

Resources Scrutiny Commission – 2020/21 Budget Scrutiny Questions

| People Directorate | | |
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| No | Question | Answer |
| 1 | <p>Adult Social Care</p> <p>The P8 report forecasts a £154.4m outturn. (P9 is £154.35m). This needs to be reconciled with the 20/21 Budget of £145.55m to fully understand the challenges facing the ASC team in achieving this budget. On 27/1 We discussed and agreed the need for a reconciliation please in the form as follows:</p> <p>P8 outturn £154.4m add back the £2.028m one off winter pressures income in 19/20 = £156.4m</p> <p>Then reduce savings and add extra pressures from the £156.4m like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - add in the £0.787m expected pay award, - reduce £0.920m of costs transferring to housing dept, - reduce £2.86m of iBCF funding and more.... <p>This will come to a figure £Xm that is ASC costs before savings.</p> <p>That figure £Xm compared with the new budget of £145.55m shows the true challenge (or gap) that needs to be made up from savings from approved programs like Better Lives, ASC Innovation and some capital spend as well as programs not yet finalised.</p> | See Appendix A for reconciliation. |
| 2 | <p>Children and Families Service</p> <p>Cost control depends heavily on the effectiveness of the Strengthening Families and Edge of Care programs (FP31). This has been working well and bucking the national trend. But I have heard of some recently expensive placements due</p> | <p>a) The most significant uncontrollable expense is the requirement on the local authority to meet the remand costs of young people in custody. We do receive a grant based on previous trends of £180k. Each young person costs approximately £200k if on remand for one full year. In this financial year we have had significant periods of time when 6 young people have been</p> |

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| | <p>to Court/Police decisions (out of our control).</p> <p>a) P9 outturn is £62.75m, similar to P8 so have these recent costs been incorporated into the outturn? If not are they significant?</p> <p>b) If they are significant how are they being mitigated this year and does that leave us in a more difficult situation next year? How much?</p> | <p>remanded and so we are forecasting approximately £700k spend. The difference between the budget and spend is being mitigated elsewhere within existing budgets.</p> <p>b) The budget is based on a formula determined by the Ministry of Justice which looks at the numbers of remands over previous years. We receive the grant annually in April each year. We are using a mixture of troubled families, children centre and early help cost centres to meet the gap as I am expected to consume the overspend in my budget.</p> <p>Next year we might get an enhanced grant depending on government decisions, and based on our higher use of remand this year. It is uncontrollable in that we cannot dictate the number of young people who will be remanded in custody and so we have to meet the expenditure.</p> |
| 3 | <p>Educational Improvement This is budgeted at £11.831m.</p> <p>a) Does this include the costs of processing EHCPs? (If not where is it please).</p> <p>b) We note that P9 shows an expected outturn of £12.495m. This implies a saving of £0.65m to be made next year, what are the chances of containing this? (Note - this question was written before the SEND Scrutiny Day so it might need to be reworded at Resource Scrutiny in the light of further information).</p> | <p>a) Within the budget of £11.8m, £0.91m is the budget for Special Needs Team staffing – which includes the staff supporting EHCP. (Total High Needs General Fund is £6.778m, includes further £5.423m on HTST and £0.445m for Ed Psyc and Sensory Support).</p> <p>b) This relates to the Home-to-School Transport saving, which is currently undergoing a service review seeking to introduce new software to make the service more efficient. This will look to reduce the overspend back in line with budget for 2020/21.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Education</p> <p>a) Is any of this Capital program on p81 allocated for expanding in house SEND provision?</p> <p>b) We note that PE02 on page 86 describes additional SEN provision capital investment and this totals £42m. What projects might this include?</p> | <p>a) Yes approx. £11m of the capital is for expanding existing in house SEND provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. KnowleDGE b. Kingsweston Special School c. Feasibility work to identify future key SEND expansion and improvement projects |

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| | | <p>b) This is the project pending business case development and securing external funding. It is recognised that further SEND capital investment is required in the city, to which external SEND grant would need to be directed on receipt. Invest to save opportunities are being explored, lobbying DFE for to enable the PWLB borrowing to be charged to DSG.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Care Services</p> <p>a) This shows zero capital spend. Does this mean we have no social care infrastructure or that we don't need to maintain it? Or something else?</p> | <p>a) Capital expenditure of maintenance of general fund Council owned property is included within Resources under Building Practice Service.</p> <p>b) The project relates to Day Opportunities and reports as completed in 2019/20 which had a remaining Budget of £0.228m which the Forecast is confirming will be spent in full</p> |
| 6 | <p>Mobile Working for Social Care RE05</p> <p>a) This shows zero capital spend. This was an important project two years ago to help control Care spend. What is its status now?</p> <p>b) Has it been absorbed into the larger IT projects above that line. If so which one?</p> | <p>a) In March 2018 a Social Care proposal was approved by Cabinet to invest in tablets for the Children's and Adult Care Services to enable agile/mobile working and bring in efficiencies and meet some Ofsted recommendations amongst other things. The project was commenced to deliver service improvements quickly (to ASC within 1 year and to Children's Services by 2020). It was run as a separate project due to expected delays in the FSA Programme (Future State Assessment, approved by Cabinet in July 2018) which could also deliver the technology.</p> <p>The project experienced a series of delays, both technical and operational. A small number of pilot devices were deployed with the mobile application (a cut-down version of the case management system which holds just the records needed and synchronises changes with the main system), and this has generated some valuable feedback. One of the key findings is that the Council has been unable to obtain supplier assertions that the mobile software meets the security standards expected by Information Assurance officers. In addition, it has been identified that a variety of different devices is required to meet the different workstyles across the services (one type does not fit all).</p> <p>b) The technical aspects for the Agile Working pilot were essentially a short-term</p> |

