

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee

Agenda

Monday 30 January 2023 at 7.00 pm

Room 9 (1st Floor)- 3 Shortlands, Hammersmith, W6 8DA

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MEMBERSHIP

Administration	Opposition
Councillor Helen Rowbottom (Chair) Councillor Daryl Brown Councillor Mercy Umeh Councillor Lucy Richardson	Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan
Co-optees	
Eleanor Allen, London Diocesan Board for Schools Nandini Ganesh, Parentsactive Representative Nadia Taylor, Parent Governor Representative	

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Note: This meeting is open to members of the public and the building has disabled access. If you'd like to attend please contact david.abbott@lbhf.gov.uk

Date Issued: 20 January 2023

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Agenda

30 January 2023

<u>Item</u>		<u>Pages</u>
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE		
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
	<p>If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a particular item, whether or not it is entered in the Authority's register of interests, or any other significant interest which they consider should be declared in the public interest, they should declare the existence and, unless it is a sensitive interest as defined in the Member Code of Conduct, the nature of the interest at the commencement of the consideration of that item or as soon as it becomes apparent.</p> <p>At meetings where members of the public are allowed to be in attendance and speak, any Councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest or other significant interest may also make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter. The Councillor must then withdraw immediately from the meeting before the matter is discussed and any vote taken.</p> <p>Where Members of the public are not allowed to be in attendance and speak, then the Councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest should withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is under consideration. Councillors who have declared other significant interests should also withdraw from the meeting if they consider their continued participation in the matter would not be reasonable in the circumstances and may give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest.</p> <p>Councillors are not obliged to withdraw from the meeting where a dispensation to that effect has been obtained from the Standards Committee.</p>	
3. MINUTES		4 - 10
	<p>To approve the minutes of the previous meeting and note any outstanding actions.</p>	
4. 2023 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY		11 - 34
	<p>This report sets out the budget proposals for the services covered by the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee.</p>	
5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING		
	<p>To note the date of the next meeting on 27 March 2023.</p>	

Agenda Item 3

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
**Children and Education
Policy and Accountability
Committee
Minutes**



Monday 21 November 2022

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Helen Rowbottom (Chair), Daryl Brown, Mercy Umeh, Lucy Richardson and Aliya Afzal-Khan

Co-opted members: Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

Officers

Jacqui McShannon (Strategic Director of Children's Services)
Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service)
Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND)
David Abbott (Head of Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Matt Jenkins and Alex Sanderson (Cabinet Member for Children and Education).

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan, Eleanor Allen, and Nandini Ganesh attended the meeting remotely.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan requested the following addition to the minutes under Item 8:

“Councillor Afzal-Khan observed that a majority of the 16,000 summer activity sessions were planned in the North and central part of the borough despite the fact that South Fulham had many young families and housing estates, as well as schools, parks, and the Sands End Art & Community Centre as possible venues where sessions could be delivered. Marcus Robinson accepted there were good venues in South Fulham, made a note of the discrepancy and said that future plans would ensure a more equitable distribution of session venues across the Borough.”

Members agreed the amendment.

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) noted that officers were working on the winter school holidays programme and had secured 3690 places, with 41% in the south of borough. Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan thanked officers for the update.

RESOLVED

The minutes of the previous meeting, with the amendment noted above, were agreed as an accurate record.

4. YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE INSPECTION OUTCOME

The Chair congratulated the team for their work delivering, what the inspectors judged to be, a ‘confident and capable service’.

Jacqui McShannon (Strategic Director of Children’s Services) introduced the item on the inspection of the Youth Justice Service. She said the Council welcomed the positive outcome and noted that it was a credit to the frontline professionals in the service and their skill, expertise, and perseverance. She also paid tribute to the service’s community partners who enabled a rich extended offer. She added that Hammersmith & Fulham was one of only two local authorities in London with an overall rating of ‘outstanding’ and that should be celebrated.

Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service) presented the report and discussed the inspections recommendations. One area for improvement was around volunteer training. During Covid it was done online but there were plans in place to return to a hybrid model and improve engagement.

Councillors congratulated officers on the inspection outcome.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan, in reference to recommendation 3, asked for more information about the disproportionality mentioned. She also asked what was being done to address diversity needs. Amana Gordon said there was an over-representation of black and mixed-heritage boys in the service, though it was broadly in line with the general population going by the latest census data. There were also a significant number of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Officers were working on that area with the Education team.

The Chair asked what data other than stop-and-search data was being used to determine over-representation and how it compared with other areas. Amana

Gordon said stop-and-search data was difficult to work with because it wasn't broken down in the right way. It was a priority for the partnership though and officers were working with police colleagues to resolve this problem. Jacqui McShannon added that, through the Community Safety Partnership, officers had challenged the police to provide that data.

The Chair asked how Councillors could support officers to move this forward – and suggested a note from the Committee. Amana Gordon said that would be helpful. She added that officers were also working with community voice on the impact of stop-and-search and how traumatic it was for children. She said it was effective for police officers and children to speak to each other about their experiences.

The Chair, in reference to recommendation 2, asked if the Youth Justice service had benchmarking data. Amana Gordon felt the inspection didn't reflect the service as well as it should have. The inspectors were specifically looking for data analysis, but practice had moved on. Officers were planning to reflect this back to them.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked if the mentors were in house or agency. Amana Gordon said they used a range of third sector organisations to serve different needs like education or criminal exploitation.

Councillor Richardson asked if the issue with volunteer training staff was purely due to Covid or if there were other issues. Amana Gordon said it was to do with Covid. The volunteers wanted to get back to face-to-face meetings. The training record before Covid was strong and officers were confident it had already been addressed.

The Chair asked if the gangs unit was new since the previous inspection. Jacqui McShannon said it was and it worked closely with the service and community-based partners. It was focused on developing community resilience and capacity.

A resident attending the meeting noted that she had picked up a lot of initiatives in the report that she wasn't previously aware of. The Chair asked officers to think about how to disseminate this work to community leaders – in residents' meetings for example.

ACTION: Jacqui McShannon / Amana Gordon

Councillor Daryl Brown asked about the age range of the young people in the service. Jacqui McShannon said it ranged from 10 to 18 years old, the national criminal age of responsibility.

Councillor Mercy Umeh congratulated officers for their hard work and said she was happy to see co-production pay off.

Councillor Richardson discussed signposting young people at risk and suggested putting materials on the Council's website for parents or teachers who were worried about someone. Amana Gordon said there were resources on the website already and she offered to share them with the Committee.

ACTION: Amana Gordon

Nandini Ganesh asked if the inspection looked at the role of schools. Amana Gordon said it looked at education routes for children. Amana Gordon and Peter Haylock (Director of Education) worked closely to ensure there was a good education offer available – and alternative provision when necessary.

Nadia Taylor asked about peer mentoring and if there were any opportunities for the Youth Council or Youth Parliament to mentor young people.

