

## Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

27 November 2023

### Council Plan, Medium Term Financial Statement and preparations for 2024/25 Draft Budget

#### Comments and responses from the service scrutiny committee meetings

##### 1. Children and Young People's Services

- Recognised the pressure on the **home to school transport** budget and asked what work was being undertaken to review current arrangements. The Committee heard that initiatives were in train through an officer task and finish group which was focusing on reviewing current policies, providing independent travel training for young people, reviewing vehicle occupancy numbers and parental mileage rates.
- Recognised the pressure on the budget as a result of a **reduction in government funding**, and supported the continued lobbying of government by the Cabinet Member.
- Asked how the County Council would **increase Kinship placements**. It was confirmed that work would be undertaken to provide the same level of support as foster carers and an uplift in fees. Kinship carers were also entitled to the same level of support for home adaptations as foster carers.
- Suggested that any **communications** around the budget should make it clear that the budget reductions being put forward for the portfolio are efficiency savings, rather than cuts to services. It was advised that the Cabinet Member had looked at areas of improvement and future demand to offer these efficiencies and subsequent savings.
- Suggested that **additional performance measures** to track those with Education health and Care Plans not accessing education and the time taken on the SEND journey be considered.

##### 2. Communities, Highways and Environment

###### 2.1 Communities

- Was reassured that the staff time freed up by no longer opening the Record Office on a Saturday could be used to create more online content.

###### 2.2 Highways and Transport

- Was reassured that bus operators had not expressed concerns about a proposed reduction in the concessionary fares budget, and that the announcement from government on additional funding to repair roads in the County might come to fruition soon enough to impact the 2024/25 budget.

- Was informed that modelling had been undertaken in respect of parking fees and charges, and that demand continued to outstrip supply. The percentage increase would depend on the specific area.
- Questioned whether the Service had sufficient staffing resource to successfully deliver the additional £5m highways maintenance spending in 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- Recommended that the council engages with building contractors to better understand the impact of increases of fees and charges on tradesmen.

### **2.3 Environment and Climate Change:**

- Regarding the proposal to roll out the booking system to all Household Waste Recycling Centres, members expressed concerns as follows:
  - That Cabinet Members did not take heed of Scrutiny Committee views.
  - That the consultation by which the proposal was informed was outdated, and should not be relied upon for present purposes.
  - That the proposal would lead to increased fly-tipping
  - That some sites did not currently experience congestion, and that the proposals would solve a problem that did not exist
- Most members expressed support for the booking system proposal.

### **3. Health and Adult Social Care**

- Concern was raised in relation to the proposal concerning the review of care information, advice, assessment and support contract regarding the potential impact on residents, and whether the committee could consider proposals ahead of the award of the contract, including hearing evidence from the current provider. The service agreed to provide advice on whether scrutiny ahead of the procurement award could be undertaken.
- Members expressed concern on the conclusion of the adult social care precept, but were assured that this had been factored into future budget projections.
- Reassurance over the work undertaken and the transparent presentation of savings was welcomed by the committee.
- Members requested further information on the review of commissioning contracts at an appropriate time.
- It was confirmed that all other proposals as detailed in Appendix B were understood and no further information required by the committee.

### **4. Fire and Rescue Service**

- Meeting scheduled for 30 November therefore no feedback to report.