council is not moving up '*the hierarchy of engagement methods*' of citizen involvement and this year's budget consultation process was still at the inform / consult stage. (*Discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 28 September 2017 report ['Budget Consultation and Engagement'](#).*)

The Committee **recommends** that as part of the medium and long term planning, the Council should outline how it plans to develop citizen engagement and move from the inform/ consult stages, more towards involvement and collaboration models.

Developing How the Council Engages

Different ways of presenting the consultation was discussed and how a '*budget simulator*' had been used in another Local Authority, and explored as an option within Newport. This involved asking the public to effectively look at options for balancing a budget – to prioritise and select one area / proposal over another.

The Committee **recommends** that alternative methods of engaging with the public are explored for next year and whether more could be done to increase the range of demographics who respond to the consultation.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - People - 23 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (People Directorate):

Comments to Cabinet on following Proposals:

EDU181902 - Consolidation of the Educational Psychology, Additional Learning Needs, and Specific Learning Needs Teams into a 'Inclusion Enrichment Team'

The Committee felt that there was insufficient evidence in this business case to fully understand how the savings would be achieved. The Committee received explanation from the Head of Service as to how this would work in practice; however this level of detail should have been included within the business case, so that the public have an understanding of the potential impact of the proposal.

Highlight the risk of this proposal:

- This proposal will increase the pressure placed on schools without any additional funding or resources, and will likely have a negative impact on the young people needing to use this support.
- Move to a cluster approach - unclear how the clusters will operate, and how the resources will be allocated to each cluster, which makes it difficult to fully understand the impact of the proposal.
- Indication from the officers was that the face to face contact with pupils will decrease and the proposal looks to empower the school based staff to take over this role. There is a risk that too much is being expected of the teaching staff to provide effective oversight of all of the potentially complex issues for that individual child, whilst managing the needs of the whole class.
- This presents a risk to young people who could potentially be missed if the impact of this proposal is a reduction in service. This would have an impact on their opportunity to engage within work and training.

The Committee acknowledges the mitigation outlined to provide training to support the teachers and schools to enable school based staff can support their pupils in their own learning environments. However, the Committee concerned that this mitigation may not fully address the risk for the following reasons:

- Concerned about the capacity of the remaining staff within the clusters to provide training for schools on a large scale;
- As its unclear how the cluster approach will operate – therefore it's also unclear whether there is capacity within these clusters to deliver this training;
- Unclear who within the new team will be responsible for training, and the timescale of when the training will be provided to the schools;
- The time that this will take to roll out the training could mean that there is a substantial gap in provision in the short term.

The Committee recommends that if this proposal is approved, that the implementation of this is carefully monitored, and that this is reported to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – People on a regular basis, with detailed information in the impact on these young people.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - People - 23 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (People Directorate):

EDU181904 - Re-modelling of the Pupil Referral Unit

The Committee felt that this saving was not accurately set out in the business case. The Head of Service provided additional information; the Committee agreed that this should have been included in the business case to inform the public of the potential impact, risks and mitigations in place.

Highlighting the risks of this proposal:

- The proposal will increase pressure on schools without any additional funding or resources and could have a negative impact on the young people accessing the PRU in its current state;
- The staff and teachers are being asked to undertake additional roles and responsibilities, which might impact on their health and wellbeing. As well as their ability to provide a continued high quality service to all the young people;
- The young people, who would normally receive additional support from the PRU, are now at risk of losing this support, increasing the likelihood of them dropping out of education and becoming NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training);
- The detail about satellite provisions was missing from the business case, as was their impact on the communities where they are based;
- The impact on the young people in mainstream school when the young people from the PRU are placed in a mainstream environment.

The Committee welcomed the mitigations outlined in the proposal, but were concerned that the mitigations were not enough. They explained that there might be an accumulative affect from increasing the numbers of young people in need of support, and the transition period of the Educational Psychologists and ALN team training and upskilling the teachers and school staff.

