



SPECIAL HEALTH SOCIAL CARE AND WELL BEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 18TH DECEMBER 2017

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
MONDAY, 18TH DECEMBER 2017 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Binding – Chair
Councillor Ms J. Gale – Vice Chair

Councillors:

A. Angel, Mrs C. Bezzina, Mrs D. Cushing, M. Evans, Ms A. Gair, D. Harse, V. James, J. Simmonds and S. Skivens.

Cabinet Member:

C. Cuss (Social Care and Well Being) and Mrs E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection)

Co-opted Members:

Ms J. Lawton and Mrs M. Jones

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection), S. Harris (Interim Head of Corporate Finance), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director – Children's Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director – Adult Services), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms E. Forehead, L. Jeremiah, B. Owen, C. Thomas and C. Luke (Co-opted Member).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

3. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2018/19

The report, which was presented to Cabinet on 15th November 2017, provided Members with details of draft budget proposals and draft savings proposals for the 2018/19 financial year, to allow for a period of consultation prior to a final decision in February 2018.

Members noted the headline issues in the WG Provisional 2018/19 Local Government Financial Settlement and the details of the draft budget proposals for 2018/19. The report detailed Whole Authority Cost Pressures (£8.867m), together with Inescapable Service Pressures and Other Service Commitments (£2.310m) and a 1% reduction in Welsh Government Funding equating to £2.965m for 2018/19. Additionally, the report outlined draft savings proposals for 2018/19 (£7.205m) and a proposed Council Tax Uplift of 4.52% (£2.999m) which will ensure that a balanced budget is deliverable for 2018/19. The draft budget proposals assume no growth for schools in 2018/19, and as there is no requirement in the Provisional Settlement to protect schools, they will be required to manage their own pay and non-inflationary increases in 2018/19 along with other emerging cost pressures.

The report outlined the financial pressures placed on service areas, in particular Social Services, arising from fee increases for external care providers and further demand in both Adult and Children's Services. As a result, the report proposed that a further £1.5m be allocated in the 2018/19 budget to meet these ongoing financial pressures. Members were also referred to the report appendices which summarised the savings proposals by Directorate/Service Area, together with the savings proposals that are likely to have an impact on the public. £4.682m of the proposed £7.205m savings are 'nil impact', consisting of vacancy management, budget realignment and minor changes to service provision.

Members were reminded of the Medium-Term Financial Plan presented to Council in February 2017, which showed a potential savings requirement of £22.161m for the three-year period 2019/20 to 2021/22, and assumed a cash flat position in terms of the WG Financial Settlement for each of these years. WG has now provided an all-Wales indicative reduction in Aggregate External Finance of minus 1.5% for 2019/20, which would increase the Council's savings requirement by a further £3.984m for 2019/20 alone. If this was replicated in 2020/21 and 2021/22 then further savings of £7.789m would be required. This would result in a total savings requirement of circa £34m for the three-year period 2019/20 to 2021/22 and presents further challenges moving forward in regards to the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan.

It was explained that the indicative reduction of 1.5% is being reviewed by WG following the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement and the Final 2018/19 Local Government Financial Settlement, due to be issued on the 20th December 2017, may include a revised indicative figure for 2019/20. An updated Medium-Term Financial Plan covering the period 2018/19 to 2022/23 will be presented to both Cabinet and Council in February 2018.

Having fully considered the report, Members unanimously agreed that the details of the draft budget proposals for 2018/19 be noted.

4. 2018/19 DRAFT SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Consideration was given to the report, which provided details of the 2018/19 draft savings proposals for Social Services and Public Protection and sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee prior to final 2018/19 budget proposals being presented to Cabinet and Council February 2018.

At its meeting on the 15th November 2017, Cabinet was presented with details of draft

revenue budget proposals for the 2018/19 financial year, including savings proposals across the Council amounting to £7,205k.

The Committee noted that, as in previous years, the savings proposals that are not expected to have an impact on the public have been consolidated into a single line for each service area. These 'nil impact' savings consist in the main of vacancy management, budget realignment and minor changes to service provision.

The Corporate Director- Social Services provided the Committee with an overview of the review of the Voluntary Sector Contracts, which referred to Social Services. It was noted that each of the contracts have been considered carefully in line with the implementation of the Social Services & Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014, which means that people should be sign-posted via the Council's Information, Advice & Assistance Team to promote their independence and choice and to control their own needs.

