

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Councillor Jenkins(Chairperson)
Councillors Carter, Philippa Hill-John, Lent and McGarry

67 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gibson and Lister.

68 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

69 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 December 2019 and 8 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

70 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2022 & DRAFT BUDGETARY PROPOSALS 2020/21 - TO FOLLOW

The Chairperson advised Members that this item provided them with an opportunity to consider those items contained in the draft Corporate Plan and draft Budgetary Proposals which fall within the responsibility of the Committee. These proposals would be considered by Cabinet on Thursday 20th February, prior to being considered by Council on 27th February.

As per the Agenda, Members would firstly receive a briefing on the Corporate Overview of the draft budget proposals.

The budget proposals and relevant parts of the Corporate Plan would then be considered in three parts, namely; Adult Social Services Directorate; The Housing & Communities Directorate relevant to Councillor Elsmore's Portfolio, and the Housing & Communities Directorate relevant to Councillor Thorne's Portfolio.

Corporate Overview

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance; Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources; and Ian Allwood, Head of Finance to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Weaver to make a statement in which he said that the budget was later than usual and the final settlement was yet to come. These had been challenging times but he welcomed the meeting with scrutiny chairs on the corporate plan.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members noted that the lateness receiving the papers was not ideal. The Cabinet Member agreed but explained there was still time before budget Council, explaining that timescales were months behind the usual due to the General Election, Purdah, late Settlement etc. and stated it would be better next year and back on track but he appreciated it was difficult for scrutiny.

Members noted that the Council Tax increase figure had been set before the settlement was known and asked for clarification on this. The Cabinet Member stated that they set the Council Tax increase in the summer in the financial strategy; the assumption was that when the provisional settlement arrived, all issues would be considered in the round and they have been able to hold the increase at 4.5%; it was a balance of cuts and keeping services.

Members noted the £1.7million saving needed from Adult Services, yet £1.5 million had been put into the budget for Adult Services and asked why this could not be offset. Officers explained that they show how much is needed to maintain services, then look to see if efficiencies can be made and that determines the level of savings. Officers look at how to make savings differently with more robust plans worked through with the service area. Officers noted that the savings target was significantly less than previous years.

In relation to borrowing, Members asked about the predicted interest payments and whether Officers were confident that they were achievable. Officers explained that the predicted interest payments were included in the financial implications section of the report at £870million, there was also commentary on the robustness.

Members considered the juxtaposition between the mention of austerity and the ambitious Corporate Expenditure Plan and asked if Officers considered austerity would be significantly reduced next year. Officers said there was a lot of uncertainty; the Minister had said austerity was not over, the budget in March would be a better indicator. A better settlement would provide the opportunity to realign essential services and invest in key priority areas.

Members asked if we look at other Local Authorities when it comes to income generation and were advised that they do; service areas take ownership and try and benchmark for changes and look to best practice; all ideas are welcomed. Members added that cross Authority working parties may be useful and Officers agreed stating that sharing info with other Local Authorities as well as LGA and WLGA would be beneficial.

Social Services, Adult Services Directorate

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Wellbeing and Claire Marchant Director of Social Services.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Elsmore to make a statement in which she noted the commitment to the most vulnerable people and protecting their services. Reference was made to remodelling, re-commissioning, strength based practice and locality working as part of the strategy for Adult Services. The Cabinet Member emphasised the importance of working closely with Health colleagues in relation to Mental health and of the importance of All Wales Safeguarding procedures.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members sought clarity on the figures in Appendix 2 and were advised that it is the sum of a number of different savings lines, as outlined in the presentation; it was a composite figure and Appendix 5 sets out all of the proposals.

Members noted the maximum charge for non-residential care had increased to £100 and asked if this has to be done. Officers explained that a few years ago there was no maximum charge so Welsh Government introduced a policy to cap the charge; it started at £50 and has increased to £100. Officers added that it would be unusual not to charge the maximum rate and it is means tested.

Members felt uneasy about the savings around case reviews. The Cabinet Member understood this but stated they were spending huge amounts and needed to ensure they were getting value for money; it was however essential to do the reviews as they often pick up other issues, this can mean additional support is needed and not necessarily meaning cuts. There is a drive towards prevention and enablement and keeping people independent at home for as long as possible.

Members sought more information on single/double handed care. Officers explained that care packages are often out together in times of crisis, they need to be reviewed and decision made of what best suits their needs such as the use of equipment or grant adaptations; it may mean less care workers needing to go in but support is still provided; it is about the totality of the offer.

Members referred to Closer to Home and the target of returning 5 people in year; Members asked how these will be selected. Officers explained that the figure is across Learning Disabilities and Mental Health, the process is person centred and it is planned for over a long period of time to ease the transition; implementation can also involve colleagues from other areas such as Housing.

Members sought more information of the complex hospital discharges. The Cabinet Member stated this was a major piece of work, there were daily/weekly accountability phone calls across the partnership. The Cabinet Member referenced the Pink Army – Get me Home and Get me Home Plus, with growing numbers of Officers supporting 8 patients per week currently. She added it was important that money flows across the system and there can be challenging partnership conversations. Officers added that previously there was view that when in hospital it was a health cost and when in care it was a Local Authority cost. Partnership working saves money across the board and also helps to ensure that people are discharged at the right time for them and they go to the right destination for them.

