

CABINET- 28 January 2025

Cabinet Response to the Recommendations from Select Committees Following Scrutiny of the Draft Budget Proposals in December 2024.

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Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture (CFLLC) Select Committee

- I. The Committee notes the significant pressures on the Directorate's budget of pay inflation, and the efficiencies planned through staff restructuring. As the EIA is not yet available for the planned restructuring we are concerned at the impact on front line staff and at the risk that we will not have sufficient capacity to deliver vital preventive and statutory services. We are aware of high vacancy rates for social workers, with only some of these roles covered by agency staff.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet notes the Select Committee's comments. We can confirm that an EIA is required before all restructures.

- II. The Committee was reassured that frontline staff (including social workers, SEND caseworkers and residential caseworkers or alternatively qualified professionals) have been exempted from recruitment controls. It is important to the Committee that plans do not impact the continuing need to improve our communications and responsiveness in the area of additional needs and disability (SEND).

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet notes the Select Committee's comments.

- III. We are aware that there has been some growth in senior roles over the past few years and we recommend that restructuring does not disproportionately fall on front line roles which are so vital to the delivery of services.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet notes the Select Committee's comments.

- IV. The Committee recommends that recruitment into vacant – or currently agency filled - front line roles is prioritised, and that difficulty recruiting some roles does not lead to budget being redirected or reallocated away from the frontline.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet notes the Select Committee's comments. We can confirm that recruitment to front-line roles is prioritised.

Culture Budget

- V. The Committee notes the success of the transformation programme which had delivered significant efficiencies whilst also transforming libraries into inclusive hubs for the community giving access to a range of community events and services.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet notes the Select Committee's comments.

- VI. The Committee welcomes and supports the new partnerships and funding streams that are being developed to deliver additional services.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet notes the Select Committee's comments.

- VII. The Committee recommends that the 2025/26 CDC Budget and MTFS should ensure there are sufficient staff to provide community hubs, identified as an important aspect of the libraries' strategy and a key factor in helping to reduce isolation in society.

Cabinet Response:

There are existing resources assigned to specific community hub developments where that includes a library facility as part of the further implementation of the Libraries' transformation. Building on the success of this approach to date, additional future opportunities to make better use of community-based facilities will be identified and progressed through the One Council Transformation Programme. This will include the funding and staffing model required to deliver impact and value, with an expectation this is met through re-direction and re-prioritisation of existing council resources.