

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Wednesday 21st October 2015 at 2.00p.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: P.S. Farley, R.G. Harris, S.G.M. Howarth and M. Powell.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, E. Hacket Pain and P. Murphy and V.E. Smith.

ADDED / CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

M. Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)
K. Plow (Monmouthshire Association of School Governors)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

S. McGuinness	-	Chief Officer, Children and Young People
K. Beirne	-	Chief Officer, Enterprise
I. Saunders	-	Head of Leisure and Culture
T. Thomas	-	Youth and Community Service Manager
J. Robson	-	Head of Finance
N. Wellington	-	Finance Manager
S. Randall Smith	-	Head of Resources and Achievement
H. Illett	-	Scrutiny Manager
S. King	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P. Clarke, L. Guppy, M. Hickman and D.W.H. Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor R.G. Harris declared a personal and prejudicial interest pursuant to the members' code of conduct in relation to Item 3 B20 mandate. Councillor Harris left the meeting during discussion of the mandate.

County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal interest pursuant to the members' code of conduct in relation to ALN provision at Deri View Primary School, as a School Governor.

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Mr M. Fowler declared a personal interest in relation to ALN provision as a parent of a statemented child.

3. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2016/17 FOR CONSULTATION

We received a report from the Head of Finance in which Select Committee Members were provided with detailed draft proposals on the budget savings required to meet the gap between available resources and need to spend in 2016/17.

Report explains background for budget proposals of 2016/17 and the period of consultation runs up to end of November. Mandates are work in progress, the report provided an opportunity for members, staff and public to influence what goes in to final proposals.

Headlines identified:

- MTFP gap over £11 million over 4 years, based on assumptions and pressures in report.
- Report focuses on next years budget 2016/17 position, £3 million gap. £844,000 already identified as savings, but there are still savings.
- It's about understanding context and issues surrounding it and to welcome alternative ideas to meet the gap.

Committee scrutiny:

- Concerns were expressed that there would be less cash for schools. This was as a result of cash flat line and inflation was not in the model.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

4. SERVICE AREA BUDGET MANDATES

We welcomed Officers who presented the budget mandates and we heard the proposals before the Committee were invited to ask questions.

During discussion the following points were noted:

i) Mandate B1 - Assess the feasibility to establish a Not for Profit Service Delivery Model

- Purpose of mandate is so that select committee members are presented with relevant budget aspects, within the remit of the Children and Young People select committee.
- Outline problem that will be addressed through the mandate, trying to sustain access to locally significant services, this is a priority of the organisation.
- Targeted reduced services, huge scope to integrate an offer which is growing.
- There is a need for income generation and using assets to make money

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- Return on investment generated by visitor economies and main part is that a lot of time spent with front line and staff are stretched beyond. Massive income targets which have been increased year on year, based on facilities and capital investment we have saturated markets. Need to change format and current restraints on way of working.
- Future options approach to bring services together in a more effective way.

Member scrutiny:

- A member queried whether schools would be subjected to a form of charge for using leisure facilities and members were mindful that charges should not be significantly increased as to dissuade customers from using facilities. We were informed that partnerships between schools and leisure facilities had to be developed, this involved appropriate dialogue with stakeholders and ensuring correct agreements were in place.
- There was a need for market forces to be considered, this was to ensure that prices were not excessively increased to dissolve market competitiveness.
- Members were reminded that it was imperative to make a change, as there were significant risks to the services as a result of doing nothing.
- Options for alternatives were provided, which included not for profit companies, commercial opportunities, leisure and school budget combined.
- The first cohort would be undertaken and if there were successes then introduction of other services would follow.
- Clarification was requested regarding acronyms. The term 'TECKAL' was defined as not having to go through EU procurement processes for a company to delivery services.
- In response to a question regarding outdoor education, we were advised that outdoor education has undergone review, which is near to completion and would contribute to new vehicle going forward. Subsidy levels are questionable but moving forward, adult market and commercial opportunities are ones to focus on. There are very different offerings on each site, multitude of opportunities.
- Outdoor education needs to be about the mass market, and support museums, youth service etc. the services make a massive contribution in terms of wellbeing.
- We discussed the possibility of collaborative working with other authorities for outdoor sites, which included specialised activities and income generation.
- A question was raised in relation to how accountability and scrutiny would work, particularly where some areas were statutory and not discretionary. We welcomed further discussions and clarity to look at accountability and scrutiny, for example, if youth is not part of directorate but part of new company. It was important for good scrutiny and governance arrangements to be in place at the outset.