Members were concerned that savings would not be met, as had happened in previous years and made reference to big numbers in the Amber/Green section in Appendix 5. The Cabinet Member stated that things have been difficult for at least 10 years; staff have to do the right thing. There is a drive to support the vulnerable and sometimes savings have not been made. Officers added that the service is demand driven; Officer's work with the S151 Officer to determine what the base budget should

be and look at where any efficiencies can be made, but only if all the Corporate Plan steps come together.

Housing & Communities – Councillor Elsmore

The Chairperson advised Members that they would now move on to the proposals for Housing & Communities which would be considered in two parts, the first being areas which fall into Cllr Elsmore's portfolio the second part being areas for Cllr Thorne.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Elsmore Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Wellbeing, Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Jane Thomas Assistant Director Housing & Communities.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Elsmore to make a statement in which she said that she was pleased to present this to Committee; the importance of joint working across portfolios delivering good work was emphasised. Cardiff was an inclusive city supporting EU Citizens through the resettlement scheme and the Independent Living Services have been hugely successful.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members referenced the Dementia Friendly City Status and asked how much it costs. The Cabinet Member explained that there is a senior officer and colleague who are driving this work; lots of work in is kind through partnership support. Officers added that it doesn't get captured as a specific budget line as officers have other responsibilities too; Dementia Friendly work needs to be across the piece and in Hubs across the City; it needs to become second nature in services and culture. Members understood that it can be difficult to cost but noted that other Local Authorities take a different approach; Members asked if Dementia Friendly City Status is the most cost effective way to address Dementia. The Cabinet Member made reference to the integrated Dementia Centre in Ely in partnership with Health Colleagues and stated that Dementia Friendly City was more about the approach taken, a cultural approach that is being driven and the intention is to grow this; there are very significant business such as Cardiff City Football club involved and staff in libraries and Hubs will be trained.

Members made reference to the referrals target of 70-80% and considered this would be challenging to scrutinise and recommended that a set target be set. The Cabinet Member reiterated that the service is demand led and this is the only target measure that is a broad band.

In relation to the target of 90% of Domestic Violence Victims being contacted within 24 hours; Members were concerned that people would be scared of being contacted, they wouldn't know who was calling them etc. The Cabinet Member said they want to drive clear and high performance targets; if someone has reported and incident, the first 24/48 hours is when they need support the most so it was important to act fast. Clarity of communication would be key and Officers explained that staff are qualified and experienced in this area, they have information from the Police and they would not contact victims if it put them in more danger.

Housing & Communities – Councillor Thorne

The Chairperson advised that they would now move onto the areas of Housing & Communities which fall to Cllr Thorne.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Jane Thomas Assistant Director Housing & Communities

The Chairperson invited Councillor Thorne to make a statement in which she said that the report shows the wide range of activities undertaken to ensure Cardiff is a great place to grow older; supporting vulnerable people and enabling safe and empowered communities. The plan was ambitious and partnership working was crucial. Reference was made to the positive impact MASH has had on rough sleeping; the positive impact that Hubs have had across the city and this will continue and grow with a focus on integrating local services. Council rents remain very good value for money and the ambitious build programme will mean that more people will benefit from warm and safe homes.

The Chairperson invited Officers to make their presentation after which he invited questions and comments from Members;

Members made reference to the Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes and asked when they would be up and running and how are the costs arrived at. The Cabinet Member explained that the budget was set in 2017 and spread over a number of years; Members had to bid for the whole period of 5 years then Officers prioritised and a timetable agreed. Those that have been done have had a huge impact on the communities.

In relation to alley gating, Members asked if this incurred costs as they can't prevent the issue of fly tipping. The Cabinet Member explained that alley gates are not just for fly-tipping, it a huge community safety issue in some communities. The same process applies, bids were submitted in 2017, officers prioritise in relation to crime, anti-social behaviour etc. The scheme has been set for the next 2 years and 200 applications have been received but there is no money to progress them; it has also been noted that gating can move the problem along and it was important to take a whole Ward approach.

Members referred to the target of 550 new council homes and the costs involved. The Cabinet Member stated it was not an extravagance when people are in emergency accommodation; the build programme had been slow to start but will speed up due to the initial processes such as Planning. Officers added that it was important to look at affordability and that housing does give a return.

Members referred to the Libraries and Hubs Strategies and asked if they would eventually roll into one. The Cabinet Member explained it is a combined Strategy, however there is a legal requirement to have a strategy for the books and book lending – the Library's Collection Policy.

Members asked if there is any engagement with the Prisons in relation to prison leavers. Officers explained that they have a probation officer based in the Housing

Options team, there was also the Housing First project which is specifically for prison leavers. Work is undertaken in prisons, working with the most complex first and attempting to house them. There was also the Prisoner Pathway, Welsh Government is looking at reviewing this as it doesn't help when they are released on a Friday and support services are limited on weekends.

In relation to Housing Build, Members noted that there was no full HRA budget and little information on the impact of Universal Credit. Officers explained that the detail was in the HRA Business Plan, assumptions had been made and included in the budget such as rent levels.

Members referred to the £125k going back to reserves and Officers explained this was to add resilience for the perceived challenges of 2020/21 and beyond.

Members asked if the Training Centre would be funded by a grant. Officers explained it was the Training Support Grant and reserves, they were also looking to Welsh Government for funding; if all come through there would be no need to draw from reserves.

Members asked if austerity was over in Housing and Communities. The Cabinet Member strongly disagreed with this and Officers stated that although the savings are small, they are focussed on integration and bringing services together whilst being as efficient as they can be meeting the needs in the most efficient way.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

71 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

72 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

4th March 2020 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall.

The meeting terminated at 1.50 pm