



SPECIAL HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY, 6TH DECEMBER 2018 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor B. Owen – (Presiding as Chair)

Councillors:

C. Bezzina, D. Cushing, M. Evans, A. Gair, J. Gale, D.C. Harse, V. James, Mrs A. Leonard, and C. Thomas.

Cabinet Member: C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing).

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director - Children's Services), M. Jones (Interim Financial Services Manager), S. Harris (Interim Head of Business Improvement Services), C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

Users and Carers – Mrs M. Jones and Mr C. Luke.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that Councillor L. Binding (Chair) had given apologies for absence, as such Councillor J. Bevan (Vice-Chair) presided as Chair and opened the meeting.

Apologies for absence had also been received from Councillors A. Angel, Miss E. Forehead, L. Jeremiah, S. Skivens, J. Williams (Assistant Director - Adult Services) and Ms J. Lawton (Co-opted Member).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors J. Bevan and C. Bezzina declared personal and prejudicial interests in relation to agenda item 3 - Draft Budget Proposals for 2019/20 and item 4 - 2019/20 Draft Savings Proposals for Social Services, Councillor A. Leonard declared a prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 3 - Draft Budget Proposals for 2019/20 and Councillor D. Cushing declared a personal interest in relation to item 4 - 2019/20 Draft Savings Proposals for Social Services at the commencement of the meeting. Details of which are recorded with the respective items.

Councillor J. Bevan (Vice-Chair) declared personal and prejudicial interests in relation to agenda item 3 and 4 and he left the room at this stage. It was moved and seconded that Councillor B. Owen Preside as Chair for the remainder of the meeting. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

3. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20

Councillors J. Bevan and C. Bezzina declared personal and prejudicial interests in relation to this item. Councillor J. Bevan has a close relative that works in administration for the Social Services Department and a close relative that works for Barnardo's. Councillor C. Bezzina works for Unison. Councillor A. Leonard declared a prejudicial interest as she is a Teacher. They all left the meeting when the report was presented and did not take part in the debate or vote.

The Interim Head of Business Improvement Services summarised the report that had been presented to Cabinet on the 14th November 2018. The report provided details of the draft budget proposals for the 2019/20 financial year and to allow for a period of consultation (19th November 2018 to the 11th January 2019) prior to a final decision by Full Council. The proposals are based on the Welsh Government (WG) Provisional 2019/20 Local Government Financial Settlement and a higher than forecast council tax rise by 6.95% to cover a savings target of £15.6m to enable the Authority to set a balanced budget. A Members' Seminar was held on the 15th November 2018 to consider the proposals and a further Seminar is proposed for January 2019 ahead of the final report being presented to Cabinet on the 13th February 2019 and Full Council on the 21st February 2019. The Officer emphasised that the Authority is entering unprecedented times and there will be difficult decisions to be made in moving forward.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised of the whole Authority cost pressures as set out in paragraphs 4.2.3. to 4.2.9. in the report and of the inescapable service pressures being faced by the Authority. The Officer referred to the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) appended to the report and advised that this a five year plan from 2019/20 to 2023/24 and the Authority are required to make savings of up to £60 m during this time. He added that in looking to develop proposals to address the significant financial challenges going forward the Council cannot continue as it is. Members noted that through the Councils Business Improvement Programme (BIP) strategic reviews, Officers will look at how services can become more business efficient through examining how they are currently provided. Options shall be explored for greater customer focus, digital delivery, alternative delivery models, and commercial opportunities. The approach will look at preventative measures that will encourage early intervention that will ultimately allow demand for certain services to be regulated. Members' consideration of the report and comments were sought as part of the consultation.

Members expressed their concerns to the draft budget proposals and made reference to the cessation of the Community Safety Warden Service and hoped that this would be reviewed due to the police also withdrawing from some services. A Member referred to the introduction of the Rat treatment charge of £20 and expressed his concerns that people may no longer use this service and resort to using unregulated poisons. A Member queried the reduction in Waste Management Service and feared that the proposals may result in illicit fly-tipping which may result in further cost to the Council in moving forward. The Officer advised that there are risks attached to all proposals and these issues in particular can be considered at the Special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny on the 18th December 2019. Members were reminded of the Members' Seminar in January 2019 that will provide further opportunity to raise questions.

