

Scrutiny Budget recommendations 2019/20

Scrutiny Committees' note the Government's provisional financial settlement and the spending targets determined by the Cabinet, expressing concern nonetheless at the continuing financial pressure faced by local authorities and the potential consequences on the ability of the Council to do what matters for the citizens of Devon; specifically, Scrutiny:

Welcomes and supports

1. The proposed 1% Social Care Precept;
2. The commitment to invest monies from the business rates retention pilot scheme into Children's Services including for Edge of Care and Crisis Care, with an expectation of innovative invest to save initiatives;
3. Additional investment of;
 - i. £8.2 millions for looked after children;
 - ii. £1 million additional funding to support the scrutiny recommendation on changes to foster care allowances; and
 - iii. The planned investment of £2 millions in service improvement and development.
4. The Council's flexible and adaptable approach moving to direct delivery of the following services:
 - i. Residential Short Breaks;
 - ii. Rehab officers or Visually Impaired Children's Services;
 - iii. Public Health Nursing; and
 - iv. Portage.
5. Increased use of Capital prevention strategies to alleviate revenue spend on highways.
6. The continuation of service provision despite challenging budgets in the:
 - i. 50 libraries and 4 mobile libraries across Devon;
 - ii. continued support for democracy and the effectiveness of scrutiny.

Records Concern:

7. That the budgets prepared based on Cabinet's approved targets are sufficient to meet the demands placed on those services and that the apportionment of resources between the various services is appropriate and proportionate. Most notably:
 - i. Potential future overspend of the Children's budget, noting with concern the estimated future cost to the authority due to demographic pressure and increases in demand notwithstanding the recognition of the robust planning undertaken by the Service to address needs led budgets;
 - ii. The reduction in Public Health grant (as a key player in promoting health and wellbeing of the population); and the increased demand and budget pressures in adult social care and asks Cabinet to continue to put pressure on Central Government; and
 - iii. The impact of Brexit on the Council's budget and the impact on staff recruitment especially adequate recruitment of nurses to private residential homes.

Requests that Cabinet:

8. Continue to pursue the investment in Devon's children until funding for education is needs led and equitable with other similar local authorities. Scrutiny welcomes the endeavours undertaken by this Council to achieve fairer funding for children in schools across Devon and the additional £10.2million increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant. However, Scrutiny highlights the reality that this is mainly due to an increase in pupil numbers and in real terms there will only be an additional £10 per pupil and is still a **shortfall of £294 compared to the national average** funding for each pupil. Scrutiny encourages consideration of how parents and schools' voices' can be recognised and supported on these issues, including sharing information (e.g. a factsheet).
9. Continue to press Government for investment in SEND support; whilst commending the work in increasing specialist provision as well as the success in developing two new special schools in Tiverton and Newton Abbot.
10. Call on the Government for the swift publication of the Green Paper anticipated to address funding in adult social care including adequate funding for care workers, recognising the interrelated nature of system working with the NHS and highlights the limitations of short-term funding affecting long term planning for local services, most notably the Improved Better Care Fund.
11. Consider a co-ordinated approach to address concerns about recruitment and retention of teaching and learning support staff, including:
 - I. Recognition and extension of Devon approaches to mentoring, coaching and career development as well as the launch of a new DCC recruitment website with a dedicated section on the benefits of working in education in Devon; and
 - II. lobby central government reflecting the serious concerns about recruitment and retention of teaching staff.
12. Consider additional funding to be made available to support winter planning for Adult Social Care if possible.
13. Ensures that all risk and impact assessments continue to be updated and are compiled with the evidence gathered during this budget preparation exercise and any subsequent engagement processes to support the proposed way forward.

Requests that the NHS:

14. Continues to work with Devon County Council to ensure the continuation and extension of a comprehensive offer for 0-25 mental health prevention and support and requests further updates to scrutiny as available.
15. Support integrated working arrangements with Public Health around sexual health.