Jacqui McShannon said mentoring was a rich offer – the service tried to ensure it was listening to young people. She said it might not be appropriate to match them with the Youth Council. They were mainly interested in people who had been through the system themselves.

RESOLVED

1. The Committee noted the outcome of the inspection and the five recommendations made by HMIP to support continuous improvement of our delivery.
2. The Committee asked officers to consider how they could disseminate the good practice from the inspection report into local communities.

5. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD REVIEW

Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service) presented the report on last year's review of the Corporate Parenting Board. The goal of the review was to strengthen direct engagement and consultation with young people and to ensure that it continued to meet its desired aims and objectives.

The Chair noted that she was a member of the Board and said how valuable it was to hear directly from engaged young people about their views and experiences.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan spoke about peer mentoring and suggested the more mature young people could become mentors.

The Chair asked for examples of practical changes stemming from the review. Amana Gordon said the health offer had changed following feedback from young people. The health assessments for care experienced children would be seen in the community where possible and would be more bespoke to their individual needs. Jacqui McShannon gave the example of the Care Leavers Hub – young people had asked for a centre to go to and it was being brought to life in early 2023.

Amana Gordon spoke about how important it was to hear from a diverse set of voices at the Board. Officers wanted to ensure that everyone was given an opportunity to engage.

Jacqui McShannon updated members on the Children in Care awards ceremony that took place recently. The event was developed in co-production with young people,

and she felt it created a real sense of community and was an example of genuine corporate parenting.

The Chair and Councillor Afzal-Khan attended and noted the joyful atmosphere and the importance of sharing success stories.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the redesign of Corporate Parenting Board and provided scrutiny and challenge of the impact and outcomes of the Board in future.

6. THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) presented the item on the Hammersmith and Fulham Learning Partnership which was created to provide an enduring collaboration between schools and the wider community, cultural and business interests to deliver an excellent education that is exciting, challenging, and fit for the moment.

Eleanor Allen asked if the Partnership would think about providing subject specific support. She noted that in the past there were subject advisors available to support teachers. Peter Haylock said there wasn't enough funding for subject specific advisors, so the Partnership delivered subject specific professional development, including having national experts in to deliver targeted sessions to staff. Jacqui McShannon said they were also helping to create peer-to-peer support – acting as a broker between schools with different specialisms that could complemented each other.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan asked how many schools were members. She also asked what incentive there was for schools to work together then they were in competition for students. Peter Haylock said the response had been positive so far. This was the first term of it so more data would come in over time. He added that the school community in the borough was very supportive.

Nandini Ganesh asked if schools paid to be members. Peter Haylock explained that it was free this year but the department's capacity to provide free services would stop when the Government grant funding ended early next year. The intention was that it would become part of a traded offer that schools buy in to.

A school governor in attendance said they supported the Partnership. Their only concern was money – it was a major challenge for schools.

Councillor Lucy Richardson discussed the SEND aspects of the Partnership and felt it was an exciting opportunity for schools to collaborate. Peter Haylock said they offered 'ask us' sessions where members of staff or SENCOs could book a call to discuss specific issues and then the service could target resources around that issue.

Councillor Afzal-Khan asked if it was possible for schools to share sports and transport facilities through the Partnership. She also discussed the possibility of

engaging local private schools. Peter Haylock said the goal of the Partnership was to provide support, advice and guidance to teachers. Though the Partnership did have a school games coordinator who supported primary sports activities.

The Chair noted that there were a lot of institutions in the borough with great facilities including the big football clubs and schools like Latimer and Godolphin. She felt the Council could play a coordinating role if a need was identified. She asked for a discussion with officers around this.

ACTION: Councillor Rowbottom / Peter Haylock

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the report.

7. SUMMER IN THE CITY DELIVERY REPORT

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) presented the report on the Summer in the City programme of free holiday activities and food for school aged children. The programme provided engaging activities, physical activity, and nutrition education. The 2022 programme saw high levels of engagement and a lot of positive feedback from parents from families. Peter Haylock thanked the Children's Services commissioning team and 'Let Me Play' for their fantastic work.

The Chair thanked officers for their work. Then she asked if there were any surprises during the programme. Peter Haylock said the rowing offer from Fulham Reach Boat Club was really positive, with children from previous years coming back to help.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan said it was a fantastic initiative and added that she hoped information went out to schools on time so free school meals and pupil premium children could be targeted. A school governor attending the meeting said schools did receive information early and turnout was good. Peter Haylock added that the programme was also targeted through the Children and Young People's team as well as promotional signs and posters around borough.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the programme extended to 25-year-olds with SEND. Peter Haylock said it was mostly for school aged children, but officers could consider a more formalised offer for young adults with SEND in future years.

ACTION: Peter Haylock

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the report.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates of future meetings were noted:

- 30 January 2023
- 27 March 2023

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.54 pm

Chair

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London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Report to: Children and Education Policy & Accountability Committee

Date: 30/01/2023

Subject: 2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Report author: Andre Mark, Head of finance (Strategic planning and investment)
Tony Burton, Head of finance (Childrens and education)

Responsible Director: Sukvinder Kalsi, Director of Finance
Jacqui McShannon Strategic Director of Children's Services

SUMMARY

Cabinet will present their revenue budget and Council Tax proposals to Budget Council on 23 February 2023. In the face of worsening economic conditions and tightening financial constraints, the budget protects council services, particularly those that support the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF) is unique in providing free breakfasts to school children, abolishing home care charges, establishing a local Law Enforcement Team to keep our streets safe and clean, maintaining weekly bin collections across the borough, and stopping the use of bailiffs to collect Council Tax debt. Despite unprecedented levels of inflation eroding council spending power, the budget protects these key services.

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting residents across the borough. With rising inflation, energy bills, and food costs many residents will be struggling to get by, and in need of additional support. This is why the budget includes new provisions of nearly a million pounds to help tackle the increasing cost of living.

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 obliges the council to set a balanced budget, and this is what is proposed. Government resource assumptions that are used to calculate Government grant for LBHF, model the council increasing Council Tax by 2.99% in 2023/24. Over the last eight years, the council has cut or frozen Council Tax five times, with the Band D charge has reducing by 10% in real terms. As a result, Council Tax in LBHF is 35% lower than the London average. The council proposes to apply the 2.99% increase for 2023/24.

The government has modelled an adult social care precept since 2016/17. Government funding modelling assumes that this has been applied every year since its inception despite LBHF choosing to apply it for only two of the past eight years. Due to the continued high levels of demand and inflationary pressures in the social care market and the government's continued failure to propose a long-term funding solution to social care funding, the council proposes to apply the 2% adult social care levy for 2023/24.

This report sets out the budget proposals for the services covered by this Policy and Accountability Committee (PAC). An update is also provided on any proposed changes in fees and charges in the budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Policy and Accountability Committee (PAC) considers the budget proposals and makes recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.
2. That the PAC considers the proposed changes to fees and charges and makes recommendations as appropriate.

