



## **SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.**

#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor D. Cushing - Chair

#### **Councillors:**

E.M. Aldworth, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, P. Cook, D. Cushing (Chair), M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Gordon, T. Heron, A. Leonard, B. Miles (Vice Chair), T. Parry, J. Roberts, J. Simmonds, and K. Woodland.

#### **Cabinet Members:**

Councillors C. Andrews (Education and Communities), and E. Forehead (Social Care).

#### **Together with:**

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), G. Jenkins (Interim Corporate Director of Social Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), M.J. Jones (Financial Services Manager), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), J. Green (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

#### **Also in attendance:**

Councillor J. Pritchard, and co-opted Members D. Bezzina (Parent Governor Representative), K. Stacey (Parent Governor Representative), and P. Ireland (NEU).

### **RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Bishop, S. Skivens J. Winslade and co-opted Members K. Cole (NEU), and D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

## **3. SOCIAL SERVICES 2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (MONTH 5).**

Councillor E. Forehead (Cabinet Member for Social Care) introduced the report which informed Members of projected revenue expenditure for Social Services for the 2024/25 financial year and its implications for the current and future financial years.

Members were informed that the report identified the reasons behind a projected overspend of £490k against a total Social Services budget for 2024/25 of £139,133k, inclusive of transport costs. It highlighted overspends caused by an increasing demand for residential care for children and supported living placements for vulnerable adults, in particular. These overspends have been partially offset in-year by staff vacancy savings, but these savings may not recur in future years. This demand will need to be closely monitored throughout the financial year if the Directorate is to balance its budget for the current financial year and into the medium-term.

A Member sought clarification on Wanless Income. Members were referred to Professor Wanless and the information provided in the appendix and advised that Wanless Income is money that was distributed to the Health Board, then allocated annually to Social Services. Discussion followed regarding income received from residents and Members were advised that a breakdown could be provided for Members following the meeting.

A Member sought clarification on the cost of the secure accommodation placement referred to in the report and queried whether the weekly cost of £12,600 was for one child, and how long this placement was expected to continue. Members were advised that the cost was a standard rate for one child and would continue as required, following monthly reviews with an independent person and panel.

A Member sought clarification on a 'spot purchase' referred to in the report and Members were advised that this would be a bespoke support package where there has been a crisis or breakdown in the home, this would be an additional one-off purchase of additional support within the home.

A Member queried what was involved in the transport costs referred to in the report and Members were advised that this would include transport to day care settings for adult services, and transport to schools from foster homes or residential placements for children's services. Members were also advised of the importance of the school transport to the child, to enable them to continue with the stability of their usual school, even if they have moved out of the area. Discussion followed regarding whether the relevant funding came from Education or Social Services, depending on the child's circumstances.

A Member sought clarification on the 'salary spinal point saving' and Members were advised that as retention had been better, then replacement costs had been less, and staff who had been recruited were on a lower spinal column point than more experienced staff. The Member also queried the overspend on children's services and whether this was regarding the secure placement provision discussed earlier in the meeting. Members were advised that this was one of the contributing factors, and that there had also been an increase in demand for mothers with unborn babies needing specialist placements and assessments.

The Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee noted the projected overspend of £490k along with its implications for future financial years.

#### **4. EDUCATION BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 (PERIOD 5).**

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which informed Members of the projected 2024-25 outturn position for the Directorate of Education, based on the most recent information available.

Members were informed that the report identified projected under / (overspends) currently forecast for 2024-25 (full details in Appendix 1). In summary the current projected outturn position for Education was an overspend of £1.446m, an increase of £0.127m from the update at the end of period 3. Members were advised that it was important to note that this financial projection excludes a forecast outturn position for our schools. Information with regards to the school's financial position was included in the body of the report. The report also provided an update with regards to progress against the Directorates savings target of £1.319m for the year (excludes schools).

A Member queried whether the savings in the psychology service referred to in the report was due to a current vacancy and whether the vacancy was due to be filled soon and the effect of the vacancy continuing. Members were advised that this was due to staff turnover, and it was not the intention to reduce staff numbers in this area as it was a priority service within the directorate, and it was hoped this vacancy would be filled as soon as possible under the current recruitment process.

A Member clarified that there had been an increase in the Home to School transport costs and Members were advised that this service was currently under review as part of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly. A Member also queried whether a rise in fuel prices could affect transport contracts, and Members were advised that these contracts are usually on a 3-year basis and there would not normally be an immediate change during the contract period.

A Member sought clarification on the schools in deficit budgets which had recently been updated. Members were advised that a further breakdown would be checked and circulated to Members following the meeting and that a School Budget Forum was planned for the current week.

A Member clarified that the lease on Crumlin Institute had been surrendered a couple of months previously and no further ongoing costs were applicable to CCBC.

A Member requested whether an update was available on the buyout of the PFI regarding Lewis Boys and Cwm Rhymni schools. Members were advised that an update should be available before Christmas.

The Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 6.06 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

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CHAIR