

Unity Group Amendment to the Cabinet's proposed 2022/23 Budget

For Consideration at Full Council 17 February 2022

Purpose of report

- To present to Full Council one proposed amendment from the Unity Group to the budget recommended by Cabinet on 3 February 2022, with officers' technical comments on the impact to the budget.

Background

- The proposals are set out below:

Amendment: Further Investment in improving Children's Services

Unity Group Revenue Budget Amendment Proposals 2022/23	Amendment 1	
	£ million	£ million
<u>Expenditure</u> - investment in the following areas: Further enhance our targeted support services to all vulnerable children including those with additional needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Family Group Conferencing service which helps families to co-ordinate a network of support within their wider family and community. Development of Green Hill Lodge to specifically cater for Children with SEND and EHCP's to have community support groups to promote independent living skills. We propose to delegate to the Chief Executive WCF and Director of Children's Services the final allocation based on their assessment of need. Further detail can be found in Appendix 1 below.		0.455
<u>Funding</u> - reduction in planned increase in capital expenditure on highways borrowing: Reduction of Carriageway works for the car by 33% to support the Climate Change Emergency declared in 2021 and promote Active Travel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce £12 million planned capital structural carriageway maintenance expenditure by 33% to £4.5 million. This will reduce planned borrowing costs by £0.455 million for redeployment to Children's Services. 	-0.455	
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Net Total Impact 2022/23	-0.455	0.455
Balance / gap		0

3. Due to updated information from our District Councils, the draft budget for 2022/23 presented to Cabinet on 3 February received an unanticipated additional £4 million in income resulting from Council Tax. A proposal has been made by Cabinet that this additional income be used to extend support for the capital programme from 2 years to 3 years.
4. Therefore, further capital expenditure for highways structural maintenance of £12 million is included in that draft budget to be funded by an increase in borrowing costs of approximately £1.2 million. On consideration of relative priorities, it is proposed by the Unity Group that this capital expenditure is amended and reduced by £4 million which in turn will reduce the requirement for borrowing costs by approximately £0.455 million.
5. This amendment proposes that this reduced borrowing cost is instead used to support areas of development within Children's Services. This proposal notes the existing good quality of the County's highway infrastructure but considers that supporting continued improvement in Children's Services to be a higher priority.
6. In addition, this supports the wider objectives of supporting the Climate Change Emergency focus relating to Active Travel and avoiding contravention to the Climate Change Emergency declared 2021.

Financial technical comments

7. The proposal amends the revenue fund by reducing Cabinet's proposals to use debt financing to support the capital programme with an amendment to use those funds within Children's Services. The expenditure proposal is matched by an equal funding proposal and thus have a nil net impact on the base budget overall. The amendment is for nearly one hundred percent pay costs, thus making the requirement to fund most of this proposal from recurrent sources of funding. The proposed funding route of removing debt financing requirement thus matches a recurrent assumption. As such this proposal does not require or impact any call on the Council's reserves or financial standing.

Monitoring Officer technical comments

7. The proposals do not appear to impact adversely on the statutory duties of the Section 151 Officer or the Head of Paid Service, or any other statutory requirements set out in the Cabinet report. Council is responsible for setting the Budget; the executive (Cabinet) is responsible for discharging executive functions as it thinks fit within those budgetary limits.

Head of Paid Service technical comments

8. As Head of Paid Service, I can confirm that officers, including the representative of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) have provided independent technical advice.
9. We are aware of the full details of Unity Group's amendment as set out and consider the proposal is intra vires, and do not impact adversely on the Cabinet's budget recommendations as they would not change the net budget requirement, the level of Council Tax or reserves proposed.

Conclusion

10. Council is able to consider the amendment.

PROPOSED FURTHER INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Family Group Conferencing Service

The investment will focus on strengthening the team and therefore consists of staffing costs. There is a requirement to provide a total of 5 additional FTE as follows:

Table 1: Family Group Conferencing Service Staffing Costs

Role	Level	FTE	Annual Cost 2022/23
Manager	PO1	1	£41,000
Support worker	Scale 6	4	£141,600
Total		5	£182,600

Greenhill Lodge

The Greenhill Lodge investment will consist of two phases as follows:

Phase 1 - Community Support Offer:

Community room and Sensory room made available for parent support, access to sensory and play equipment for parent & child.

- a) Day activities for under 5's stay and play
- b) Day activity after school and school holidays
- c) Independent Skill Development 1-1 and or groups sessions
- d) Parent Carer – support sessions (linked with Umbrella pathway, CDC or other contact points)
- e) Occupational Health for assessing equipment and adaptation need

Phase 2 - Overnight Support Offer:

Day and overnight Respite with independence skill development

The investment will focus on strengthening the team and therefore consists of staffing costs. There is a requirement to provide a total of 7 additional FTE as follows:

Table 2: Greenhill Lodge Staffing Costs

Role	Level	FTE	Annual Cost 2022/23
Community Support Workers (3 per session)	Scale 6	6	£212,400
Receptionist		1	£35,400
Total		7	£247,800

The total investment in Children's Services will therefore comprise of £455,400 and is summarised in the table below:

Table 3: Summary of Total Investment in Children's Services

	Staffing Costs	Non- staffing Costs	Total Cost 2022/23
Family Group Conferencing Service	£182,600	-	£182,600
Greenhill Lodge	£247,800	£25,000	£272,800
Total	£430,400	£25,000	£455,400

Note: non-staffing costs represent decoration of Greenhill Lodge and are not recurrent expenditure.