Wards Affected: All

Our values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F values
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	We need to always confirm that spend fits our council's priorities; challenge how much needs to be spent; and achieve results within agreed budgets. Finance is everyone's business and every penny counts.
Creating a compassionate council	As the Council's resources have been reduced, we have protected the services on which the most vulnerable residents rely. This budget continues all our previous policies to support residents and also proposes new spending on care packages for disabled children and additional resources to help residents through the cost-of-living crisis.
Building shared prosperity	A significant proportion of services are delivered in partnership with local and national companies, and this will continue to promote all business sectors to the benefit of residents. In addition, there will be increased investment in the Industrial Strategy Delivery and the development and promotion of the STEAM sector strategy.
Doing things with residents, not to them	The use of co-production across the Council is embedded and all service matters are developed with the engagement of residents. The Council is continuing the

	REAP Programme to improve residents' access to the services.
Taking pride in H&F	The budget proposals include significant investment in public realm services especially waste collection, street cleaning and open/park spaces. Our new waste contract includes provisions to tackle fly-tipping and collection of food waste.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The Council has established a Climate Change Team and the Team has developed a Climate and Ecology Strategy (and is making a significant contribution to the international and national policy debates). It is also securing grants from national programmes to help with improvements of the thermal efficiency of Council properties and homes).

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

Not Applicable

DETAILED ANALYSIS

The Budget Requirement and Gap

1. The gross General Fund budget¹ rolled forward from 2022/23 to 2023/24 is £539.6m of which a **net budget requirement of £166.6m** is funded from council resources (such as Council Tax and business rates) and general government grant.

Table 1 – Budget rolled forward from 2022/23

2022/23 Budgeted Expenditure	£m
Housing benefit payments	91.2
Social care and public health	118.1
Children's services	123.6
Economy	49.4
Environment (includes parking)	108.1
Corporate (Finance, Resources and council wide)	49.2
Gross budgeted expenditure	539.6
Less:	
Specific government grants (including housing benefits and dedicated schools grant)	(239.8)
Fees and charges	(68.0)
Contributions (e.g. health)	(47.0)
Other income (e.g. investment interest, rentals, and recharges)	(18.2)
Budget requirement rolled forward from 2022/23	166.6

2. The budget proposals for 2023/24, and forecast to 2026/27, are summarised in Table 2. A balanced budget is projected for 2023/24 based on several key assumptions regarding resources and expenditure.

¹ Figures exclude capital charges and internal service level agreements. These have a net nil impact on the budget.

Table 2 – Budget summary

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Base budget	166.6	164.9	163.2	161.5
Pay and price inflation	13.6	21.6	27.6	33.6
Additional pay inflation (on-going effect of award in 2022/23)	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
Additional investment in key services and priorities	10.7	16.7	22.7	28.7
Contribution to Cost-of-Living support (one-off) / Council Tax support scheme	0.9	0	0	0
Increase in the net cost of borrowing	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.0
Concessionary fares demand	(2.2)	1.1	3.1	3.1
Recognition of current income projection	(2.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)
Income from investment of cash balances (one off in 23/24)	(5.0)	0	0	0
Employee budget management	(2.5)	(2.5)	(2.5)	(2.5)
Reversal of employers National Insurance Contributions (1.25%)	(1.3)	(1.3)	(1.3)	(1.3)
Efficiencies and Savings Proposals	(2.9)	(4.0)	(4.8)	(5.5)
Contribution to contingencies	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3
Gross budget requirement	185.6	204.7	216.2	225.8
General grants	(53.0)	(54.1)	(54.7)	(55.2)
Locally retained business rates	(59.4)	(59.5)	(60.7)	(61.9)
Council Tax (4.99% increase in year 1 assumed then freeze)	(73.3)	(73.9)	(74.6)	(75.2)
Gross budget gap – cumulative	0.0	17.1	26.1	33.2

Budget assumptions

Inflation

3. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for October 2022 is 11.1%, its highest level for 40 years, in part due to the recovery from the pandemic, the impact of Brexit and

recent global events such as the invasion of Ukraine. The Office of Budget Responsibility is forecasting inflation of 7.4% during 2023 which will impact both Hammersmith and Fulham staff costs and suppliers. The 2023/24 budget includes **a £13.6m provision for inflation**. This allows for:

- Contract and external services inflation of £7.6m.
 - £6.0m provision for a 2023/24 pay award (this equates to a 5.0% pay award)
 - Beyond 2023/24, headroom of £8m per annum is modelled for future inflation in 2024/25 and a further £6m in 2025/26 and 2026/27.
4. The on-going impact of the pay award from April 2022 will cost £3.8m (this was funded from the one-off use of policy contingencies in 2022/23).
 5. In September 2022, a previously agreed 1.25% increase in employers' National Insurance Contributions was withdrawn by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with effect from the 6th of November. The impact of this for the council is a reversal of the £1.3m set aside in the MTFs from 2023/24.
 6. A reduction of £2.5m is proposed on our employee spend (this is 2% of total estimated spend and represents about 40 posts). It is expected that this will be managed through natural turnover, management of recruitment and review of the use of agency staff. It is not expected that this will require any voluntary or compulsory redundancies.

Fees and Charges

7. For **fees and charges** levied by the council, the inflation assumption is:
 - They are frozen for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Housing in line with administration policy.
 - Commercial services that are charged on a for-profit basis, will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in response to market conditions and changed as appropriate, with due authorisations according to the Council constitution.
 - Parking charges and fines are to be set in line with transport policy objectives and not considered as part of the budget process.
 - A standard uplift of 10% is applied for other non-commercial and non-parking fees. The RPI indication for October 2022 was 14.2%.
 - The exceptions to these assumptions for this committee are attached in **Appendix 4**.

Other Measures

8. In addition, further short-term contributions of £2.2m are expected to arise from lower than budgeted contributions to the concessionary fares (freedom pass) scheme. This is due to the impact of passenger usage on public transport in response to the pandemic and changes to ways of working. This is not expected to continue beyond 2023/24 as demand is forecast to return to pre pandemic levels and fares increase.

9. A further one-off saving £5.0m relating to income from investing cash balances as favourable interest rates is assumed (cash balances are expected to be a minimum of £250m during 2023/24 and lower than current levels of more than £300m). This income will be used to balance the budget in 2023/24 and is not expected to continue beyond 2023/24.

