

# SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 18 December 2017

**PRESENT:** Councillor G. Thomas (Chair)

**Councillors:**

I.W. Davies, K.V. Broom, A. Davies, W.T. Evans, M.J.A. Lewis, K. Lloyd, E. Morgan, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, E.G. Thomas, D.T. Williams and J.G. Prosser (In place of A.S.J. McPherson)

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor J. Tremlett, Executive Board Member for Social Care and Health  
D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

A. Bracey, Head of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities  
R. Dawson, Head of Integrated Services  
A. Thomas, Group Accountant  
S. Sauro, Performance Review Officer  
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer  
R. Edmunds, Trading Standards Services Manager  
A. Passenger, Trading Standards Officer  
Q. Davies, Trading Standards Officer

**Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 2.00 - 3.55 pm**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Evans, A. McPherson and B.A.L. Roberts.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of personal interest.

**3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS**

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

**4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)**

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

**5. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2018/19-2020/21.**

The Committee considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2018/19 to 2020/21 (Appendix A) which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2018/2019 together with indicative figures for the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 financial years. The report was based on officers' projections of spending need and took into account the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on 10th October 2017.

The Group Accountant advised that although the announced provisional settlement of -0.5% was significantly better than the anticipated -2%, it still meant the authority had to identify efficiency savings for 2018/19 of £8.544m, compared to the initial £12.527m, and would continue to have a negative impact on the Council's resources.

In summary, the budget proposals would assume full delivery of the £25.6m identified savings over the plan period. Furthermore, the budget proposals assumed a Council tax increase of 4.12% for 2018/19 and that a 1% movement in council tax levels equated to +/-£820k.

The Committee considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy relevant to its remit:

- **Appendix A(i)** – Efficiency summary for the Social Care and Health Service;
- **Appendix A(ii)** – Growth Pressures summary for the Social Care and Health Service;
- **Appendix B** – Budget extracts for the Social Care and Health Service;
- **Appendix C** – Charging Digest for the Social Care and Health Service.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the £1.75m of growth bids awarded to the Communities Department within the Strategy and clarification sought on how much of that allocation would be spent within Social Services.

The Group Accountant advised that whilst the Communities Department's indicative allocation was £1.75m, that was set against a total Departmental bid of £3.779m. As the level of indicative allocation was 50% less than the total growth bid, the Department would need to examine its bids and prioritise where the additional allocation should be directed.

- Reference was made to the reduction of the Council's earmarked reserves over the Strategy Period from £74.132m in March 2017 to £17.233m in March 2020. Clarification was sought on whether the reduction could impact on the viability of schemes within the capital programme.

The Group Accountant confirmed the majority of the earmarked reserves were set aside to fund capital projects, all of which would be utilised.

The Committee was further advised that the Authority was examining its use of reserves, with an emphasis being placed on maintaining a general reserve of 3%.

- In response to a question on the impact of the Releasing Time to Care Project for Domiciliary Care Packages, the Head of Integrated Services advised that related to the initiative introduced by the Authority two years previously to reduce the percentage of care provision packages involving double handling from 21% to match the performance of other best performing authorities where the level was 13%. The Authority now assessed requests for care packages in terms of whether there was a need for double handling and if the same or, improved level of care could be

provided in alternative ways for example, the use of specific equipment. It was confirmed the purpose of the initiative, which was on-going, was not to reduce, but improve the level of care provision.

- Reference was made to the level of consultation being undertaken as part of the Budget Strategy and to whether that involved specific organisations such as MIND and Age Cymru and also with service users if there were any proposed reductions to be made to the existing level of service provision.

The Committee was advised that the consultations being undertaken related solely to the Council's Budget Strategy for 2018/19 – 2020/21. If any consultations were required to be undertaken on changes to service delivery, they would be managed by the respective Council Department.

- Reference was made to the table in item 4.1 relating to the current financial outlook and the provision for a general inflation rate of 2.2%. As inflation was currently running at 3.1%, a view was expressed on the accuracy of the figures within the table and that they would need to be amended to reflect both the current inflation levels and any further efficiency savings which may be required as a consequence of that higher rate.