Having fully considered the report, Members unanimously agreed that the details of the draft budget proposals for 2019/20, be noted.

4. 2019/20 DRAFT SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

Councillors J. Bevan and C. Bezzina declared personal and prejudicial interests in relation to this item for the same reasons as in agenda item 3 (above). They left the meeting when the report was presented and did not take part in the debate or vote. Councillor D. Cushing declared a personal interest as she has a close relative who is in receipt of Services from the Social Services Department. As the interest was personal she was not required to leave the room when the report was presented and could take part in the debate and vote.

The report sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee regarding the 2019/20 draft savings proposals for Social Services, prior to final budget proposals being presented to Cabinet and Full Council in February 2019. As part of the consultation process the Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider and comment upon the content of the report. Members were advised that excluding Schools, Social Services has the largest budget within the Council. Social Care has already exceeded the budget where savings have previously been made and this position is becoming more difficult year on year. Of the £14.66m savings proposals presented to Cabinet, £4.557m are not expected to have an impact on the public and £197k of these savings relate to Social Services. These 'nil impact' savings consist in the main of vacancy management, budget realignment and minor changes to service provision and are listed in appendix 11 (attached to the report).

Officers summarised each of the proposals in turn. The review of administrative support (proposed saving of £186k) would be achieved through a restructure within Children's Services Business Support, by reducing the staffing establishment by 7.5 WTE posts. This will be achieved through vacancy management and whilst duties will need to be reviewed and prioritised across all teams, there will be no impact on service delivery to the public. Members expressed their concerns in relation to cuts to staffing levels and the pressure this may have on services and on staff sickness levels. Officers confirmed that this is year 5 of services cuts and this is the last cut in moving forward to protect frontline services. There have been no jobs lost or redundancies made throughout the savings process as the vacancies have been managed by moving staff around. Sickness levels are quite low in the short term and long term within Children's Services.

Members were advised that the Barnardo's contract under review (proposed saving of £189k) is due to expire in September 2019. The existing contract provides four service strands namely, Contact, Young Carers, Domestic Abuse and Family Support Services. Children's Services has undertaken a review of the services provided to identify areas that can be reduced in order to achieving savings. Whilst the Family Support element is an important preventative service, the key elements for the families in greatest need can be provided by the Social Work Teams within Children's Services. It is therefore proposed that the Family Support element of the service will cease. Reference was made to appendix 2 that sets out the details within the Equality Impact Assessment Form (EIA) in relation to this proposal. Officers stated that it is important to note that all families will be prioritised within the Teams, will have an allocated worker and Care Plan. Senior Management believe this approach can be managed safely and this saving proposal is considered the most safe and appropriate area to make a target saving. Mrs M. Jones (Co-opted Member) referenced social work early intervention with families and raised whether the voluntary sector could 'lighten the load' in this regard. She suggested services such as Families First and Flying Start may be able to assist as this could reduce the pressure on social workers. Officers welcomed this suggestion and proposed approach in maximising the family service and also confirmed that any further funding made available will be used to bolster this support service.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that in order to reduce staffing budgets in adult services (proposed saving is £550k), a restructure could be required but there is likely to be little or no public impact. The recent workforce planning letter sent to all staff will be used to identify posts that could be deleted and existing vacant posts will be used to cross match to enable staff to be released from their employment with the council at their request. The exact number of posts to be deleted will be determined by the grade of the posts identified through this process. This will principally involve back office staff and management posts. Officers

propose a saving of £100K in respect of a review of the Non Residential Charging Policy. Members were reminded that this report was deferred at the Health Social Care and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on the 23rd October 2018 and will be considered at a future meeting with a date to be confirmed.

Officers explained that the retender of Shared Care Respite Contract will allow a proposed saving of £50k. The Children with Disabilities Team was transferred to Adult Services Team in April 2018 and this highlights the Council embracing the broad principles within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The term for the current shared care contract held with Action for Children expires on 31st March 2019. Officers are required to carry out a re-tender for the service under procurement guidelines. This involves reviewing the service specification and looking at utilising a wider range of services to meet the assessed need for respite. A Member sought clarification as to the full value of the contract and Officers confirmed the figures would be distributed to the Committee following the meeting.

