

North Lanarkshire Carers Together supported carers to contribute to the council budget consultations during the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> January. Hugely important to ensure the impacts on decisions on budget cuts may have on carers and those they care for; two equality group sessions took place on Monday and Thursday for carers which we coordinated. They were facilitated by council officers, and we were assured comments would be relayed in reports to elected members to help them inform decisions in the upcoming budget.

Key themes that were shared with officers include:

- Why do we need savings of £32m in year 1 but less in years 2 & 3 (*this is due to recent strikes and wage agreements for this coming year*)
- ASN education provision is already insufficient and with many thousands of Children and Young People waiting on neurodevelopmental assessments across the whole of Lanarkshire, this should be protected and indeed enhanced.
- Alternative Education should be protected due to the equality impact cutting it would have and given the positive outcomes for children not necessarily academic.
- Health & Social Care provision across the board is important to carers and those they care for, and no services could be identified as surplus/easy to cut.
- Bins/Recycling – cutting these impacts everyone and would risk pest issues and affect wellbeing, but also note carers may have a higher reliance on waste especially if they care for someone for example who is incontinent.
- Citizens in receipt of a social work budget receive a paper copy remittance every 4 weeks, if this changed to electronic correspondence it would make savings, but this may not suit everyone.
- Could consultation take place 9 months in advance to allow for robust and extensive consultation with the public including ways to include NL residents who do not have digital access to attend online sessions or respond to online surveys.

A snapshot of priority spending:

#### **High priorities for spending within Education**

- Primary/Secondary & ASN Schools with more resources, support and training for staff, money should be spent on training all teaching staff to implement the nurturing approach, teaching methods used by staff in these ASN establishments. This would help those currently in the wrong school placement.
- ASN Schools should be an extremely high priority with years of under investment the sector needs to continue to be the highest priority till we are at an equal standing as mainstream primary/secondary, we need more investment into new ASN provisions being built.
- Early years/nursery & childcare - To be able to continue to offer children full time placements and help the families who need this for childcare to enable them to work. Regular workshops/training from other services available to both staff and parents to help identify any additional support needs their child may have. The earlier the relevant support is put in place the better.
- We also need to invest in more resources within mainstream estate to ensure they are equipped to properly support those with additional support needs.
- Virtual schools should be a high priority as every child has a right to an education and we as parent/carers are not qualified to give them this. There are many children across the

authority who do not attend school full time due to an incorrect placement, disabilities, or health, each will need to have access to virtual schools to ensure that we get it right for every child.

- Digital Learning is another high priority, the world of work is changing, and our children should be given every opportunity to have this enhance their education, as a parent carer of a children with additional support needs, they rely heavily on digital learning to access the curriculum.

*“Children and young people are the adults of the future and should have the proper investment to ensure they are given the best opportunities.”*

### **High priorities for spending within Health and Social Care**

- Home Care Support - This is an essential service with many people living longer and wishing to remain at home, this needs to continue. Change is needed so home care workers can spend more time with each service user and not have to put them into bed at 6pm, after eating their dinner.
- Mental Health Services – many carers mental health is impacted, and it is important to ensure the right supports are available to those who need it in a quick, concise manner.
- Community Care - This is another essential service, especially for those kept in hospital who could be cared for at home with the correct support.

### **High priorities for spending within enterprise and communities**

- Libraries, Culture, Community Centres and Museums - Many families depend on these. Students for books, printing services and a quiet area to study. A lot of the unemployed access the computers and Wi-Fi to look for work. A lot of families visit the museums for days out, more so if they cannot afford to go on holiday. Community centres are needed to continue all activity and fitness classes from babies up. I know people from every age group who attend these regularly.
- Leisure Centre and Sport - These are crucial for the health and mental well-being of everyone who access them.
- Commercial Buildings - The empty units and shops need to be improved to gain interest, realistic rental fees.

### **High priorities for spending within chief executives**

- Audit - Required to ensure all monies are accounted for and used appropriately.
- Elections - To make sure we have the correct people in the positions to make the relevant changes the people of North Lanarkshire want.

### **Medium priorities shared**

- Outdoor Learning - This should be offered to all children/young people. It breaks up the traditional way of learning and being outdoors can only be of benefit to all.
- Youth work/adult learning - There is a massive gap in this area. The transition from school onto further education or employment is quite poor. This is more challenging for young adults with additional support needs. My own two sons have been at home since leaving school and college. They struggled to engage in what was on offer at the time and only really have had the option of attending a life skills course. This will suit some but they all should

have the same opportunities as their peers, be able to access these with whatever support required. Many other parents have the same experience.

- Children's Social Work - This service would work better if there were more communication and parent/carers were made aware of the help and support available to their family.
- Adult Social Work
- Palliative Care
- Community Alarms & equipment to promote independent living.
- Play Park provision, inspection, and maintenance- The play parks help families during school holidays, after school in Summertime and nurseries/childminders throughout the year.
- Roads, paths, bridges, and lighting - Roads are in disrepair. The lighting, even on the main paths is not bright enough. I don't allow my daughter to walk home alone when it's dark.
- CCTV - I think most tenants feel a bit safer knowing there are cameras throughout North Lanarkshire

North Lanarkshire Carers Together would like to place on record our thanks to council officers but importantly to carers who took the time to participate in the sessions and thereafter with email comments.