The Committee was advised that whilst it was recognised inflation was higher than provided for within the original outlook, the final budget proposals to be presented to Council in February would take account of inflation trends as appropriate.

- Reference was made to the Domiciliary Care's in-house service and the need to arrange cover for staff absenteeism. Clarification was sought on whether an analysis had been undertaken on the nature of those absences and if any were stress related.

The Head of Integrated Services confirmed the department closely monitored sickness levels and whilst stress was a factor in absenteeism levels, musco-skeletal injuries also featured highly on the reasons for absence, as would be expected by the very nature of the service provision. Work was being undertaken on analysing the reasons for sickness, be they work or personal, and support was available to all employees via the Council's HR policies

The Committee was also advised that a planned upgrade, in January 2018, to the Council's Resource Link software would enable a more detailed analysis to be undertaken on staff absences and whether they related to work or personal issues. It was also confirmed that a pilot study on stress related absence would be undertaken in the near future and the Council was examining ways of becoming more pro-active in preventing sickness occurring wherever possible.

- The Head of Integrated Services, in response to the efficiency proposal to halve the numbers of small care packages by 2020, advised that the proposal sought to embrace the principle of assisting people to live as independently as possible within their home environment. That could for example, if a person's need was physical as opposed to functional, be achieved via the provision of physiotherapy and occupational health services. The ethos therefore revolved around the principle of providing the right level of package which, might not necessarily be care related.
- Reference was made to the opportunities for the development of intergenerational services in partnership with adult services within Coleshill

and Manor Road and to vacate the day premises at Crosshands. Clarification was sought on whether there was sufficient capacity within Coleshill and Manor Road to accommodate the change.

The Head of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities confirmed that sufficient accommodation was available and the proposal revolved around the principle of making more efficient use of existing buildings.

- The Group Accountant confirmed the budget allocation for Care-line within Appendix B to the report did not reflect any proposed changes to its provision or the proposals for the establishment of an Arms-Length Company.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:**

**5.1 The 2018/19 – 2020/21 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation be endorsed**

**5.2 The Charging Digest for the Social Care and Health Service be endorsed**

Councillor A. Davies requested that the minutes of the meeting record that he did not accept the Current Financial Outlook table detailed in item 4.1 of the Budget Strategy as he considered the figures detailed therein to be inaccurate in view of the increased inflation rate.

**6. COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENTAL DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19-2021.**

The Committee considered the Communities Departmental Draft Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 in relation to those services falling within its remit i.e. Care and Support, Mental Health Learning and Disability Safeguarding, Integrated Services, Commissioning Services, Business Support and Performance Analysis and Systems. It was noted that further work would be undertaken on the draft following comments and engagement by the Committee and Executive Board Members. Additionally, feedback from staff groups to date had indicated greater emphasis would be welcomed on integrated wellbeing actions through divisional plans together with ensuring the sustainability of services through different methods in the face of growing demand.

The following issues/questions were raised on the report:-

- Clarification was sought on the level of risk identified within the report on the Authority (as a key partner) being liable for the repayment of significant amounts of grant funding to the Area Planning Board for Substance Misuse with no prospect of recovering those amounts from third parties.

The Head of Mental Health & Learning Disabilities reported that the funding of the service was met via a Welsh Government Grant which was then used to commission services from Drug Aid. The potential risk of any payback was considered to be low, with the only occasion when that would be envisaged being if a commissioned service were to become insolvent. As the providers of those services were required to submit quarterly performance reports, it would be unusual for them to become insolvent without the Authority being aware of any difficulties.

- In response to a question on qualitative monitoring of substance misuse commissioned service providers, the Head of Mental Health & Learning

Disabilities confirmed they were subject to quarterly reviews. The Department would also, in the New Year, be holding a workshop on commissioned services to examine qualitative outcomes. Arrangements could also be made for the committee to be provided with a report on substance misuse in the New Year

The Head of Mental Health & Learning Disabilities requested that if members had any concern on the level of service from the Council's commissioned service providers they draw them to her attention.