Government Grant Funding

10. **General government grant funding** of £53.0m is forecast for 2023/24. This is an increase of £7.8m from 2022/23, however historically, government funding has reduced by £48m from 2010/11 to 2023/24, which represents in real terms a cut of 56%. £5.1m of the increase is not new money but compensation for the government decision not to increase business rates. The level of compensation is linked to the standard CPI rate of inflation. The Revenue Support Grant has increased by £2.2m.
11. No grant allocations are confirmed beyond 2023/24 following the government decision to announce a single year local government finance settlement (LGFS). The lack of future certainty continues to undermine effective medium-term financial planning and the risk of future funding reform and levelling up remains.
12. Ringfenced grants, which can only be used for a specific purpose, are currently forecast to have increased by £3.245m from 2022/23 to 2023/24. This forecast will be updated as further announcements are confirmed. It is assumed that such grants will have a neutral impact on the budget requirement as they will be matched against spend commitments, particularly given the current inflation risks.
13. The 'services grant' which was first allocated in 2022/23 has reduced by over 44% in 2023/24. For modelling purposes the future grant forecast assumes that the services grant will be reduced for future years also. The future of the new homes bonus grant scheme is also uncertain, and the council's allocation has reduced by 43% in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23 and by 77% compared to 2021/22.
14. As part of the LGFS, the government calculated that Hammersmith & Fulham spending power will increase by 9.5% in 2023/24. The government spending power calculation also assumes that authorities will increase Council Tax (including the adult social care precept) by 4.99% and that business rates collection is not adversely impacted by rating appeals or lower collection rates experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking these into account the Hammersmith & Fulham calculation is that spending power has increased by 2.5%

Council Tax

15. The Council is proud to have the third lowest Council Tax in the country, and to have cut or frozen Council Tax in 5 of the last 8 years. LBHF also has one of the most progressive Council Tax support schemes in the country, with almost half of residents not paying the full amount, and those least able to pay facing no charge at all.

16. The current major national fiscal conditions of high inflation and interest rates have made a Council Tax increase in 2023/24 unavoidable and a 2.99% increase in the LBHF element of Council Tax is proposed. This level of Council Tax increase reflects the assumption that has been made by the government in the Autumn Statement on the 17 November by the Chancellor and assumed in the funding settlement for local authorities. The additional income will fund increasing costs and support investment in, and protect, key services for residents and strengthen future financial resilience. The increase is equivalent to £25 for 2023/24 (at Band D). The Council Tax charge for LBHF is the third lowest in the country and 35% below the London average charge.
17. The council is also proposing to levy a 2% adult social care precept (again in line with government funding assumptions). The increase is equivalent to £16 per annum for 2023/24 (at Band D) and will be used to support Adult Social Care services. The continued delay in the national review of the funding of adult social care is a major concern and the government is continuing with its strategy of using an adult social care precept (since 2016/17). In the first years of the levy, the council were determined not to apply the levy despite the fact the council's funding from the government was modelled on the assumption that it would. Due to the continued high levels of inflation and instability in the social care market, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the government's continued failure to propose a long-term funding solution to social care funding, the council accepted the need for a 3% adult social care levy for 2021/22 but it was not applied in 2022/23.
18. As set out in table 4 below, it is estimated that 47% of residents will not be required to pay the full increase (as they will be supported through the single person household discounts, Council Tax support and exemptions).
19. Due to the anticipated impact of Covid-19 the budgeted Council Tax collection rate reduced from 97.5% in 2020/21 to 97% in 2021/22 and 2022/23. A 97% collection rate is modelled for 2023/24. For years beyond 2023/24 a tax freeze is modelled with the tax base increasing in line with trend data for increases in dwelling numbers.

Table 4: Liability for Council Tax at October 2022

Total dwellings in the borough	93,165
Reductions:	
Exemptions (mainly students, includes care leavers and vacant properties)	(3,871)
Council Tax support claimants (elderly & working age on low income)	(10,143)
Single person discount (25% discount)	(29,505)
Dwellings liable for 100% of Council Tax	49,646
	53%

Business Rates

20. The current estimate for business rates assumes that the business rates income will be the minimum guaranteed within the business rates retention system (the

safety net threshold). The government have confirmed that they will compensate local authorities for all changes they make to the business rates system.

21. The forecast assumes that LBHF will receive the minimum amount guaranteed, the safety net threshold, by government. This is £59.4m for 2023/24. For years beyond 2023/24 a 2% inflationary increase to the safety net is modelled.
22. As part of the Autumn Statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that a new temporary 50% business rates relief will apply for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties. In addition, a new 100% improvement relief will be available where eligible improvements increase rateable value. There will also be a business rates freeze in 2023/24 (no increase in line with the multiplier). Local authorities will be compensated by the government for the resultant loss of income from these measures.

Investment, savings and risks

23. Investment in services (increasing the available budget) and savings proposals (reducing the available budget) for the services covered by this PAC are set out in Appendix 1 with budget risks set out in Appendix 2.

Investment

24. Additional investment of £10.7m is being provided following budget setting and review process. The investment proposals for this PAC are set out in Appendix 1 to this report and summarised in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: 2023/24 Investment Proposals

Proposal	£'m
Social Care (including hospital discharge and demographic growth)	4.1
Waste collection (fly tipping and food waste)	1.7
Free breakfasts (and extension for secondary schools)/Out of term support	1.7
Homelessness services (temporary accommodation)	0.9
Disabled children care packages/Care leavers and family hubs	0.5
Other policy priorities	1.3
Other unavoidable pressures (loss of advertising income, audit fees)	0.5
	10.7

Table 6: Categorisation of investment proposals

Analysis of Investment	£m
Increase in demand / demographic growth	6.9
Resident priority	2.4
Budget pressure	1.0
Government related/Other Public Bodies	0.4
Total	10.7

25. A provision of £0.9m has been set aside to support residents on the cost-of-living pressures and to consider further developing the Council Tax support scheme for those least able to afford Council Tax.

Savings and Income Generation

26. After ten years of austerity, it is increasingly difficult to identify and deliver substantive savings. However, further savings are necessary if the financial challenge of real terms government funding cuts, unfunded burdens, inflation, and demand and growth pressures is to be met and the council has been able to find these. In the future, the council must consider all available options to operate within the funding available to it.
27. The proposed savings (including additional income) for 2023/24 are set out in Table 7. The savings proposals for this PAC are set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

Table 7: 2023/24 firm savings and additional income

Proposal	£m
Improving commissioning of children's services	(0.7)
Greater use of digital technologies to improve support and services in social care (e.g. timely return of equipment)	(0.5)
Working with NHS to improve hospital discharge and independent living)	(0.4)
Resident Engagement and Access Programme	(0.2)
Lower waste tonnages (impact of awareness programmes)	(0.2)
Joint commissioning of extra care services	(0.2)
Other (mainly social care procurement, Direct Payments)	(0.7)
Total savings	(2.9)

28. The saving proposals are categorised by type in Table 8.

Table 8: Categorisation of 2023/24 savings

Savings categories	£m
Commercialisation / income	(0.1)
Procurement / commissioning	(0.9)
Service reconfiguration	(1.5)
Service rationalisation/budget reduced in line with spend	(0.2)
Prevention	(0.2)
Total savings	(2.9)

Risk and financial resilience

29. An updated reserves strategy and action plan will be included within the suite of finance reports presented to Budget Council.
30. The current reserves forecast is set out in Table 9 and models a fall in overall general fund reserves and balances to £76.1m by 2027/28. This assumes a balanced budget is set each year with no further call on reserves.

