

23rd March 2019

Agenda Item: 11

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PROGRESS ON THE IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on progress against the Improving the Effectiveness & Efficiency of the Children's Services Plan originally presented to Committee on 16th September 2019.
2. To consider whether there are any further actions Committee requires in relation to the information contained in the report.

Information

3. On 16th September 2019 the Children and Young People's Committee received a report entitled '2019/2020 Children and Families Budget Update'. This report provided a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing the departmental budget, the factors behind the volatility of spending on children's services and the actions proposed in mitigation. Committee agreed to receive an update every three months. A further report was received by Committee in December 2019.
4. An update on the departmental budget position is provided to Committee in the paper entitled 'Children and Young People Core Data Set – performance for quarter 3 2019/20' which is also on the agenda of this meeting. As the information is available to Committee through that source the analysis is not repeated within this report.
5. An updated version of the 'Effectiveness and Efficiency Plan' is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Conclusions of the Independent Audit

6. An audit of financial management processes and culture within the department has now been completed by an independent auditor. The review was commissioned to evaluate 12 objectives which have been subsequently addressed under four key themes:
 - Budget Pressures and Savings
 - Financial Control, Compliance and Challenge
 - Benchmarking and Forecasting and

- Financial Culture.

7. The detailed findings from each of the four themes have been reported back to the commissioners and officers from Children & Families and Corporate Finance during the completion of the review. This approach enabled emerging issues to be addressed in a timelier manner than awaiting completion of a formal final report. This report therefore focusses on the conclusions and recommendations which are supported by an active action plan generated by the Corporate Director for Children & Families and Service Director of Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement.
8. The review has identified a need to strengthen the approach to implementing a robust financial culture within the department along with more detailed planning on some areas where budgets are difficult to control. There has also been an identified need to strengthen the links between performance and cost data to improve fiscal discipline. All of these challenges have been addressed in section four of the plan attached as **Appendix 1** and this will build on and increase the consistency of the existing good practice in the department.

Progress Against the Plan

9. Whilst a small number of elements within the plan have been delayed progress is being made against all of the improvement actions and a number have already been completed. The first section of the plan, addressing the in-year financial challenges, will be completed by the end of the financial year and any actions that need to be ongoing will be aggregated into the wider plan.

Other Options Considered

10. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. These recommendations provide the range of measures being taken by the Children and Families department via the Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Children's Services Plan, to address the financial and service challenges currently being faced.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

13. The 'Effectiveness and Efficiency Plan' aims to address the financial challenges that the Children and Families department is facing due to increased demand.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee considers whether there are any further actions required in relation to the information contained in the report on progress against the Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Children's Services Plan.

Colin Pettigrew
Corporate Director, Children and Families

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Laurence Jones
Service Director, Commissioning and Resources
T: 0115 9773042
E: laurence.jones@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LW 03/03/20)

14. Children & Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (SAS 02/03/20)

15. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[2019-2020 Children and Families budget update – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 16th September 2019](#)

[Progress on the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Children's Services Plan – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 16th December 2019](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1357