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- Officers confirmed that it was anticipated services would become more accountable as there would be a need to prove outcomes and achievements.
- Services were well known and recognised within the authority, there were no apparent concerns of services losing identity and autonomy through change. Officers welcomed services being developed and opportunities to access resources, which would ordinarily not be available within a smaller service/organisation.

ii) Mandate B20 – Review of service provision for children with special education needs with the authority

- County Councillor R. Harris left the meeting during discussion of this item.
- Process was to reform ALN provision across the authority. Two stages of ALN had been undertaken, the purpose of the mandate is for Deri View to be considered and to consult on closure of 24 place facility.
- Service provisions were considered and Deri View usage had reduced significantly.
- Reasons for closure had been supported by parents of children, with mild to moderate needs, which could be incorporated into mainstream school provision.

Member scrutiny:

- The committee wanted to be reassured that there was confidence in proposals being cost effective. In response, we were advised that the proposals were based on needs of children in Monmouthshire. ALN had not been reviewed for a number of years and there was a need to meet requirements, through improved adaptation and change.
- As part of the 21st Century Schools project, the Cabinet Member confirmed ALN facilities would be included within the four comprehensive schools. The review included regional provisions, which would ensure that provision was replicated in the North and South of the county.
- In terms of costs associated for redundancy, considerations would be given so that these were minimised as much as possible, they would be achieved through the £300k allocated to the school.
- The authority had a responsibility to redeploy employees where possible. The authority were charged with supporting schools and cross directorate work was a factor.
- In relation to concerns expressed regarding cost of floor space, the Chief Officer reiterated that as part of the ongoing strategic review of education, a fundamental part was looking at estate and where there are surplus. The

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Welsh Government requirement for this aspect to be considered was also being addressed.

- The process of consultation would commence, with the needs of the children at the centre and will work with school to make transition as smooth as possible. Work would be undertaken with parents to ensure most suitable timescales were used.

iii) Mandate B23 – Discretionary Fees and Charges Review

- Feedback from previous consultation with public, prefer charges to be increased than services cut. Therefore, required to look at discretionary fees and charges.
- Already 2.5% increase assumed in budget model, this increased up to 10%. Cabinet agreed income generation strategy, being more innovative but will take time for fruition.
- Schedule to mandate gives all fees and charges, as well as a target figure. Services areas will consider how this will impact and how it will be delivered.
- Flexibility for services to look within 10% increase.
- Some of the services are within remit of this Select committee.
- The Cabinet member advised that it was not anticipated for school meals to be increased by 10%. Possibility of looking at increased adult meals, or work within school meals to assist with functions so that an income stream could be generated. Welcome select committee views.

Member scrutiny:

- The Cabinet member advised that officers had provided detailed information in earlier agenda item. It was made clear that it was in mind of officers that there was a point that increased point couldn't go beyond. It is not a proposal for prices to be increased to 10%, it shows potential of what could be achieved.
- In response to a request for clarification regarding SLA arrangements between leisure and schools, we noted that these were in place with primary schools for swimming, but not for secondary.
- A member highlighted that the figures should be included and form part of public consultation. The Cabinet member confirmed that this would be considered and discussed with public and consultation/engagement sessions.
- General concern expressed by committee, that members would be strongly dismayed if cumulative effect would bring disadvantages to children and their parents.
- Chair agreed that there were specific areas which would affect children and young people.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

Thanks to Joy and team for production, for officers and Cabinet members.

Understand difficulty of remit, not easy to cut for income generation and budget.

Overall committee agree mandates in principle, but would like issues discussed to be considered and the effects they have on children and young people (school meals, outdoor education, activities outside schools).

Committee concern scrutiny of new models is sufficient to ensure accountability. Do not want to lose sight of outcomes and achievements in future.

Welcomed future items to be considered by the committee, strategic review of schools, Mounon House and charges.

The next meeting would be held on 2nd November 2015 at 2.00pm, items included EAS and safeguarding prior to Estyn visit.

The meeting ended at 3.45pm.