

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2020

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON
WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2020 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor CA Green – Chairperson

S Aspey	MC Clarke	SK Dendy	A Hussain
JE Lewis	AA Pucella	SG Smith	G Thomas
CA Webster	DBF White		

Apologies for Absence

J Gebbie and MJ Kearns

Officers:

Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Pick	Scrutiny Officer
Tracy Watson	Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Jackie Davies	Head of Adult Social Care
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Chris Morris	Accountant
Councillor Dhanisha Patel	Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations
Councillor Philip White	Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help

102. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

103. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 dated 10th October 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

104. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-21 TO 2023-24

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing presented the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-21 to 2023-24 which set out the spending priorities of the Council, key investment objectives and budget areas targeted for necessary savings. The strategy also included a financial forecast for 2020-2024 and a detailed draft revenue budget for 2020-21.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing outlined the provisional settlement from Welsh Government and reported that there had been a real increase of 4.57% or £8.878 million. Whilst this was a significant improvement compared to the “most likely” assumption, it did not recognise a number of new pressures that the Council would have to meet.

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The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing highlighted the Draft Revenue Budget 2020-21, the Usable Earmarked Reserves and the Budget Pressures for 2020-21. She also outlined the Budget Reduction Proposals as listed in appendix B to the report.

A member asked if an issue crossed more than one directorate, were staff primarily concerned with only what related to their directorate. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there were a number of overlaps eg. Early Help was managed in Education however it was inextricably linked to LAC. However, the authority had one approach, no matter where an issue sat. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help added that there was a similar crossover with other Cabinet Members and the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations was in attendance for this item. Another member stated that she supported cross directorate working however she was concerned that there could be some areas that did not get the attention they deserved.

A member asked if there were problems with the referral system and in particular, incorrectly allocated referrals that took a long time to be acknowledged. The Head of Adult Social Care explained that some referrals came through the common access point where they were prioritised based on need. On the whole there was a strong process in place for member referrals and most responses were made within the appropriate timescale. If they were going to take longer an acknowledgement was sent. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that all referrals in her area came through MASH. The police were involved in referrals of a serious nature and if necessary, meetings were set up including all partners and a decision made within 24 hours. The authority had a 100% success rate with that indicator.

A member asked if there was any trend when it came to sickness statistics and the financial implications. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that sickness was an issue however during the last quarter there had been an improvement. This was a service providing a high level of personal care and when a staff member was sick, they had to be replaced with a direct impact on the budget. The remodelling of services had also had an impact on sickness levels however it was hoped that given time, this would improve. Staff providing personal care had to be off work for a minimum of 48 hours if they had a bout of diarrhoea and vomiting and this also had an impact. They tried to recruit casual staff because this was cheaper than using agency staff and this had been extended to include recruitment of casual social workers.

A member referred to the cost of day care services and asked if this was sustainable, what other authorities were doing and what would be the impact of the minimum wage. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that Maple Tree House went live in December 2018 and the new model was still bedding in. There had been consistent demand and without this facility, the majority of children would have been placed out of the authority at an approximate cost of £4,000 per week. They needed to revisit the staffing structure and were in the process of recruiting a peripatetic pool of staff. A member asked if officers talked to both staff and children at Maple Tree House. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that they did get feedback and she visited at least quarterly and talked to both staff and children. The member asked what percentage of children were exceeding the length of time that they were expected to be in a placement. The Head of Children's Social Care did not have the exact figure but she added that only one child had exceeded the 28 days deadline and one child had been in the assessment unit for more than 6 months however in this case, it was the correct course of action and the regulators had been informed. She added that a group would be specifically looking at LAC in February with a view to finding more provision. They were struggling with two children in particular who accounted for 35% of the over spend.

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A member asked if there was a disjointed approach with regard to funding from Cwm Taf. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that it was running smoothly in some areas but not in others but still early days.

The Head of Adult Social Care explained that they were looking at the demographics and the complexity of people and recognised that there were different ways of providing a service. They had already saved significant amounts of money and were looking at localised services. They were also looking to maximise the potential of buildings such as the Bridgend Resource Centre. This was a specialist dementia unit offering a number of activities. A piece of work was underway reviewing day services and how to maximise resources in the community. A member suggested that the Bridgend Resource Centre did not need to be in the centre of town and that it could be relocated to another area easier to access and with better parking. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing replied that the Resource Centre provided a day service for people with specialist behaviour. People with moderate behaviour tended to stay local. There were between 60 and 70 people with very complex needs who attended the Resource Centre. This was a more effective way of managing people and there were better outcomes. The centre contained a hydrotherapy pool and sensory rooms and the professional view was that it would be difficult to provide these services in a different way. The centre was in use between 9am and 4pm every day and they were looking at maximising the use outside these hours. Discussions had taken place with YMCA and Cwm Taf.

The Finance Manager, Budget Management: Social Services and Wellbeing reported that £766,000 had been saved on day service provision since 12/13.

A member asked if funding had been identified to replace the EU grants that would no longer be available. The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations reported that she had been told that there would be funds from Westminster so she was not overly concerned. Cabinet and the Leader were in regular contact with officers and they were including MP's to ensure that the authority did not miss out.

A member asked what was happening with DFG's bearing in mind targets were still being missed. Officers reported that a review was underway, the section had been streamlined and they were expecting results to improve

A member raised concerns regarding the 48 hour absence from work following diarrhoea and vomiting and if this was recorded against a personal sickness record. An officer advised they were in discussions with HR regarding this issue.

With reference to LAC, the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing reported that each local authority had to submit a reduction strategy and action plan. They were working with Early Help and Housing to achieve a reduction and to look at alternative approaches and initiatives.

A member asked what the impact would be of the increase in minimum wage and the pay claim. The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help explained that they were reviewing the situation and in discussions with HR. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there had been a grant from WG to address the issues around minimum wage.

A member stated that with regard to services for disabled children, Discovery Days had been cut back, Helping Hands had recently closed and the YMCA were under pressure. She asked if this would have an impact on the budget in future years. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there had been a reduction in the provision of play schemes however the Disabled Children's Team had attracted new funds and the grants. They also had a strong relationship with the 3rd sector to look at

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alternatives and other options. The member replied that there was not necessarily the right provision and this had an impact on families and the issue of respite. Officers reported that they were looking at this area.

RECOMMENDATION:

Following the Committee's consideration of the draft budget proposals for the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate, Members determined to make the following comments and recommendations:

In relation to SSW26, in particular the Bridgend Resource Centre, the committee would welcome further investigation into the quality of provision and the efficacy of the current approach, which should be one council.

105. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report on the Forward Work Programme.

Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 were due to receive the Home to School Transport report on 5th February, Transformation Grant on 5th March 2020 and Remodelling Children's Residential Services in April.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that there could be a problem with the availability of the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing for the 5th March meeting and she would advise at the next meeting, if they needed to change the date.

The Committee asked that a representative with planning and LDP experience be invited to the meeting when Home to School Transport was discussed.

106. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 11:30