- In response to a question on the monitoring of the Department's intent for staff to 'have manageable workloads, effective and responsive systems and processes, the Head of Integrated Services confirmed the Authority, as an employer, had a duty of care to ensure staff had manageable workloads. Whilst demand for integrated services was increasing, she was confident the workload was being managed within her service. Staff were also able to raise any workload concerns via regular appraisals and 'one to ones'

The Head of Mental Health & Learning Disabilities advised that in relation to her service, an analysis was being undertaken on increasing service demand on workloads, especially in relation to the provisions of the Health and Well Being Act.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Communities Departmental Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 be received.**

## **7. UPDATE ON TRADING STANDARDS INITIATIVES - PROTECTION OF ELDERLY AND VULNERABLE CITIZENS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE.**

The Committee received a report and powerpoint presentation on the initiatives being undertaken by the Trading Standards Division aimed at improving citizen's quality of life at home and improving community resilience by reducing financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. The Committee noted that in 2014 the Division in response to statutory obligations in relation to financial abuse and policy changes brought by the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, had established the Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS), a multiagency initiative designed to detect and prevent the financial abuse of vulnerable persons.

The following question/issues were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the potential for financial abuse of vulnerable persons by family and friends granted Power of Attorney to manage their financial affairs. Clarification was sought on what action, if any, could be taken to address that abuse.

The Committee was advised that a number of options were available and included a scheme operated since 2014 in conjunction with Barclays Bank and the Halifax Bank (and recently the Santander Bank) regarding the reporting of any unusual bank activity on a vulnerable persons account. That could then result in the initiation of a multi-disciplinary response to safeguard the vulnerable person and the prosecution of offenders by a relevant enforcement body.

Arising from the above reference was made on the need to raise awareness of those granted a Power of Attorney of the responsibilities attached to that grant.

- Reference was made to the financial abuse that could be suffered from unsolicited telephone calls and the Committee was advised that the Division had purchased 220 telephone call blocking devices for installation within vulnerable persons' homes to help protect them from such calls. Those devices, whilst requiring callers to identify themselves also advised that calls were being monitored by trading standards. To date, over 41,000 nuisance calls had been blocked and 67 vulnerable residents protected from nuisance spam calls.

Other avenues available to protect vulnerable persons from nuisance telephone calls included the Telephone Preference Service and similar blocking services offered by telecommunication companies whereby the caller had to identify themselves prior to the phone being answered. The advantage of those systems were they blocked automated calls.

In response to a question on how vulnerable persons could be referred to the department to receive a call blocking device, that could be undertaken in a variety of ways including referral via social services, the banks and intelligence led. The department also held 'pop up' sessions in banks and issued press releases to raise public awareness of telephone fraud.

- It was recognised that in addition to nuisance telephone calls vulnerable persons could also be targeted via spam mail. The Committee was advised that in response to such activities, the Royal Mail, in conjunction with the National Trading Standards Board, had established a project to provide formal training to post office sorting offices in relation to Mass Mail Fraud. That training had already been provided to the Ammanford sorting office and would shortly be undertaken at the Carmarthen and Llanelli offices and included enabling postal employees to identify vulnerable persons who may be at risk from spam mail. Royal Mail could also write to vulnerable persons asking if they would like any such mail to be blocked.
- In response to the issue of No Cold Calling Zones, it was confirmed that since 2008 the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 made it a criminal offence for businesses to cold call and any offences committed under that Act were punishable with a fine of £5,000 and 2 years imprisonment. However, where charitable door to door collections were made with the benefit of a licence issued by the Licensing Division, the collecting organisation was issued with a list of properties where they should not call.
- Reference was made to the various initiatives being undertaken under the FESS umbrella and views expressed it would be advantageous for members to have a seminar thereon.

#### **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**

**7.1 That the report be received**

**7.2 That a members seminar be arranged on the Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme**

## **8. EXPLANATIONS FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORTS.**

The Committee received a report detailing the reasons for the non-submission of the following scrutiny reports:-

- Mental Health Transformation
- Carers Assessment

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the explanations for the non-submissions be noted.

**9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2018 be noted.

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**