

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY 2004 at 10.00 a.m.**

REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITOR TO 31 OCTOBER 2003

Report of Director of Children, Schools & Families and the Finance Director

Author: - Lesley Brockington,
Deputy Director Commissioning, Performance & Resources

Executive Member: - Robert Gordon

1. Purpose of the report

To enable the Committee to identify if there are any issues arising from the budget monitor that they wish to scrutinise.

The October meeting of the Scrutiny Committee requested a report setting out the amended strategy for looked after children (including Out County and other associated costs) together with the regular budget monitor report to Committee requested by Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel.

2. Background

- 2.1 Each area of the CSF budget is allocated to a named manager who has responsibility for ensuring that the services are delivered within the available funds. At the end of each month, from May onwards, a report is prepared that sets out any changes in the budget, predicted variances, virement and carry forward proposals and any other items of budgetary concern.
- 2.2 Copies of the report are sent to Group Spokesmen and to Corporate Finance who produce periodic summary reports that are considered by Cabinet.
- 2.3 At their meeting on 12 May, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel resolved:
"That the regular Budget Monitor and 'Traffic Light' Monitor reports be included on the agenda of Scrutiny Committees on the basis that the reports are for noting not for discussion and to enable the Committees to identify issues for scrutiny."

- 2.3 Copies of the reports produced to the end of October 2003 are attached for consideration as follows:

Revenue Monitor

Appendix A (Summary Table) and
Appendix B (Detailed Analysis)

Capital Monitor

Appendix C (Summary Table) and
Appendix D (Detailed Analysis)

3. Amended Strategy for Looked After Children

- 3.1 A report for Children and Families Panel on 11 December 2003 discussed one element of the Looked After Children Strategy, covering Out of County Placements. The conclusions were:

- The proposals made for more robust management and monitoring of out of county placements and cost are an important element in the development of the CSF Looked After Children Strategy.
- Additional funding of £6m has been requested as part of the budget process for 2004/05. Out of county placements will be managed within these resources should this funding be approved.
- If additional resources were made available, a proportion of them will be used flexibly to fund care solutions as alternatives to placement out of county. Any care solutions funded in this way will be carefully monitored to assess outcomes for the young people concerned, and compared against outcomes for those placed out of county.
- Further elements of the LAC strategy will be the subject of a report to the next meeting of the Panel in February 2004.
- Section 11 of the report contains a series of management solutions and actions which will all be implemented. They cover issues including; a shift in emphasis to prevention and early intervention, more rigorous scrutiny, stricter placement and financial controls, and improved commissioning arrangements.

4. Rural Implications

There are no direct rural implications arising out of this report.

5. Conclusions

Members are invited to decide if there are any items arising out of the budget monitor report that they wish to consider for future scrutiny.

Background information referred to by the author:

Children & Families Panel report 11 December 2003: Out of County Placements

If you require further information about the issues referred to in this report please contact: Lesley Brockington, Telephone: 01992 555710