

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 25 January 2018, County Hall, Worcester - 10.00 am

		Minutes
Present:		Mrs F M Oborski (Chairman), Ms P Agar, Mr R W Banks, Ms R L Dent, Mr S M Mackay, Ms T L Onslow and Ms S A Webb
Also attended:		Mr A C Roberts, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families Mr M J Hart, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education and Skills Catherine Driscoll (Director of Children, Families and Communities), Steph Simcox (Head of Strategic Infrastructure Finance and Financial Recovery), Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Samantha Morris (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)
Available Papers		The members had before them: A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); B. Presentation handouts for Budget Scrutiny: Draft 2018/19 Budget Children's Services and the Alternative Delivery Model (circulated at the Meeting) C. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2017 (previously circulated). (Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).
301	Apologies and Welcome	Apologies were received from Mrs J A Potter, Mr B W Allbut and Mr D Benson, Independent Chairman of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board.
302	Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip	None.
303	Public Participation	None.
304	Confirmation of	The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2017

**the Minutes of
the Previous
Meeting**

**305 Budget
Scrutiny: Draft
2018/19 Budget
Children's
Services**

were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Cabinet Members with Responsibility for Children and Families, and Education and Skills and the Director of Children, Families and Communities were invited to the meeting to present the 2018/19 draft budget and discuss how any challenges were being addressed.

As part of the development of the Council's 2018/19 budget, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels had been asked to consider draft budget proposals for areas within their remit. Panels had previously discussed the budget position and challenges for the current budget year in November 2017. The Panel's views would contribute to Overview and Scrutiny's overall response to the budget which was being discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 30 January 2018.

The Panel received a presentation from the Senior Finance Manager (Financial Planning and Reporting). In the course of the discussion, the following main points were made:

- an extra £10.5 million was being invested in safeguarding vulnerable children in 2018/19 to improve outcomes for children and young people of which, £9.3m was for Children's Social Care placements and £1.2m for Children's Safeguarding including additional safeguarding staff capacity both in social work time and management to reduce caseloads, and increased management oversight. £2m was "new" money
- given that the current budget was not sufficient to meet the demands of the services, the Panel welcomed the recognition that the current shortfall would now be addressed by including the costs in the base budget for 2018/2019
- service improvement remained as important as doing the right thing at the right time, this would help not only to deliver good services but achieve efficiencies
- the Panel was concerned that there may be potential additional costs involved in the development of the Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) for Children's Social Care which were not included in the budget for 2018/19 (the Cabinet weren't deciding which ADM the County Council would support until it's meeting on 29 March)

- there may also be a risk to future budgets of cost pressures associated with the ADM, which at present couldn't be forecast
- a projected saving of £210k was included in the budget for 2018/19 as a result of efficiencies being negotiated with Babcock. The Panel learned that it appeared that some of the efficiencies being considered may impact on the provision of services for young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The Panel was concerned about these reductions as this service had been instrumental in helping to reduce the number of NEET's in the County
- the Panel noted a significant overspend on placements due to growing demand for services and increasing complexity of need. As at the end of November 2017, the Council had 76 more children in a placement than at the same point last year and 63 children in external residential placements
- as with other authorities, Worcestershire was seeing a growth in complexity of need which meant that some children needed to be placed out of county, which in turn had an impact on the costs
- the additional £400k for Children's Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Transport was welcome. This was based on the expectation that demand for this service would increase
- the Panel acknowledged the extra financial pressures on schools and noted the additional £1m for Education funding which replaces lost Government grant.

A summary of the Panel's comments would be agreed in consultation with the Chairman and after the meeting and submitted to the OSPB for consideration and forwarding on to Cabinet for its meeting on 8 February 2018.

306 Alternative Delivery Model

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Director of Children, Families and Communities attended the meeting to update the Panel on Alternative Delivery Models (ADM) for Children's Social Care.

The Panel received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Children of Children and Families and Communities and were reminded that:

- no decision had been made yet on the preferred ADM. The decision was scheduled to be made by

Cabinet on 29 March 2018, with the full business case being submitted by 31 March 2018 and implementation to commence on 1 April 2018 and being operational by April 2019

- programme governance oversight was provided by the Department for Education (DfE) appointed Children's Commissioner and would feed into the democratic processes
- two options were being Twin Tracked ie one business case that considered both options ie a Wholly owned council company and Strategic Partnership with another Local Authority (yet to be named).

