

Response from Executive Director – Operations and Finance

I would like to thank the Priorities and Resources Review Panel for their Interim Report 1 : Children's Services.

With regard the recommendation contained therein, I am pleased to confirm that I have approved the appointment of a senior qualified management accountant (or consultant management accountant in the interim if this is necessary) to work with Children's Services. This recruitment is underway.

With regard the report generally, which is accepted in spirit of "providing a Critical Friend challenge", I would like to recognise in my response the hard work of the finance team within Children's Services over an exceptionally difficult period.

The reality is that the immediate finance team did not have the "Executive Teeth" (Paragraph 3.6 refers), influence or mandate to appropriately guide the responsible Senior Management Team within Children's Services, thereby avoiding the perfect storm of service failure (which was not finance driven), rising demand and an inadequate starting budget. It is also clear, having met with the finance team recently, that they are continuing to work hard to mitigate the financial issues arising.

I do believe that the service is now turning the corner and that much has been learned by all involved. As noted within the report, the funding challenges ahead will require systemic changes throughout the Council in the way that we financially plan, hold Directors to account and prepare for the medium term.

Steve Parrock

December 2013