

Budget 2022/23 Consultation Response of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

7 January 2022

This document outlines the joint response of Nottingham City Council's three Overview and Scrutiny Committees to the 2022/23 Budget Consultation. The three Committees met separately during November/ December 2021 to consider the elements of the budget proposals relevant to their remits and on 5 January 2022 at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following response was agreed incorporating its own comments and those of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

The Committees submit the following comments to Executive Board for consideration.

Feedback on the Consultation Process

- a) The committee felt that the consultation process was not sufficiently accessible to a wide enough proportion of the population, especially in deprived communities and communities that will be affected most by proposed budget proposals. There was concern about a lack of awareness of the consultation and it was recommended that the Executive considers utilising communication channels that residents engage with on a daily basis for future consultations eg working with schools/ academy trusts to use school messaging systems/ parent spaces on school websites for proposals that affect children and young people.
- b) Concern was expressed about the digital focus of the consultation, though the Committees recognised the deteriorating Covid situation throughout the consultation period. Councillors felt the online form was difficult to navigate, particularly on a phone, and were concerned that citizens may not have access to the devices or data required to participate in the consultation. They felt that this especially affected more deprived areas who may be more greatly affected by some of the proposals eg closure of Children's Centres.
- c) It was felt that the information provided in the consultation is too generic, with very little information about the nature of what is being proposed and the impact it will have on service provision and individual people/ wards. This makes it very difficult for citizens to meaningfully engage with.
- d) The Committee emphasised the need for consultation with groups using adult social care to be tailored to their needs eg people with learning disabilities or elderly people who may not have access to internet. The Committee recommended working with people/groups (especially in the voluntary sector) who have experience with this to support consultation exercises.

Comments in relation to specific savings proposals

Resident parking permits

- e) The committee were concerned that if the parking permit scheme were to be introduced there would be a greater requirement for enforcement and reiterated their view that this element and wider cost/ benefit analysis needed to be fully considered. Consideration should also be given to the potential for any challenge to the scheme.

Community Development

- f) Councillor queried how local Councillors would remain engaged in the new arrangements.

- g) Concern was expressed that the proposals risked diminishing the networks and community cohesion that has been created and that the proposals didn't take account of our most deprived and vulnerable citizens who accessed these services most frequently.

Bulky Waste

- h) Councillors expressed concern that a reduction in waste and community protection services could result in an increase in fly-tipping and a lack of enforcement against offenders.
- i) The Committee recommended that hot spot mapping be carried out in areas with a high prevalence of fly tipping and these areas be targeted with particular emphasis on areas with high levels of HMOs.
- j) The Committee were supportive of the proposal around encouraging citizens to reduce, recycle, upcycle. They were in agreement that education was a key component but where it was failing enforcement should follow.

Children's Integrated Services

- k) The Committee supports the prioritisation of statutory services and meeting statutory responsibilities, however is very concerned that the proposals relating to Children's Integrated Services present a very real risk to the Council's ability to do this in the medium – longer term. The Council is already struggling to meet demand, in terms of numbers and complexity, for Children in Care (as evidenced by the in-year pressures and forecast overspend in this area). Firstly, the Committee would like assurance that statutory responsibilities and the delivery of statutory services are adequately funded for the four years of the MTFP. The Committee would like assurance that the Council fully understands the pressures in relation to Children's Integrated Services (the forecast variance has been so volatile during 2021/22 that it is difficult to have full confidence in the ability to assess pressures and forecast accurately) and that these are appropriately resourced going forward to avoid an impact both on the ability to deliver statutory responsibilities and services and on the Council's overall financial stability in the future. Secondly, the Committee considers that, based on the information presented to it in a range of different meetings, reducing early intervention is likely to further increase demand for statutory services, which the Council is already struggling to meet at current levels. While the Committee recognises the potential for transformation to address this, this work is far from being at a stage that provides the Committee with reassurance on that.

Youth and Play Services

- l) The Committee has considered a range of evidence about the interplay between permanent exclusion from school and support from play and youth services for young people on the edge of being excluded, or who have been excluded from school. Reducing school exclusion is a priority area within the Strategic Council Plan (SCP) because of the impact that it has on outcomes for a young person who is excluded – reducing support for young people on the edge of exclusion does not support this aim within the SCP. The Committee has heard from leaders of local Academy Trusts about delays in access to CAMHS and the lack of mental health support in schools. Through their relationships with vulnerable young people, youth workers play a role in filling this gap. The Committee is concerned about the impact of reducing youth work capacity and has referred the issue of delays in accessing CAMHS to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Agency Decision Maker Role

- m) The Committee asked about the capacity of senior managers to take on the Agency Decision Maker role, and whether it would present any risks for the local authority and how that approach compares with other local authorities. The Committee was sufficiently assured on these issues.

Support for those with no recourse to Public Funds

- n) The Committee is concerned about the impact on the Council's ability to deliver statutory services and responsibilities as a result of having to support people with no recourse to public funds, who often have high levels of need. The Committee would like more explicit consideration to be given to understanding the costs of this to the Council, and use this to 'push back' to Government on the inadequacy of funding to support people currently with this status. The Committee will be looking at this issue in more detail at its meeting in January.

Children's Centres/ Youth and Play Services – Estate Considerations

- o) While it may not currently be possible to provide services, such as those provided in children's centres or play services, the Committee is concerned that once the buildings in which they have been/ are currently being provided in (which in some cases are purpose-designed) have been sold it will make it very difficult to ever recommence delivery of similar community-based services should circumstances allow.

Area Based Grant

- p) The Committee supports improved partnership working and work to make better use of Area Based Grant to deliver what is required and to the appropriate standard and, indeed, this was an area that the Committee made a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People about earlier this year. The Committee understands that there is a proposal for Area Based Grant to be split equally between youth services and employment. It is suggested that consideration could be given to some of the employment and training portion being used for training youth workers. The Committee has previously recommended working more closely with partners, such as schools and the Police, to share intelligence and inform decisions about targeting services.

Adult Care Package Assessments

- q) In relation to care packages it is important that the Service has sufficient capacity to assess the level of need upon discharge from hospital and to regularly review need and ensure an appropriate level of care is in place.

Workforce Capacity in Adult Social Care

- r) Concerns were raised about workforce capacity. The workforce forward plan will be considered by the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee in January.

Partnership Working

- s) It was suggested that there are opportunities for greater levels of partnership working with partners beyond those commissioning and delivering health services, for example housing providers.