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- the amount of Government funding which may be received and costings of the ADM were yet to be clarified
- the point was made that whilst the ADM was being worked on, it was important to remain focused on the improvement plan for children's social care
- members of the Panel were concerned about the morale of staff and the uncertainty that the ADM brought. The Assistant Director confirmed that that was a major concern for the Directorate and that staff were concerned about terms & conditions and pensions. However regular drop in sessions for staff were being run to keep staff informed about the ADM
- only those services under direction and/or essential to improvement work or day to day business were included 'in-scope', so neither the Babcock Contract or virtual school were included at this point
- the Panel was concerned that there may be potential additional costs involved in the development of the ADM which were not included in the budget for 2018/19.
- the point was also made that there may be a risk to the budget for the future, in that whatever form the ADM took, it may lead to a requirement by that body for additional funding, which had not been planned for
- in terms of how long it was envisaged that the Statutory Direction would remain in force, the Assistant Director advised that it would remain in place whilst the Authority were inadequate, after which it wasn't clear when it would be lifted as this varied on a case by case basis

307 Work Programme

- there were two main options which would be considered for the Director of Children's Services role: the function would either be retained in the Council, whilst the Company recruited its own Chief Executive or the Director would be seconded to the ADM to take on the Chief Executive role
- it was suggested that the Service Contract should include reference to the views of children and young people
- possible partners being considered for the strategic partnership were Shropshire, Staffordshire and Wolverhampton
- it was confirmed managing the impact on staff of the new model was a challenge and risks would be minimised wherever possible and performance management applied if necessary
- the Scrutiny function for the chosen model would remain within in Worcestershire.

The Panel requested the opportunity to look at the full Business Case when it was available and make comments to the Cabinet Member at this time.

The Panel was asked to consider and comment on the suggested amendments to its Work Programme and confirm the Scrutiny Champion roles, prior to consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) at its meeting on 30 January 2018.

At its meeting on 18 July 2017, the OSPB agreed its Scrutiny Work Programme, which was subsequently endorsed by Council at its meeting on 14 September 2017 with an acknowledgement that the Panel's Work Programme would be updated to reflect the greater level of scrutiny work required by the Panel as a result of the post Ofsted action plan for Children's Social Care.

During October 2017, the Local Government Association (LGA) funded a Development Session for the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, the Panel, the Corporate Parenting Board and representatives of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board to discuss the role of scrutiny and understand the added value that it could bring.

Accordingly, It was now timely to update the Panel's Work Programme and the following suggested changes were agreed:

- Care Leavers – this was an area identified in the

LGA Development Session as an issue suitable for Scrutiny. It was however, agreed that as the Corporate Parenting Board was considering this at its February 2018 meeting and in order to avoid duplication, Scrutiny should await the outcomes of this meeting before deciding if some Scrutiny should be carried out.

- Review of Social Work (looking at the workload of social workers (including travel time and key workers) and considering comparative figures in relation to performance of agency staff, recruitment and retention and caseloads). It was agreed that this was added to the Work Programme and looked at in September 2018, by which time the new Social Care Operating Model would have had time to settle.
- Placements – the Director of Children, Families and Communities suggested that it would be helpful for this to be added to the Programme and for Scrutiny to look at this with a focus on the types of placements in Worcestershire (including emergency placements), costs and availability – it was agreed that this would be added to the Work Programme
- Scrutiny Task Groups - It was agreed that approval be sought from the OSPB to set up two Scrutiny Task Groups to look at:
 - (i) the Short Breaks Consultation led by Councillor Fran Oborksi
 - (ii) the relationship between the Family Front Door and schools led by Councillor Jane Potter
- Scrutiny Champions - at the LGA Development Session, it was suggested that individual Members may wish to act as 'Champions' for particular aspects of the Panel's work. This would enable a focus and watching brief to be kept on important areas of children's services without the need for a formal scrutiny review. Champions would then report back periodically to the Panel. The Scrutiny Champions agreed were:
 - (i) Safeguarding – Cllr Fran Oborski
 - (ii) Education – Cllr Shirley Webb
 - (iii) Looked After Children - Cllr Jane Potter
 - (iv) Finance/budget – Cllr Bob Banks

The meeting ended at 12.25 pm

Chairman