Table 9 – Reserves and general balances - cash flow forecast to 2027/28

	April 2023 £m	April 2024 £m	April 2025 £m	April 2026 £m	April 2027 £m
Opening Balances					
General balance (recommended range £19m - £25m)	23.3	23.3	23.3	23.3	23.3
Earmarked reserves – unrestricted	41.7	40.7	43.2	43.2	43.2
Earmarked reserves – restricted	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Sub-total	72.5	71.5	74.0	74.0	74.0
Covid related	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Total	74.8	73.6	76.1	76.1	76.1
<i>Developer contributions</i>	46.0				

31. The Covid-19 pandemic has emphasised that councils need an adequate safety net to manage increased levels of financial risk. The experience of several councils over recent years, including Thurrock, Croydon and Bexley in London, has shown the difficulties that can arise when reserves are not maintained at a sufficient level. The Council's reserve forecast includes a general balance of £23.3m at the start of 2023/24 which represents 4.3% (equivalent to 16 days spend) of the Council's gross spend of £539.6m. The Director of Finance has recommended that the optimal range for the general balance is between £19m and £25m.

Key Risks

32. The key financial risks that face the Council have been identified and are set out below:

- The Covid-19 recovery and addressing pent-up demand
- An upturn in inflation post Brexit and Covid-19
- Higher pay inflation particularly given current labour shortages
- The stabilisation and restoration of Hammersmith Bridge, with the Council incurring revenue and capital costs at risk until government funding is confirmed
- The future impact on London of the government's 'levelling-up' agenda and wider local government finance reform (such as business rates)
- The impact of the wider economy on major council development projects and future contributions from developers
- The impact of, and costs of, tackling climate change
- The challenge of identifying further significant future savings that balance the budget over the longer-term.

Departmental risks for the services covered by this PAC are set out in Appendix 2.

33. Reserves are also a key enabler for future service transformation. The financial challenge facing the council will require investment to deliver future efficiencies to enable the council to balance the budget in future years.

Comments of the Director for Children's Services on the 2023/24 Budget Proposals

34. Our vision in Children's Services is that:

We are committed to making Hammersmith and Fulham a place where every child has the best possible start in life, grows up feeling cherished, loved and realises their full potential as young citizens. We will provide the right support at the right time to enable our families and communities to ensure all children are safe, healthy and thrive. We will nurture relationships that are respectful, collaborative, and empowering. Our highly skilled teams will work in partnership to ensure services remain efficient, responsive and support the building of resilience and prosperity for all children and young people.

35. Our aspiration and ambition to ensure consistent and compassionate care and improved outcomes is underpinned by a continuing commitment to protect the quality of services to the most vulnerable members of the community within the statutory framework required of the directorate. Equally strong is the central commitment to work with children, young people and their families in the design and development of services that affect them.

36. Despite the increasing demand for its services, Children's services have delivered a balanced budget in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and similarly forecast a balanced budget for 2022/23. This has been achieved whilst continuing to strengthen our financial standing, working hard to mitigate and prioritise statutory

services, including investing in services despite an extremely challenging economic situation. This includes:

- Proactive engagement and management of pressures with a continued ruthless focus on efficiencies embedded throughout our structure and managers forum.
- Investment in in-borough provision and increased social housing nominations following collaborative work with the Economy department.
- Continued work with schools with regard to central Education department functions and schools' contributions to these.
- Continuing to maximise income generation (Clinical Commissioning Group contributions, traded income) and Section 106 developer contributions.
- Securing expected Safety Valve funding in line with the Department for Education (DfE) Safety Valve Agreement against the High Needs Block deficit following delivery of agreed milestones.
- Mobilising a new minibus provider maintaining high quality services with no significant cost increase.
- The staffing establishment is now aligned to the new structures and fully funded with vacancy factors removed through funding increases.
- Investment in our Contact and Assessment team to ensure timely decision making, risk management and throughput of work to ensure a safe service
- Reduction in agency numbers. Agency as a % of total spend was 16.6% in 2019-20, down to 14.1% in 2020-21.

37. The department is driven by strong leadership which ensures sufficient pace, focus and capacity, the coherence of which is manifested in our Early Intervention strategy and Youth Crime Prevention strategy.

38. Our staff are our most important asset, and our frontline practitioners exemplify care, compassion, and a child centred and systemic approach. We are proud to have a dedicated, capable, and confident workforce that has the skills, expertise, and perseverance to deliver high quality services to our children, young people, and families. We appointed a new Operational Director of Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in June 2022 and have invested in our workforce function to ensure we retain and recruit highly skilled professionals.

39. Our workforce was commended in an Ofsted focused visit on front door services in January 2022 which recognised “*exemplary practice*” for “*children in need of help and protection who receive highly effective services to ensure they get the right help at the right time*”. The quality of practice was further recognised and celebrated in our recent Youth Justice inspection where we received an Outstanding rating by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). The Chief Inspector described the service as “*a dedicated, capable and confident service where children have every opportunity to move away from crime. We were impressed with how staff at the service work with children under their supervision, and their parents or carers, to understand their circumstances and drive them toward positive futures.*” We have subsequently had our annual education and children social care conversations with Ofsted; in which

discussions were positive and highlighted our continued strengths and our ability to identify and respond to challenges quickly.

40. The directorate continues to develop strong, dynamic, and interactive partnerships across the local area which ensures our strong practice continues to be informed and enriched by the support and experience of our communities, third sector and statutory partnerships and corporate colleagues.
41. We have continued to harness the pace of change post pandemic and remain committed to delivering outstanding services for our children and young people to give them the best possible start in life. Despite this, the post-pandemic wave, conflated with the national challenges of the cost-of-living crisis continue to add increased pressure on services.
42. Children's Services are strongly focused on a number of priorities, including improving early support and family intervention work, improving educational attainment, and avoiding exclusions, tackling gangs, diverting young offenders, and co-producing an improved local SEND offer.
43. Nevertheless, the landscape remains challenging. We are seeing post pandemic demand led growth in our services presenting in a complexity of need. These pressures pose substantial risks to managing demand within the financial constraints. We continue to invest in our data systems to support us in identifying trends and we have well developed systems to monitor and manage them.
44. As we look forward to 2022/23 a key priority remains to review services against the need to ensure they are as responsive and efficient as they can be and offer the right outcomes for children and young people. The directorate's approach for identifying savings is consistent with our vision and high aspirations for our children, young people, and their families.

