

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 NOVEMBER 2020

Minutes of the remote meeting of the Social and Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Wednesday, 11 November 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Carol Ellis, Gladys Healey, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Michelle Perfect and David Wisinger

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Cabinet Member for Social Services), Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Social Services), Senior Manager (Integrated Services, Lead Adults); Senior Manager (Children and Workforce); Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning); Strategic Finance Manager (Financial Strategy and Insurance) and Principal Accountant

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, Community and Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

10. BUDGET 2021/22 – STAGE 1

The Chief Executive and Strategic Finance Manager (Financial Strategy and Insurance) introduced the first budget stage report which detailed the forecast and the cost pressures which would make-up the total budget requirement.

A report to Cabinet in October had provided an update on the financial forecast for 2021/22 and the following two financial years. A full review of the forecast had been undertaken to build an accurate and robust baseline of cost pressure which needed to be funded. The review had taken into account the ongoing impacts of the emergency situation including the speed of recovery of income against set targets.

This report set out the limited solutions available to fund the cost pressures with the funding strategy highly dependent on sufficient national funding for local government. The details of the cost pressures for Social & Health Care were included in the report.

The Chief Executive and Strategic Finance Manager (Financial Strategy and Insurance) gave a detailed presentation which covered the following areas:-

- Financial Forecast for 2021/22;
- The Future – What we advised back in February;
- Summary Totals of Cost Pressures;
- Three Part Solutions and Risk-Taking;

- National Position and Funding;
- Potential Funding Scenarios;
- Budget Timetable;
- Support and Challenge Today

Additional details around specific Social Services cost pressures were provided by the Principal Accountant as part of the presentation.

The Chair commented on the cost pressures showing for the expansion of Marleyfield Residential Care Home and asked whether this pressure related to additional staff costs. The Chair also asked if the role of the Missing from Home Coordinator also involved working with children who were missing from school. The Senior Manager (Integrated Services, Lead Adults) explained that the cost pressure for the expansion of Marleyfield Residential Care Home included staffing costs to support the additional beds but would also include the funding for additional cleaning, food and utility costs required. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) explained that the Missing from Home Coordinator was a prescribed role with clear criteria outlining what constituted a missing child. Their role would include visiting a child who had returned to their home/placement to better understand why the child had been missing and share information with the Police to better understand patterns where children were at risk of being exploited. There would be a link with education, if a child was missing in the evenings and also not attending school. The Chief Executive added his support to the creation of this post which had been highlighted as a regional issue by North Wales Police to ensure greater resilience.

Councillor Dave Mackie thanked officers for their work in preparing the budget report and his comments were echoed by a number of Members of the Committee. He commented on the summary of cost pressure and asked what percentage of the overall budget this equated to and why out of county placements had not been included as a cost pressure at this stage. He also suggested that further information around the consideration to treat some risks as 'Open Risks' in order to manage the budget in-year be provided to the Committee and commented on the Adoption Service, asking whether the cost could be reduced if this Service was provided in-house.

The Chief Executive highlighted the negotiation of commissioning costs as an example of a 'Open Risk' which had become high level due to the emergency situation, in relation to higher overheads, additional hygiene and changes to staff rotas. If Welsh Government (WG) did not continue to provide additional funding to meet this need, the cost would have to be met by the Council. The Chief Officer (Social Services) explained that the cost pressures outlined in the presentation and report were the equivalent of 5%-7% of the overall portfolio budget. Increasing costs for Out of County Placements continued to be monitored with the Council being pro-active in addressing this cost pressure which remained variable. The approach taken by the Council over a number of years had been comprehensive and reasonable to support this risk with the additional provision of in-house children's services as an example of managing this risk in the medium term.

The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) advised that North Wales were the first region to establish a regional Adoption Service and it had been recognised that as a region some of the pace of the service had been lost. A review of the service was commissioned which had resulted in a revised structure and services being expanded. He also reported that Internal Audit had been commissioned to carry out an audit of the Adoption Service to test whether the re-designed service was working and delivering good outcomes. It was agreed that the outcome of the audit review be presented to the Committee following its completion.

Councillor David Wisinger commented on the increasing pressure at Wrexham Maelor Hospital and asked whether additional resources would be provided to the Council if additional support was requested to assist them. He also asked whether the possible cost pressure for the Sleep in Pay Ruling included payment being backdated. The Senior Manager (Integrated Services, Lead Adults) explained that where patients already in receipt of services were currently in Wrexham Maelor Hospital due to ill health the funding to continue their service once they had left hospital was accounted for in the core budget arrangements. A bid had been recently been submitted to WG jointly with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) for winter pressure funding to assist with additional step down facilities, domiciliary care support, social work and occupational therapy support. The Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) explained that the cost pressure for the Sleep in Pay Ruling applied to Flintshire County Council staff and staff within the independent sector who were commissioned to deliver sleep in services. A decision had previously been taken to hold back any increase for commissioned services until the Court ruling and the cost pressure includes backdated costs.

In response to a further question around the Sleep in Pay Ruling, the Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) explained that the ruling, if approved, would see all sleep-in staff paid the national minimum wage for hour working even if asleep.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report and presentation slides were proposed to the Committee. Councillor Dave Mackie suggested an additional recommendation thanking officers for the work undertaken in preparing the budget information. The recommendations were moved by Councillor David Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the overall budget strategy;
- (b) That the Committee re-affirm the Council's position on local taxation policy;
- (c) That the Committee support the Council's expectations of Governments, as outlined within the presentation provided;
- (d) That the Social & Health Care cost pressures, as outlined within the report, be noted;

- (e) That no further cost efficiency areas be proposed by the Committee to be explored further; and
- (f) That the Committee expresses its thanks to all Officers involved in the preparation of the budget so far.

EMERGENCY SITUATION

The Chief Executive provided a short update on the emergency situation. He advised that the incident rate had reduced slightly from the previous day with daily cases generally lower than a few weeks ago. The advice received was that it would take around 3 weeks from the start of the firebreak to see a full impact trend and it was hoped that the overall picture for Wales would be much improved. The First Minister had indicated that a review of the position would be taken two weeks after the end of the firebreak in order to see if the figures remained stable and avoid another intervention until the New Year at the earliest.

The Council were on track to double Test, Trace and Protect capacity, and all affected services had resumed on 9 November as planned. All attention was currently on the resilience of health and social care across the winter months and a vaccination plan for North Wales was in place in readiness for one of more vaccines as they became available. A further Member briefing paper would be circulated later in the week.

Councillor Gladys Healey raised concerns around the possibility of intensive care nurses having to look after more than one patient across the border in England and sought assurance that this would not be implemented in hospitals in Wales. The Chief Executive said that whilst scrutinising the BCUHB Quarter 3 Plan, he would enquire on safety and staff ratios.

SOCIAL CARE ACCOLADE AWARDS

The Chief Officer (Social Services) reported that the Social Care Accolade Awards had been held on 10 November, 2020 where Flintshire Services had won both first and second place awards. NEWCIS had successfully won the first place award for Community Support, with HfT coming in a very close second place. Representatives from both services would be invited to attend the County Council meeting on 8 December to allow for formal congratulations. The Chair asked that the Chief Officer pass on the thanks and congratulations of the Committee to all staff involved.

In commemoration of Armistice Day the Committee observed a two minute silence at 11.00 am.

11. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public present.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.03 am)

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Chair