The Members felt that the claim of a saving of £485k was misleading. The net saving claim of £485k is incorrect as this money is being moved into the Individual Schools Budget to fund the SEBD School. This proposal will make no financial saving.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - People - 23 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (People Directorate):

CFS181901 - Review of Oakland Short Break Service

The Committee had concerns about the impact of this proposal on disabled children and their families, based on the information presented in the business case. The Head of Service provided context to the review and additional information on alternative provision that would be explored to ensure that the needs of the children and their families are met. Information on this alternative private and third sector provision should be included within the business case to enable the public to fully understand the impact of this proposal as it gives a context to the proposed review.

Within the 'Impact on Citizens' section of the business case, the impact on service users was not sufficiently stated, simply stating that '*support for families with disabled child will be reduced.*' This does not give a full picture of what the impact will be. Within the options considered section of the business case it stated '*for some children there would be a reduction in the offer within their package of care*'. This again does not give a full explanation of what this reduction would be and how the impact will be mitigated.

The Committee received assurances that the families and the children currently using these services would be consulted and their views used to shape the reformed service. This was to happen should the Cabinet adopt this proposal. It was noted that this could be misleading as the decision to reduce this service from 7 days to 5 days service would have already been taken, therefore limiting scope of the input from the families.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - People - 23 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (People Directorate):

CFS181904 - Restructuring of the Funding within Prevention Services

Preventative services is not an area that the Council should be reducing. It is fundamentally against the intention of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to act to prevent problems occurring or getting worse, and balancing the short term needs with the need to safeguard against the ability to meet long term needs. The Committee understands the rationale behind this proposal, in that it is not a statutory service and there are limited options to making the necessary savings whilst protecting statutory services.

However, the full impact of reducing this service should be fully understood if the proposal is to be adopted.

The Committee had specific concerns regarding the following:

- ' Unclear how the savings of £311,000 will be made, other than a direct reduction of staff by 4 FTE. As such, there are concerns about how achievable this proposal will be as there is insufficient information in the business case to assess this.
- ' Title of the proposal does not accurately cover the nature of the proposal, as the recommended option (option 3) directly reduces the services offered.
- ' The savings made here will directly increase the other costs in other parts of the Council, most acutely Education and Children's Services. The cost of this has not been factored into the potential savings.
- ' Although this is not a statutory service, making reductions in this service will impact upon the statutory services budgets, as it will increase the demand for statutory services in the longer term.
- ' The prevention service is a core element of working with families in such a way to prevent future problems. Concern that reducing this may increase the risk for Children who would previously accessed preventative services, in that they could miss out on early interventions before issues escalate to the level for a children's services referral. Some of the Committee felt that this presented a safeguarding risk.
- ' No mitigations were outlined for this proposal – the explanation for this was that there was nothing that could be done to mitigate as it was a direct reduction in service.
- ' Very concerned about the impact that has been outlined in the business case, in particular:
 - o *'...a potential restructuring of the Families First Grant could lead to a reduction in opportunities for third sector organisations'* – direct impact on the alternative / complimentary provision from the third sector.
 - o *'Preventions, CANs and young Carers all have waiting lists for service so any decrease in funding would increase the gap in provision'* – there is gap in provision already, this proposal would exacerbate this issue.
 - o *'Greater number of referrals to children's services'* – direct impact on future budgets of statutory services within Children's Services.
 - o *'Reduced capacity in schools for support'* – direct impact on pressures of schools staff.

The combined effect of these would significantly impact upon the lives of the children involved.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - People - 23 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (People Directorate):

Comments to Cabinet Members for following proposals

CFS181902 - Integrated Family Support Team Restructure

There had been significant changes to this proposal since it had been issued for consultation in December. The progress made had caused a dramatic decrease in the number of staff impacted on by the proposal and also the implementation costs that are required to carry out the proposal.

The Committee commented on how the business case was not fit for consultation in its current form and any recommendations made might not accurately represent reality.

It was noted by Members that that no linkage with the Well-being of Future Generations act were included in the business case and this might not be the case as it directly impacts on families and young people.