Table 10 – Children's Services key budget changes

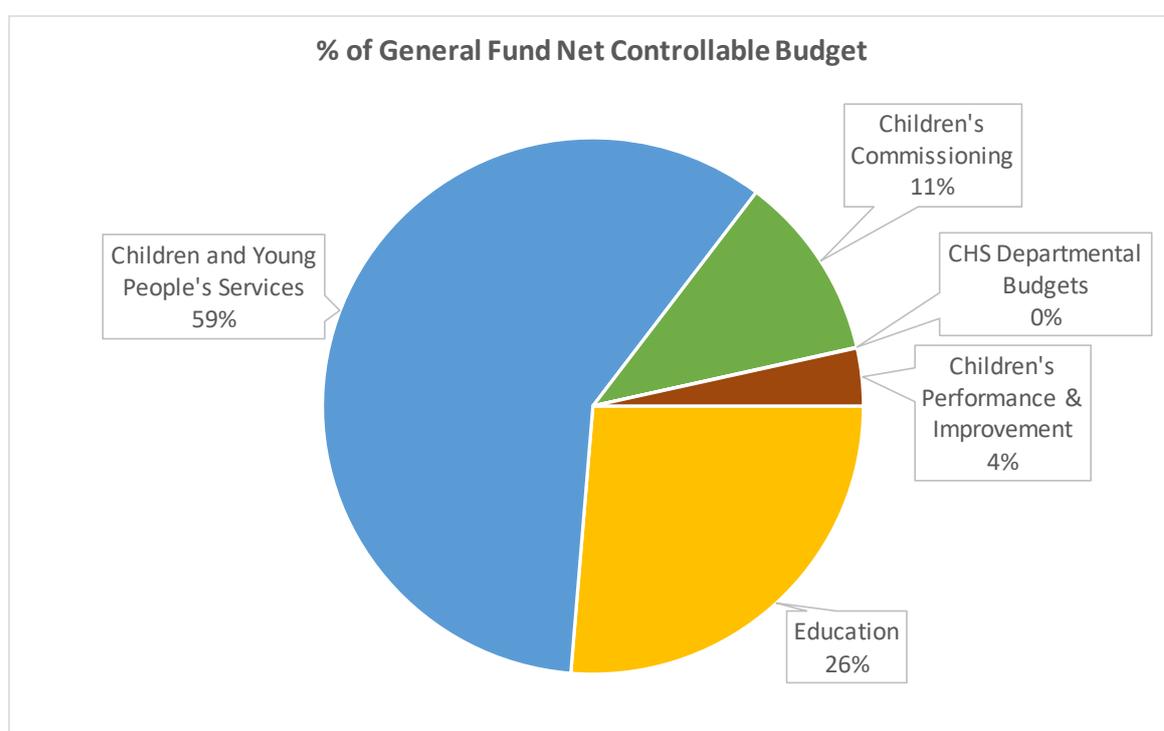
Directorate	2023-24 Savings £'s	2023-24 Contract Inflation £'s	2023-24 Investment £'s
Children's Commissioning	-700,000	199,900	1,750,000
Education	0	353,900	710,000
Children and Young People's Services	0	853,200	137,000
CHS Departmental Budgets	0	0	0
Children's Performance & Improvement	0	0	0
Total	-700,000	1,407,000	2,597,000

45. The department's proposed net budget for 2023/24 is £57,632,300. Within this sum are areas over which the service has little direct control, these are defined as non-controllable and include contributions to corporate services and capital charges. In total these add up to £8,646,600. This means that the net direct expenditure that the directorate is in control of is £48,985,700. The Table 11 below sets out how controllable expenditure is budgeted across the various

departments within the directorate showing that the greatest share of net general fund expenditure is on Children and Young People's Services, £28,933,300 (59%) of net controllable expenditure.

Table 11 – Children's Services 2023-24 Controllable budget

Directorate	2023-24 Expenditure £'s	2023-24 Income £'s	Total Net £'s	% share
Education	101,676,300	-88,780,900	12,895,400	26%
Children and Young People's Services	38,508,600	-9,575,300	28,933,300	59%
Children's Commissioning	6,617,400	-1,143,400	5,474,000	11%
CHS Departmental Budgets	650,100	-670,000	-19,900	0%
Children's Performance & Improvement	2,294,400	-591,500	1,702,900	3%
Total	149,746,800	-100,761,100	48,985,700	100%



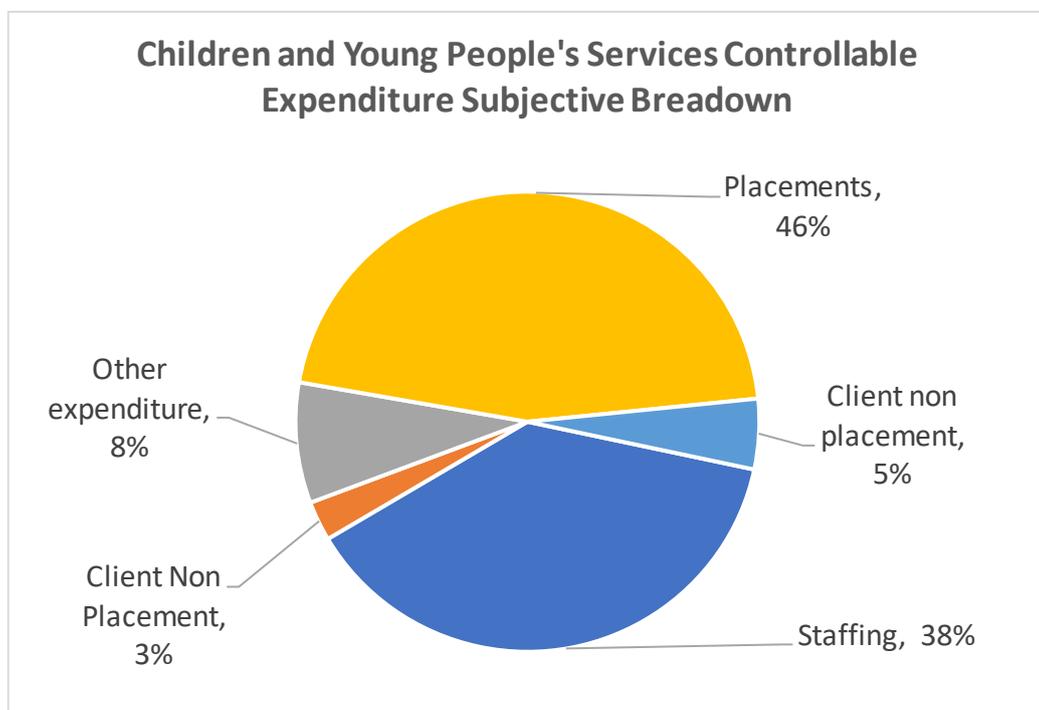
46. Savings totalling £700,000 have been identified for 2023/24 and are set out in Appendix 1. The savings proposals for Children's Services will seek not only to protect frontline services and to continue to offer a service appropriate to local need, but to improve our offer to residents facing difficult circumstances such as poverty and higher levels of need. This year the team has undertaken the recommissioning of services which has sought to protect and maintain our children's centres, youth provision and Early Help in line with our coproduced Early Help Strategy whilst also delivering efficiencies through effective and streamlined commissioning arrangements.