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| | | <p>tactical solution which was developed prior to the FSA Programme being established with its long-term solution not ready to deploy. However, now that the IT Transformation Programme (the successor to the FSA Programme) is developing its roll-out schedule, it would seem sensible for the Care Services to now get the properly developed long-term solution (which is fully supported and robust) when the timelines for deployment of either solution appear to be almost identical (end 2020)</p> <p>In Nov 2019 all the money attributed for the laptops/tablets, and small amount of equipment used for trials, has been transferred back to the IT department. This money will be utilised to procure the equipment which will be delivered as part of the IT Transformation Programme, and the equipment is being used elsewhere for other trials.</p> <p>It seems that the business case in March 2018 didn't quantify the benefits nor how they would be achieved or monitored and as the project delivery has not been met, the anticipated service improvements haven't been realised thus not reducing cost pressures on ASC.</p> <p><u>ICT's offer...</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The new IT approach is to supply PC's, laptops etc with Windows10 (W10) and to configure them for Cloud Computing so that the applications run on the Cloud and not on the PC. This also means that all hardware will be required to have more robust security protocols (and 4G). Non W10 hardware like iPads/Android will have their Council software operate in a contained part of the software. This "contained area" will be invisible to the user but provide protection if there are other non-Council apps running.2) Therefore all Council applications (nearly 800 of them) need to be able to run on W10; some of our existing apps can do this, some need upgrades and some legacy software needs replacement software as it cannot be upgraded.3) In addition to considering whether software is compatible with W10, Information Assurance Officers are establishing whether our software meets |
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| | | <p>current security standards and is compatible with GDPR legislation. The mobile application to be used by Social Care needs to meet these standards, and at present, we do not have confirmation whether it can. It is thought any development or assurance work to achieve/assure these standards, could take 6 months or more.</p> <p>4) When the new devices and the new mobile application are released, it will enable social workers to update information wherever they are sited without returning to the office. Referrals will be able to be made quicker and bring more confidence to users of the care services. In addition, they will be able to meet the ofsted requirements about children’s photo albums (life histories). These benefits directly brought about by the scope of the Agile Working Project will be augmented by the wider collaboration and productivity improvements which will be made available through the IT Transformation Programme.</p> <p><u>The wider costs to BCC...</u></p> <p>1) It seems there still isn’t a clearly defined and available benefits document for the Agile Working Project. But, since improved efficiency of operation is expected and hasn’t occurred, it could be costly. We are entering a phase of carer shortages (especially for homecare) then every 5% improvement in efficiency will make a huge saving on costs to the service, £millions or more.</p> <p>2) The delivery of the Agile Working benefits are now part of the IT Transformation Programme and requires better coordination with Children’s and Adult Care Services.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Dedicated Schools Grant & High Needs Block</p> <p>P227 shows the high needs block funding at £62.38m for 20/21. The spend is set at the same amount. We query this; the P9 forecast for 2019/20 is £60.269m. But there are major pressures on that.</p> <p>- A lot of work is going in to catch up on the EHCPs (and the</p> | <p>The actual funding earmarked for general high-needs spend in 2020/21 is £61.0m as £1.3m allocated from the schools block will be held in abeyance for the education improvement programme. In addition there is a further £1.5m from the general fund and £1.2m carried forward from £2019/20 giving the total £4m for the education transformation programme.</p> <p>The detail on the High Needs Block spend and wider Education Transformation</p> |

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| <p>reviews). Whilst some reviews might reduce the need it is assumed that most new ones will trigger new needs at £20k to £25k per head. So potentially the catch up and then providing resources for 400 extra SEND children could add £ multi millions of costs.</p> <p>- Pay rises (if 2.7%) could be £1.5m on top. Some of the skills are in tight demand so inflation could be higher.</p> <p>Therefore please we would like to see a more rigorous presentation of the predicted SEND needs.</p> | <p>Programme will be presented at Schools Forum on 31 March 2020. The detailed financial impact of the unprocessed EHCPs will form part of this.</p> <p>It needs to be noted that the grant conditions for the DSG have changed for 2020/21 reinforcing the ring-fenced nature of the grant and will prohibit any contributions from general funds.</p> <p>Current forecast outturn is £60.3m in comparison to a £61.0m budget in 2020/21.</p> |
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