The Committee discussed the proposal to decommission the Hospital Discharge Contract, which is currently held by Age Concern to achieve a saving of £46k. It was noted that the contract is currently run jointly with Health and provides services to relatively low numbers of people receiving non-statutory services for a short period of time. The current contract comes to an end in March 2018. The impact on the public will be in relation to people being discharged from hospital would be mitigated via the provision of information, advice and assistance including literature being produced by Health. Members noted that CCBC provide a 30% funding contribution to the service, and should this be withdrawn, the Health Service may look to continue the service and retender. Following discussion, it was agreed that further information be sought on the impact of withdrawing CCBC funding for this service and the impact on current users.

Members discussed the proposal to decommission 2 Luncheon Club Contracts, to achieve a saving of £12k. The clubs currently operate in Panside and Nelson and are attended by fewer than 15 people. It is proposed that the funding be withdrawn from these clubs and the Service Users be offered the services of a community connector to look at other options in their communities. Alternatively the provider may be able to find a different funding stream. Members expressed concern for the Service Users and sought further details on the amount of notice that would be provided to the service users. Officers explained that, until a Cabinet decision has been made on savings proposals, it would not be possible to provide notice to the Services Users; however, officers assured Members that Service Users would be provided with support, guidance and information in order to find a service to meet their needs, should the proposal be implemented.

The Committee discussed the proposal regarding the Care and Repair Safety at Home Service. It was noted that the contract is due to end in March 2018 and the report proposed that the service not be recommissioned. Members noted that the contract provides minor adaptations in people's own homes, however, other options are available, which provide the same service and the Council has a separate minor adaptations budget which provides support for those most in need.

The report outlined a proposal to cease the CCBC contribution to the Stroke Association contract, realising a saving of £18k. Members noted that the Health Board let this contract to which Caerphilly CBC currently makes an £18k contribution.

The Chair invited Mr M. O'Grady and Ms A. Markel to provide further information on the Stroke Association and the services they provide.

The Committee were asked to note that the Stroke Association provide emotional and practical support for people who have suffered with a Stroke. Home visits are provided post Stroke and regular contact for up to a year, to support the client. The service received by each individual is tailored to their specific needs in order to manage their recovery. Referrals are received from Health and other services and Members were asked to note the impact on Services users should the service not be funded. Service users would be left isolated without

support and their needs wouldn't be met.

A Member sought information on the number of visiting officers provided support to residents of Caerphilly. It was confirmed that there is 1 officer for Caerphilly, providing support to 70 people in service, 58 of which are engaged referrals within Caerphilly.

A Member, in noting the cuts to the NHS and the positive impact the service has on stroke survivors, sought the rationale for the saving proposal. Officers explained that each proposal will have an impact on someone and that similar contributions are not being made to other associations. In addition, Members were asked to note that the Health Board has received funding for neurological services; therefore alternative provisions would be available in the service area.

Following consideration and discussion, it was requested the further information be sought from the Health Board to determine the impact on Service Users, should the £18k funding cease from CCBC.

The Corporate Director-Social Services and Head of Public Protection provided the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Savings proposals suggested for the services under Public Protection.

The Committee were asked to note that the Deletion of 1 Van Helper Post within the Meals Direct meals on wheels service area could realise a saving of £7.5k. The post is 17.5 hours per week and, as all 5 posts are currently occupied, it would be necessary to consider redeployment or a one-off severance payment. The deletion of this post could result in increased meal delivery/waiting time as a result of our reduced ability to get to homes where we need to be double staffed, but the public impact is considered to be low.

Members raised concerns for the impact on service delivery with a reduction in staff. Officers assured Members that the impact to service delivery would be minimal, as the number of meals on wheels vehicles would remain the same, the lone driver would not be sent to any properties that pose a risk, and routes are carefully planned, however there could be less flexibility due to staff absence.

The Committee were asked to consider an increase in the charge for Meals on Wheels, which would provide a proposed saving of £11k. It was noted that by increasing the price of a meal provided by the service by 20p (from £3.10 to £3.30) from April 2018, would result in an additional income of £11k. Due to the service users, Members were advised that affordability would be considered and, in addition, Members were assured that in comparison to other Local Authorities in the area, CCBC subsidised meal prices would remain amongst the lowest even with the proposed increase. Customer numbers have fallen over a period of years. A number of alternative options are available, but some customers, and their families, continue to opt for a daily visit from Meals Direct and the delivery of a freshly prepared hot meal. A further price increase may result in further loss of customers and this has been accounted for in the overall estimate of £11k additional income per year.