CFS181913 - Reduction in expenditure on placement for Looked After Children

The Committee felt that there was not enough information or detail in this business case including:

- Increase in pressure for out of Authority placements in Education. No further information on the extent of this impact.
- *'This proposal will need to link to an invest to save proposal to crease a small amount of capacity within Children's services to first undertake a concentrated review of the current provision'*. The investment required section is then left blank so no further details about the required investment.
- The Proposal states it will reduce the spend on placements – but it doesn't explain how this will be achieved other than through reviewing the service. It is unclear how a figure for savings can be estimated before the review has taken place.
- Proposed savings – how have these been calculated, what number of placements would this reduction represent, and how are you sure this specific number of placements can be reduced before the review has been undertaken.
- In the Risk information – states that *'The risk is simply that because of external demands and increasing complexity in the children being cared for that we will be unable to achieve this saving.'* – no mitigations to explain how this risk will be managed and what the likelihood of this happening.
- Insufficient evidence of the Well-being of Future Generations act being taken into consideration.

The Head of Service provided some explanation on how the savings would be made. To achieve meaningful consultation the additional information should have been included in the business case to give the public access to all of the information.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - People - 23 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (People Directorate):

ACS181903 - Review of the Domiciliary Care Service

The Committees greatest concern was around the lack of mitigations for the contract failing and the impact that this would have on the people who are receiving care. They felt that other mitigations needed were not set out in the business case.

Not enough information and detail was provided in the business case, most importantly included the number of residents that the proposed saving would affect.

Another risk the Members highlighted that was not adequately mitigated in the business case was the continuity to care of the service users and their families.

With all of the missing information the Members agreed that it would be hard for the public to be fairly consulted on this in a productive manner as their responses would not be fully informed and would lack the depth of understanding needed for such a delicate subject.

ACS181904 - Re-provision of Supported Living Service

The Committee supported his proposal but feels that the implementation needs to be sensitively managed to limit the impact on the service users and their families.

ACS181907 - Reduction in Adult Budget

The business case does not provide sufficient information on the impact it will have on service users or what mitigations have been established.

The Committee discussed the lack of Well-being of Future Generation act information in the business case simply stating '*...the Future Generations Act 2014 requires that the City Council makes the right services available at the right time*'. This does not state how this proposal fits in with this, or mention any of the other aspects of the act.

Fees and Charges – Social Services

The Committee commented that the issue of fees and charges not being reviewed or increased for a number of years appears to be an ongoing issue.

The Committee recommends that the Cabinet ensure that each year the service areas undertake a review of the charges to ensure they are accurate each year. This would ensure that the costs area accurate, that the authority is in line with other Authorities and to stop large increases in subsequent years.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place & Corporate - 22 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (Place & Corporate Directorates):

Note: The Head of Service was unable to attend the Scrutiny Committee due to an emergency. The Committee understood this, and wished to thank the Officers within Street Scene who had to cover the meeting at very short notice.

As these Officers were not the owners of the business cases, there were naturally some questions from Members that they were not able to answer. This is reflected in the comments as the Committee felt unable to draw conclusions on the achievability, impact and risk of some of the proposals, as the information within the business cases was not sufficient.

Comments to Cabinet on following Proposals:

SS181902 - Closure of Public Conveniences

The Committee had concerns that the Business Case was not complete as:

- The impact of this proposal upon disabled people was not sufficiently mitigated in the Business Case;
- The Business Case did not contain information regarding usage or consultation with users, particularly those with access issues such as disabled or elderly users;
- How near and the location of alternative facilities needed to be identified and signposted and Members suggested this could be done via Maindee Unlimited /other businesses / Business Improvement District partners;
- There was no evidence in the Business Case of what potential solutions other Cities or neighbouring local authorities have used to address similar issues to those identified in the business case, and the rationalisation and identification of alternative provision in the community;
- With the recent City Summit in mind, this proposal was not conducive with the growth and development of Newport and attracting visitors, as it was the view of the Committee that this proposal would have a negative impact on the image of the city;
- Need to develop Business Cases to fully explain the impact on citizens, and what consultation has taken place. It would be beneficial to engage earlier in the development of proposals in future to ensure meaningful involvement when developing the proposals.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place & Corporate - 22 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (Place & Corporate Directorates):