47. At the core of all savings proposals will be services that strengthen families and support parents to care for their children whilst steadfastly remaining vigilant with regards to our duty to safeguard vulnerable children and young people taking decisive action to protect those that need it.

Children and Young Peoples Services

48. Children and Young People's Services spend is primarily made up of staffing and placement costs. The service has put in effective mitigations to reduce costs through effective move on arrangements. In addition, the service has focused on supporting more young people to remain safely at home where possible and in stable and secure caring placements where this is not possible. This has been achieved through reducing reliance on expensive placements and sourcing high quality local placements by working to increase the availability and skill of inhouse foster carers; reviewing the effectiveness and outcomes of interventions and improving support through Family Assist and the clinical team to enable children and young people to remain in their family.

Table 12 – Children and Young People's Services controllable budget expenditure types



49. The Resource Panel, which includes membership and skills from within the service and other teams, has enabled creative and effective care planning to support children to remain at home safely and avoid family breakdown. When children do need to be protected by living in an alternative home outside of their family, we are able to ensure that we develop effective needs led plans to match them with the right care and support to ensure their safety and wellbeing. By focusing on the needs of the child and the quality of the services they need to meet those needs, we have also been able to ensure payments to providers are regularised and that the cost matches the level of support they are providing with clear plans to step down support when appropriate.

50. This has reduced the anticipated upward trajectory reported in 2019/20 and 2020/21. The 2022/23 budget setting process has targeted £341,000 of savings

against the placements budget and will attempt to reduce cost and at the same time have a positive impact on service users. The effectiveness of the National Transfer Scheme has seen a reduction in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) for the end of 2022/23, but pressures are beginning to re-emerge with some local presentations for age assessment by adults accommodated in local hotels by the home office and we have also offered to take three additional UASC after the request for mutual aid due to the pressure in the wider system.

51. We are still feeling the impact of post pandemic recovery, alongside the increasing welfare need due to the cost-of-living crisis. The increased need in our community has led to investment to our Contact and Assessment Team to ensure effective and timely decision making, risk management and throughput of work to ensure a safe service which maximises the outcomes for children, young people and their families. There is the potential that the task force to address damp and mould in our housing stock may result in an increase of families needing our support as hidden harm is identified through this proactive activity.

Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Performance & Improvement

52. The Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Performance & Improvement budget totals £1,702,900 with £1,341,900 of this for Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance.
53. The Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Performance and Improvement budget is primarily made up of staffing the statutory requirements of the child protection and children looked after systems and a small proportion funding a workforce function and quality assurance activity.

Education

54. The Education and SEND service continue to foster good relationships with our wider schools' community and have developed several key workstreams within the newly developed learning partnership. These are targeted towards improving outcomes for children and young people. The Education service is operating under challenging financial constraints as funding for schools has not kept pace with costs.
55. The Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) team provides services for 0-25-year-olds with special educational needs or disabilities. Several of its services are fully, or part funded by the DSG. There are a range of SEND reform workstreams across all phases of education targeting early identification and intervention, the overall aim is to reduce escalation to statutory processes and secure better outcomes for young people. The delivery of these programmes, outlined in the Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education, is completed in partnership with schools, parents, and carers.

56. The net general fund budget of £12,895,400 in the education service. This includes £4,955,600 on SEN travel care and support where we have continued to experience demand led pressures. Despite this we have continued to deliver a high-quality service to children and young people who require travel assistance.
57. Short breaks and resources including care packages for disabled children, the Stephen Wiltshire Centre (The Stephen Wiltshire Centre is a purpose-built specialist centre for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families) and the Haven (residential children's home) account for £4,051,000 of the budget.
58. The Education assets, operations and planning team is responsible for ensuring we have a sufficient number of school places across the borough, tackling the challenge of modernising and improving the school estate through major regeneration programmes as well as coordinating projects across the department.

Children's Commissioning

59. The team is responsible for a range of commissioning, transformation and service improvement activity supporting the directorate to shape provision using innovative approaches to ensure quality and cost effectiveness as well as overseeing a number of key delivery services including travel care and support, school meals, placements and business support.
60. A key area of council investment of £1,750,000 from 2023/24 is to ensure baseline funding for the breakfast and lunch club pilots in schools as well as the holiday activity and food support schemes.
61. The net controllable budget for the directorate's Commissioning function totals £5,474,000. The commissioning team is responsible for around 70 contracts totalling circa £60m with budgets for these contracts sitting within the respective operational areas. Contracts are split into four key areas – Education and SEND, Children's Social Care, travel/food and health/joint commissioning.
62. Commissioning continues to support to manage cost pressures across Children's Services through the development and delivery of transformation programmes and recommissioning activity to meet budget challenge objectives and contribute to MTFS savings.
63. It has been a challenging year in which the national economic context and cost of living crisis has had a significant impact in terms of increasing demand and complexity of need, against a backdrop of considerable market fragility. We have experienced provider failure in our Travel Care and Support Service in which the team responded at pace to recommission an alternative provider which ensured the continued high-quality delivery of this statutory service at almost no additional cost.

64. We have recommissioned our Semi-Independent Living contract to provide a more flexible offer and support package to our care experienced young people with increased capacity that provides better value. We continue to look creatively at opportunities to work with our Housing colleagues to develop local needs led housing solutions.
65. This year the team has undertaken the recommissioning of services which has delivered efficiencies in line with our coproduced early help strategy. We have also continued to support families experiencing food poverty in response to the cost-of-living crisis through our ambitious food programmes including the holiday activity scheme, breakfast clubs and universal free school meals pilots.
66. Staffing costs account for £3,038,100. Of this £1,354,700 relates to the business support structure. The structure is fully funded with no budget pressure following a restructure in 2021/22 and further efficiencies in 2022/23 to mitigate income reductions.
67. Over the 2023/24 financial year, commissioning will continue to support and drive forward the key transformation programmes including early help, SEND transformation, health partnerships and placement sufficiency.

Equality Implications

A draft Equality Impact Analysis (EIA), which assesses the impacts on equality of the main items in the budget proposals relevant to this PAC, is attached as Appendix 3. A final EIA will be reported to Budget Council in February 2023.