The proposed saving for the review of Day Services is £300k. Officers explained that this proposal would achieve a saving of approximately 6% of the internal day services budget. These savings could be achieved through a re-design of services including reduction of 3 Community Service Officer posts (Managers) and phased closure of a day base namely Twyncarn in Risca which is underutilised. There would be little impact on service users and people could receive a similar service but in a different location. The usage in respect of Twyncarn was discussed and Officers confirmed this centre is linked to Brooklands Resource Base which provides a range of daytime opportunities for people with a learning disability including those with complex needs. The transition for service users will be carried out in a careful and considered manner. Clarification was sought in relation to the amount of day centres within borough, their location and figures regarding usage and Officers confirmed the figures would be distributed to the Committee following the meeting.

The Scrutiny Committee were informed that there was an error within the agenda pack in that the wrong document had been provided in respect of appendix 7. The correct document would be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

The proposed saving relating to the Implications of Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 is £150k. Officers explained that the Act is a strengths based approach which looks to build on individuals own networks to increase their independence choice and control in meeting their own outcomes. The ethos is to prevent reliance on statutory services by the provision of Information, Advice and Assistance and strengths based assessments to determine what matters to people. An example was provided in that people can purchase their own equipment, arrange provision of minor adaptations, use their own transport and arrange their own care or respite provision.

In respect of the review of External Day Care, the proposed saving is £205k. Members were informed that Officers will initially work with external providers to identify any efficiencies in the system. A review will be undertaken of all service users currently receiving their service out of county and/or from an external provider to consider whether the service can be provided internally. During all assessments and reviews the transport criteria will be implemented and independence will be promoted via travel training etc. in order to reduce reliance of existing transport. The proposed saving for the non-renewal of Mental Health Carers Support Contract is £34k. The contract held by Carers Trust ended on 31st October 2018. The proposal is that the service is not tendered for again and that any overlap for support with the CCBC Carers Support service is considered. Officers confirmed that they have received positive comments from users and although this is a valued service, the intention is to avoid duplication in services. The department believe the CCBC Carers Support can sign post people to existing services within the borough. Members were advised that Officers had not received any negative feedback in the last month and that this would be reviewed on a six monthly basis. The team has been strengthened in the last 18 months and Officers are proud of the service provided. They distribute a quarterly newsletter that highlights the benefits of the service where friendships are made and support is available. Copies of the recent Newsletters would be distributed to the Committee following the meeting.

Officers explained that there is a proposed saving of £300k in relation to a temporary reduction in Growth Provision. Reference was made to paragraph 4.12.1. in the report that summarised the financial pressures compounded by the service pressures experienced in social care across Wales and England. In response to these pressures, on 14th February 2018 Cabinet endorsed the inclusion of annual growth of £1.5m for Social Services in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period 2018/19 to 2022/23. However, as a result of the particularly challenging financial position faced by the Authority in 2019/20 it is proposed to reduce this growth allocation by £300k to £1.2m for 2019/20 only. This £1.2m growth would be sufficient to meet the full year costs of all packages of care that were in place as at August 2018 but would not be sufficient to meet any increase in demand that may be experienced after August 2018. Furthermore, it would not allow for any requests from care providers to increase fee levels in excess of the 2.4% inflationary increase that has been factored in to the 2019/20 budget proposals considered by Cabinet on 14th November 2018.

Members discussed the proposal and questioned if the allocation of £1.2m would be sufficient to cover all packages of care in light of the cuts referred to earlier in the report. Officers advised that additional costs will be absorbed into existing budget provision. There will be no additional costs for new initiatives and should there be an increase in work this does not necessarily mean additional cost implications. It was noted that that the MTFP is regularly reviewed and the Authority has been realistic within its budget. The Directorate's budget is monitored on a monthly basis as this is an evolving situation and bi-monthly reports are produced and presented to the Scrutiny Committee. If demand increases then exercises are undertaken to review the situation.

Members thanked the Officers for the detailed report and for responding to questions during the course of the debate.

Having fully considered the report, Members unanimously agreed that the details of the 2019/20 draft savings proposals for Social Services, be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.00pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5th February 2019.

CHAIR