WS181904 - Reducing telephone and face to face services within Customer Services

The Committee had concerns about:

- The Loss of 0.88 FTE face to face contact and the impact on users as a result.
- Issues regarding moving people online from face to face or telephone contact including:
 - Computer literacy / those unable to access computers ;
 - The difficulty of navigating the Council website;
 - The City free WiFi is inconsistent and crashes a lot.

In order to mitigate the impact upon citizens, the Committee suggested the exploration of:

- Live chats and ring back service as offered by other call centres;
- Assistance in libraries for citizens to access computers, and;
- The potential for sharing call centre resources with a partner e.g. Newport City Homes.

SS181905 - Introduce parking charges within city parks

The Committee welcomed the investment in Belle Vue Car park, but had concerns that the Business Case was weak due to the lack of evidence of consultation with users particularly on the pricing structure. Furthermore, the current business operator located in the park had not received the correct information.

The Committee recommended that:

- More detailed consultation and communication with existing regular users be undertaken urgently before introduction and particularly on pricing strategy, eg. for event customers, Bowls Team tournaments, etc.
- The rollout of this proposal to other parks be removed from this proposal and when necessary, should be the subject of future separate fully costed and consulted upon business cases / proposals.

SS181901 - Composting at Docks Way

The Committee welcomed this proposal to make a saving and bring the service in house.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place & Corporate - 22 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (Place & Corporate Directorates):

SS181903 - Review of Back Office Cemetery Operations and facilities in some parks

The Committee noted that there is information that is not included within the Business Case, namely:

- The impact on citizens is not accurately reflected - under the new arrangements an enquiry by a member of the public making about burial records for the City's cemeteries would be dealt with centrally via telephone or an appointment in the Civic Centre. This would present a change to the current provision, and as such would have an impact on citizens, not being able to access the burial records at the respective cemetery that the relevant grave is located.
- Within the summary in the Business Case, it is indicated that the proposal includes the closure of the toilet facilities in the Cemetery. However, this is not referenced in the 'Impact upon Citizens' nor the 'Risk / Mitigation' sections. Closure of the public toilets in the cemeteries would impact upon citizens and this impact should be explained within the Business case.
- There is no mention of the 36% increase in fees to £15 for 30 minutes for an administrative research of burial records which is included in Street Scene Fees and Charges schedule later in the report.

NS181901 - Council Tax - Increase Council Tax by a further 1% from current assumption of 4% to total of 5%

While the Committee realised the challenges faced by the Council and that the Council Tax had been frozen for a number of years, it was concerned about the impact on citizens to pay the increased Council Tax.

The Committee recognised the issues and noted that this proposal would be debated at Council.

Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place & Corporate - 22 Jan 2018

Comments on Draft Budget Proposals (Place & Corporate Directorates):

Comments to Cabinet on any of following Fees and Charges:

Regeneration Investment and Housing:

The Committee stressed that proper communication and consultation with the service of facilities users / fee payers upon proposed fee and charges increases is necessary to feed into the annual review of fees and charges.

Streetscene and City Services:

The Committee welcomed:

- No charge for the interment of a child up to the age of eighteen (from sixteen previously) and recommended that this is publicised;
- the freeze on car parking charges to encourage visitors.

The Committee clarified that the 36 % increase of the charge for an administrative research of burial records to £15 is for 30 minutes. (This wasn't mentioned in the Business Case for the which includes the centralisation of burial records above.)

The Committee was surprised at the under occupancy of allotments, given their rise in popularity in other areas and suggested promotion to younger demographics via social media to increase uptake and revenue.

Corporate Services:

The Committee had concerns that between this year and last year, the pay award was 2% but costs were increasing an average of 4%.

The Committee suggested the promotion of the house naming in order to maximise the opportunity of the building boom, to increase this income stream.