

Budget Scrutiny Recommendations

Welcomes and supports:

1. The overall 6.3% increase in the budget, specifically the 10.4% in Children and Young People's Futures and 6% in Integrated Adult Social Care, including:
 - a. The £2.2 million increase in the internal and external fostering budget, and the increased number of in-house foster carers by 30, and £3.2 million investment in the development of three in-house children's homes reducing the reliance on out of county placements and independent fostering agencies.
 - b. The increase of 525 places in Devon's Special School estate.
 - c. The increase in Member Locality Budgets to £8,000 per Member and thanks Cabinet for taking on board Scrutiny's recommendation in January 2023 to review Locality Budgets.

Scrutiny welcomes the cross-Council organisational work by the Cabinet and Senior Leadership team to deliver the Budget and looks forward to seeing further improvements including the continued efforts to achieve effective partnership working and value for money.

2. Recognising:
 - a. The efforts of Devon County Council staff in the continuing to support the most vulnerable people and providing essential services,
 - b. the important work of the voluntary and community sector and the varied role it plays in Devon's communities.
 - c. The intention to work with Town and Parish Councils on the Highways Self-Help Scheme.
3. The work of the Senior Leadership Team and Services to progress and work with partners:
 - a. To focus on integrated working with the NHS to deliver a strengths-based approach to the delivery of care.
 - b. To deliver the transformation required to best support people in Devon, including a sustainable budget and savings.
4. Improvements within Directorates to in relation to staffing, including:
 - a. A permanent Head of Service manager level within Children's Social Care,
 - b. Efforts to support the recruitment and retention of Social Workers, including ASYE.

- c. The re-design of legal services to focus on the skills of the workforce and achieving value for money.

Concern:

5. The ongoing concerns of achieving the savings outlined across the budget and above all else understanding the impact/s on people we support, communities and practice, particularly the Integrated Adults Social Care in-year savings set at £29.4 million, how the service proposes to achieve this.
6. The ongoing concerns relating to Budget pressures across the Council, including:
 - a. the continued overspend in the High Needs Block Budget for SEND considering the cumulative deficit, and the plans in place to reduce the overspend;
 - b. The potential impact of the proposed use of Capital receipts to fund the SEND Safety Valve Programme for the High Needs Block Overspend and the potential impact on Capital budgets in coming years;
 - c. the continued reliance on agency workers in Children's Services over successive years;
 - d. the cost differential between in house fostering and independent fostering agencies to support children in care and the resultant budgetary impact;
 - e. the number of people receiving high levels of interventions through statutory care and the need to re-shape the offer to include an alternative strengths-based offer; and
 - f. the ongoing deterioration of Devon's highways and reduced expenditure on prevention activities.
7. Concern over individual budget lines:
 - a. the net reduction to libraries budget of £175,000.
 - b. The one-year funding commitment for Carbon Reduction Programme and uncertainty for future years.
8. That Bus patronage is still 38.4% below pre-pandemic levels with Devon's residents being impacted by the reliability of services.
9. Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee's concern that Members are not able to adequately review and scrutinise the interdependencies within the NHS Devon budget.

Cabinet is asked to:

10. Continue to support Scrutiny in their critical friend challenge of the in-year financial position and progress on achieving transformation and savings, including milestones and metrics,
 - a. For Children's Scrutiny, this should include social worker agency rates, additional in house foster carers, and in house residential provisions.

- 11.** Lobby Government to highlight the difficulty of setting budgets, operating and improving services against the reality of:
 - a. The unknown grant settlement for Public Health;
 - b. The 1-year financial settlement for Adult Social Care;
 - c. The delivery of services within a large, rural County; and
 - d. Investment in highways to arrest the ongoing decline in the state of the highway, specifically highways drainage.

- 12.** For the Cabinet Member for Integrated Adult Social Care to write to Mel Stride MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions:
 - a. to ensure the support people of working age with disabilities receive incentivises them to be employed without being adversely affected economically.
 - b. the potential impact of new immigration rules on the delivery of Adult Social Care services.

- 13.** Consider investment in:
 - a) School attendance programmes and exploring national, Department for Education programmes, and pilots, to increase attendance of children in school.
 - b) The ongoing concern and need to invest in highways drainage activities to prevent deterioration in highways.

- 14.** To further support Highways improvements, consider:
 - a) expanding Highways Self Help Schemes to work with Parishes to identify and pay for works, carried out by the Council, from their own Budgets and precepts and benefit from the expertise of Council officers to deliver projects, albeit recognising the pressures and capacity of staff within the service.
 - b) as part of the planning process, whether developer contributions can improve the highways in the local area.

- 15.** The Council and NHS partners work collaboratively and commit to promoting independence for people of all ages and disabilities, and to achieve this, work alongside the Voluntary Community Sector Enterprises (VCSE) Assembly, District, City, Town, and Parish councils, making use of existing partnerships.

- 16.** Recognising the financial pressures on both statutory and voluntary sector organisations, support the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee to arrange an all Member masterclass on Local Care Partnership (LCPs) before April 2024, so Councillors can be more informed and consider the use of their locality budgets to strengthen partnership working and support communities to grow capacity to provide an alternative offer that people can access that promotes their independence and helps communities to be safe and connected.

- 17.** To add to the future Risk Assessment for all relevant services the ongoing concern of partnership working including with partner agencies and the

voluntary and community sector regarding the interdependencies in achieving the required improvements.

18. Continue to promote the Council's website and newsletters that help community groups find and apply for community grants.

CIRS Scrutiny Recommendation:

Welcome and Support:

1. The increase in Member Locality Budgets to £8,000 per Member and thanks Cabinet for taking on board Scrutiny's recommendation in January 2023 to review Locality Budgets.
2. The efforts to focus on working with our strategic partners to deliver the transformation required to best support people in Devon, including a sustainable budget.
3. The recognition of the important work of the voluntary and community sector and the vital and varied role it plays in Devon's communities.
4. The re-design of legal services to focus on the skills of the workforce and achieving value for money.
5. The intention to work with Town and Parish Councils on the Highways Self-Help Scheme.

Concern:

6. The net reduction to the libraries budget of £175,000.
7. The ongoing concern and need to invest in highways drainage activities to prevent highway degradation.
8. That bus patronage is still 38.4% below pre-pandemic levels with Devon's residents being impacted by the reliability of services.
9. The ongoing deterioration of Devon's highways and reduced expenditure on prevention activities.
10. The potential impact of the proposed use of Capital receipts to fund the SEND Safety Valve Programme for the High Needs Block Overspend and the potential impact on Capital budgets in coming years.
11. The one-year funding commitment for Carbon Reduction Programme and uncertainty for future years.

Cabinet is asked to:

12. Continue to support Scrutiny in their critical friend challenge of the in-year financial position and progress on achieving transformation and savings, including milestones and metrics.
13. Continue to promote the Council's website and newsletters that help community groups find and apply for community grants.
14. To support Highways improvements, consider:
 - a. expanding Highways self help schemes to allow parishes to identify and pay for works, carried out by the Council, from their own budgets and precepts and benefit from the expertise of Council officers to deliver projects albeit recognising the pressures and capacity of staff within the service;
 - b. as part of the planning process, whether developer contributions can improve the highways in the local area;
 - c. additional investment in highways, particularly in highways drainage activities; and
 - d. lobby Government for additional investment in highways to arrest the ongoing decline in the state of the highway.