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Savings and investment proposals

Appendix 2 – Risks

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Children's Services and Education

Change and Savings Proposals				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2023-24 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
1	Early Intervention Services Children and Young Peoples Services and Education Services	Early Intervention Services Review	A single commissioning process to ensure families receive the right service at the right time; to intervene early and prevent escalation.	(700)	(700)	(700)	(700)
Total Change and Savings Proposals				(700)	(700)	(700)	(700)
Investment and Covid Recovery				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2023-24 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
1	Education - Children with Disability	Health contributions to Disabled Children's Care Packages	Likely expected impact from NHS standardising funding contributions across local authorities in the sector.	350	350	350	350
2	Children and Young Peoples Services	Care Leavers Hub	Critical Investment into services for corporate parenting	77	77	77	77
3	Education	Performance and Quality Assurance	Longer term funding required to support key services to achieve a successful SEND Ofsted inspection. Key areas to focus on include, quality assurance, development of data infrastructure and longer term support for key teams such as the EHCP team and school improvement	250	250	250	250
4	Children's Services and Education	Free breakfasts in all primary Schools	Protect the borough's free breakfasts in all primary schools	450	450	450	450
5	Children's Services and Education	Free school lunches	Maintain free lunches in the schools we operate the scheme in.	100	100	100	100
6	Children's Services and Education	Feeding children during school holidays	Do even more to feed children who need support outside of school term time, making sure they get two good, nutritious meals a day	1,200	1,800	1,800	1,800
4	Education	Education inequalities	Tracking of delivery required through a nuanced role to encourage positive engagement from schools.	25	25	25	25
8	Education	Digital exclusion - Extension of existing schemes in schools	Co-produce a Digital Inclusion strategy for H&F schools	25	25	25	25
9	Children and Young Peoples Services	Family hubs	Develop family hubs to make it simpler for families to access a wide range of council services.	60	250	250	250
10	Children and Young Peoples Services	Twinned municipalities	Act with our twinned municipalities to enrich and improve the lives of our residents by: Developing programmes for children and young people to share in sport competitions and artistic and cultural projects, and cooperating around youth mayors, youth parliaments and other democratic initiatives.	60	60	60	60
Total Investment and Covid Recovery				2,597	3,387	3,387	3,387

Children's Services Risk/Challenges

Department & Division	Short Description of Risk	Mitigation
Children's Services		
Children and Young Peoples Services	Increased demand as a result of the service being needs led	Targeting of earlier intervention through use of family group conferences, involvement of Family Assist services and monitoring of trends
Children and Young Peoples Services	Greater demand on services as more families experience prolonged duress and the impact of economic downturn due to the pandemic	Undertaking risk assessments and monitoring.
Education	Travel Care is determined by the needs of children with SEND and the extent to school placements are made out of borough and at a considerable distance from the child's home. Demand for Travel Care continues to rise.	The SEN Sufficiency Review commissioned for early 2022/23 will identify further opportunities for local SEN educational provision and inform how local provision can be developed in order to increase the number of children with SEN being able to access both local mainstream and special school places.
All Children's and Education Services	Contractual and Statutory inflation more than budgeted	Seek to minimise inflationary uplifts as far as possible, noting these are often legally enforceable contract clauses. Set aside corporate inflationary contingency
Children's Services Total		

Draft Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) 2023/24

Children's Services Savings Proposals

Early Intervention Services Review - A single commissioning process to ensure families receive the right service at the right time; to intervene early and prevent escalation - £0.700m

It is believed that this proposal has a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

- This procurement embeds the principle of the Early Intervention strategy to ensure every child, young person and family is happy, healthy and can thrive, supported by an effective community network.
- The approach adopts inclusion in its widest sense, including children and young people with SEND.
- The procurement aims to support families from pre-birth through the Child and Family support contract. There is also an expectation within the contract to support integration with health services including pre-natal support.

The procurement aims to address disproportionality and for services to be fully inclusive. Services commit to value and demonstrate respect for diversity, and to reach into communities to deliver support in the right way for all families to encourage greater engagement.

Children's Services Investment Proposals

Investment in Disabled Children's care packages - £0.350m

A neutral equalities impact is expected as proposed budget growth ensures budget to meet assessed need and does not represent any change in service offered to young people.

Investment in SEND quality assurance, data infrastructure, Education and Health Care Assessment functions and school improvement - £0.250m

It is believed that this proposal has a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

The proposal will enable better analysis of data in relation to SEND including the associated quality assurance monitoring of services and provision to ensure the continued delivery of high-quality services to children and young people with SEND, including those that share protected characteristics.

The proposal will improve the layers of support that we can provide within the education service and will benefit all children and young people with SEND, including those that share protected characteristics.

The proposal will improve access to services by strengthening the coordination of referrals and information that is available to parents/carers and education, health and social care partners across the local area in regard to what is expected to be ordinarily available.

Care leavers Hub - £0.077m

The hub will act as a space where our care experienced young people can seek advice, support and guidance and be somewhere where they choose to spend time. It is believed that this proposal has a neutral impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

It is anticipated that there would be no impact in relation to the protected characteristics as the services will remain in place and under management by the Children's Social Work department.

Social workers will operate within the service and facilitate actions to support hard to reach groups.

Family Hubs - £0.060m

Investment in Family Hubs to make it simpler for families to access a wide range of council services. It is believed that this proposal has a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

Family Hubs are an integrated service model. Beyond being just a physical space, Family Hubs refer to a way of working which centres around service integration and inclusion in its widest sense. The aim is to support all children and young people from pre-birth to adulthood, and their families, through earlier intervention. Family Hubs act as a single point of access to help families navigate and receive the support they need when they need it, which may be wider than their initially presenting need.

Twinned municipalities - £0.060m

Investment to act with our twinned municipalities to enrich and improve the lives of our residents by: Developing programmes for children and young people to share in sport competitions and artistic and cultural projects, and cooperating around youth mayors, youth parliaments and other democratic initiatives.

It is believed that this proposal has a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics. By developing programmes for children and young people to share in sport competitions and artistic and cultural projects, and cooperating around youth mayors, youth parliaments and other democratic initiatives.

Investment into tackling education inequalities and digital exclusion in partnership with schools - £0.050m

It is believed that this proposal has a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics by supporting our schools to reduce education inequality which arose during the pandemic to narrow and erase the gap through a range of interventions, including additional tutoring and digital learning programmes as well as the coproduction and delivery of a Digital Inclusion Strategy with schools that will increase accessibility for those most impacted.

Investment with respect to supporting young people with food - £1.750m

The proposals focus on £1.200m of investment will ensure work can continue to feed children who need support outside of school term time, making sure they get two good, nutritious meals a day. Further investment of £0.550m in the free breakfast offer in primary Schools and free lunch offer in schools where this currently operates.

It is believed that this proposal has a neutral impact on groups that share protected characteristics as it represents a continuation of the offer provided over recent years.

Summary on impact on the budget

The savings proposals for these vital services to vulnerable children and young people will be delivered through promoting greater independence, more access to support within the community and increasing the number of in-borough placements. Together with a bigger emphasis on recoupment of unused direct payment balances, these proposals will realise cost savings whilst ensuring a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics.

The requests for growth funding are primarily to protect the borough's free school meals and to align budgets with the demand led growth in numbers that services are experiencing. These proposals will ensure that we continue to achieve a positive impact for these children and young people.