

**DRAFT SCRUTINY COMMENTS – EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES
(FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 30 JANUARY 2024)**

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE

Draft Budget Proposals 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Plan

Invitees:

- **Robert Green – Assistant Head of Finance**
- **Sally Ann Jenkins – Strategic Director – Social Services**
- **Mary Ryan – Head of Adult Services**
- **Natalie Poyner – Head of Children Services**
- **Mandy Shide – Service Manager**
- **Sarah Morgan – Chief Education Officer**

The Assistant Head of Finance gave a brief overview of the budget position.

Pressures and Investments

The following was discussed:

- The Committee enquired about the increase of 4 places in both Sporting Chance and Catch 22. The Chief Education Officer (CEO) informed Committee that budget demand for Education was being met by the Council and this looked at the need to support children in out-of-county placements due to complex requirements. They assured the Committee that work was being undertaken to establish local provision where possible. They highlighted that contracts with current providers would be maintained providing approximately 30 places, but this investment would provide an additional 4 places where required. They informed Committee that if they aren't used, it would be considered an underspend in the budget but they were likely to be filled. They assured Committee of consistent monitoring regarding who required places and what was available, and that when contracting additional places, quality assurance checks were carried out to ensure pupils' welfare and that the student-teacher ratios were correct.
- The Committee highlighted that in the previous year's budget, ALN funding figures were to be confirmed and asked for assurance that this investment would meet requirements. The CEO noted cost pressures for ALN provision and highlighted that more ALN pupils had been identified than ever before. The CEO informed Committee that due to increasing complexities, this investment would not necessarily meet all needs but was in addition to individual school's budgets, who had responsibility with their wholistic budget to provide for all children. The CEO acknowledged the demand on schools and that this investment wouldn't necessarily provide everything, but it was one additional measure to support those recognised challenges. The Committee were pleased that there was additional investment to support ALN students.

Budget Savings Proposals for Consultation

Domiciliary care support to be enhanced with assistive technology to reduce the levels of care hours required.

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- The Committee enquired how assistive technology would be used to help reduce levels of care. The Head of Adult Services informed Committee that implementation had already begun and highlighted the Smart Hub exhibition in Newport Market, where residents sought further information regarding assistive technology. They informed Committee that feedback from the public had been positive but were ensuring that it was tailored to meet individual needs.
- The Committee noted that if domiciliary care would be replaced in part by assistive technology, there was an assumption of familial support to carry out these checks in place of the domiciliary care. The Head of Adult Services noted that during the pandemic there was increased family support but acknowledged the change since and highlighted that for unpaid carers, this assistive technology had been a lifeline. They assured Committee that it would never replace the need for domiciliary care but was in addition to it.

Fees and Charges

- The Committee enquired who paid fees and charges to the Council. The Assistant Head of Finance directed the Committee to the headings within Appendix 5. They noted that amounts were the same under each heading, but differentiated between who pays. The Head of Adult Services informed the Committee that placement vacancies were sold to other LAs who required them, and that Newport residents did not always pay the same amount as it was means tested.
- The Committee queried the percentage increase of Appointeeships. The Assistant Head of Finance informed the Committee that this reflected a thorough review and recosting exercise of the service area that had taken place and was not as significant an increase in cash terms as other services despite the high percentage. The Head of Adult Services noted that anyone who required Appointeeship services was subject to a full financial assessment.

1. Conclusions of Committee Reports

Comments to the Cabinet on the following proposals:

- a) The Committee noted the budget proposals relevant to the People Directorate and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet as a summary of the issues raised.
- b) The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet on the Proposals within the People Directorate:
 - The Committee were pleased with the ALN funding to schools to support universal ALN provision.
 - The Committee highlighted the importance of domiciliary care not being replaced by assistive technology where it is not sustainable for individuals or their families.
 - The Committee highlighted the importance of the continuation of service delivery quality.
 - The Committee were content to recommend the proposals as they were.