Members were asked to consider a proposal to introduce a Rat Treatment Fee, which would provide a proposed saving of £20k. It was noted that Rat treatments in domestic premises are currently undertaken free of charge. It is proposed to introduce a £20 (plus VAT) charge. Customers in receipt of means tested Universal Credit or Guaranteed Pension Credit would receive a 50% discount on the Council's Pest Control charges and so would pay £10 (plus VAT). At £20 the Council would still be subsidising the service. By way of comparison the Council's current charge for treating a mouse infestation is £50 (plus VAT). Experience from other local authorities has demonstrated that following the introduction of such charges there has subsequently been a significant decline in the number of service requests processed. Income from the introduction of a £20 charge is therefore estimated to be £20k per year. It was noted that there is some risk of public health implications due to infestations left untreated. Members of the public may try to undertake treatments themselves which can lead to the improper placing of rodenticides. The introduction of charging and a decline in service

uptake is likely to create some increase in the workload of environmental health officers as they have to investigate the cause of rat infestations, neighbour disputes, and to take enforcement action to remedy problems, including the service of notices and undertaking works in default. The public impact of this proposal is considered to be medium.

The Chair invited Councillor D.T. Davies to address the Committee as the Chair of Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee and having an overlapping portfolio.

Councillor Davies asked the Committee to note the concerns the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee had in relation to the savings proposals relating to the introduction of Rat Treatment fees the impact on the Borough, should a charge be applied for the treatment of Rat infestations. Concerns were raised that there would be a decrease in the number of service requests and incidents reported and as a result an increase in the rat population.

Members raised concerns that the implementation of a cost to the service could result in a reduction in service requests and people choosing to use various poisons in order to treat the issue. Officers explained an equalities impact assessment was undertaken for the proposal, which was included within the report. In addition, Members were asked to note that other Local Authorities have introduced a change for some time and there has not been a significant increase in the rat population in these areas.

The report detailed a proposal to delete vacant Community Safety Warden posts, realising a proposed saving of £40k. It was noted that the current Community Safety Warden establishment is 9.3fte with 1.8fte being vacant and currently being covered by temporary staff. The Community Safety Warden service provides a uniformed patrolling presence in communities dealing with low level crime and anti-social behaviour. Each Warden is authorised by the Chief Constable of Gwent Police with powers that include traffic management and the issue of Police penalty notices. The service works very closely with the local Neighbourhood Policing Teams tackling issues in communities ranging from youth annoyance and disorder, persons under the influence of substances, environmental crime issues, defects in infrastructure, dog fouling and littering etc. As Neighbourhood Policing Teams are being depleted the service is increasingly the first line of response. As a result, it would be necessary for the Community Safety Warden Service to prioritise proactive patrols and responses to service requests as a result of any reduction in staffing establishment. It is considered that this proposal would have a medium public impact.

Councillor D.T. Davies, as Chair of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee addressed the Committee and expressed concern at the proposal, noting the exceptional service provided by Community Safety Wardens, and asked the Committee to consider the proposal from Gwent Police to decriminalise parking, in which Community Safety Wardens would play an integral part in parking enforcement. As a result, it was suggested that the proposal to reduce the number of Community Safety Wardens be postponed until a further report can be provided on the decriminalisation of parking.

The Chair thanked Councillor Davies for his representations and discussion ensued.

Members expressed similar concerns to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee and noted the work undertaken within their wards such as assistance with reducing Anti-Social Behaviour.

The Committee discussed the proposal to reduce Air Quality and Contaminated Land Monitoring and Contractors, which proposed a saving of £15k. It was noted that the Environmental Health service discharges statutory responsibilities in respect of Local Air Quality Management and investigation of contaminated land and also manages the Authority's closed landfill sites. The activity is supported by the use of specialist monitoring equipment, laboratory services, and environmental consultants. This includes 6 real time air quality monitoring stations, 3 of which are located within the Hafod-yr-ynys and Caerphilly Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). There are also 58 passive diffusion tubes which are located in

various streets and towns. This monitoring network is used to review and assess air quality across the county borough. External expert advice, modelling, and assessment is also engaged to assist in bringing forward the Air Quality Action Plans required for the 2 AQMAs and in meeting the Council's obligations for Local Air Quality Management.

The budget currently allocated for air quality is £46,857 and for contaminated land assessment is £18,562, totalling £65,419. Therefore a reduction of £15k would leave a remaining combined budget of £50,419 and environmental monitoring activity would need to be prioritised accordingly. This proposal is assessed as having medium public impact.

Members thanked the Officer for the overview and sought further information on the impact to service and increased risk. Officers assured Members that there is no increased risk to the Air Quality Management process, however, there will be a requirement to prioritise works and address situations where required.

Members thanked the Officers for the detailed report and noted that a Members' Seminar has been arranged, which will combine the outcome of the discussions from all Special Scrutiny Committee meetings on the 2018/19 draft savings proposals.

Having fully considered the report, Members noted the details of the 2018/19 draft savings proposals for Social Services and Public Protection.

The meeting closed at 7.04 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 6th February 2018, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR