

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held remotely on Thursday 30 September 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Marion Bateman, Jean Davies, Carol Ellis, Cindy Hinds, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Michelle Perfect and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Sean Bibby (for Gladys Healey) and Councillor Geoff Collett (for Paul Cunningham)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Patrick Heesom

APOLOGIES: Chief Officer (Social Services)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader for Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Social Services); Councillor Glyn Banks – Cabinet Member for Streetscene; Councillor Paul Johnson - Cabinet Member for Finance, Social Value and Procurement; Councillor Billy Mullin – Deputy Leader of the Council (Governance) & Cabinet Member for Corporate Management & Assets; Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Housing & Assets); Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults, Senior Manager – Children and Workforce; Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning; Corporate Finance Manager; Strategic Finance Manager; and Principal Accountant (Social Services)

IN ATTENDANCE: Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator; and Democratic Services Officer.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

None were received.

34. MINUTES

The minutes of the Joint meeting held with the Education Youth and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2021 were submitted. The minutes were approved and moved by Councillor David Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

35. BUDGET 2022/23 – STAGE 2

The Chief Executive provided background information and context.

The Chief Executive and Corporate Finance Manager introduced the second budget stage report which detailed the forecast and the cost pressures which would make-up the total budget requirement.

A report to Cabinet and the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July provided an updated position on the budget for 2022/23. The cost pressures identified were referred to the respective Overview & Scrutiny Committees with a request that they all undergo a rigorous review. The details of the cost pressures for Social Services were included in the report.

The Chief Executive, Corporate Finance Manager, Senior Manager (Children and Workforce), Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning, and Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults, provided a joint presentation which covered the following areas:

- purpose and background
- summary totals of cost pressures
 - Social Services pressures
 - School Budget pressures
- summary of all cost pressures
- out of county budget pressure
- strategic solutions
- update on efficiencies
- budget timelines

Councillor Dave Mackie referred to Social Services Pressures (1) in relation to the Children's Residential Care home and suggested that as the Committee had agreed to this amount last year he suggested the Committee must agree to the pressure this year.

Councillor Hilary McGuill referred to the changes announced regarding National Insurance and that the costs would affect the Council as an employer and also the private sector and would have implications on the funding of the private sector going forward. The Chief Executive agreed and outlined the Councils' position. He said this has been escalated to Ministers and would expect that key public sector bodies who commission and provide social care would get an extra enhancement to cover their own National Insurance costs. He added that the Council have put forward a case to Ministers with a view that the providers of Health & Social Care should be exempt from the National Insurance employers rate.

Councillor Carol Ellis referred to the pressure of £1.952m under Social Care Commissioning and felt that this did not reflect the current shortages and pressures regarding recruitment of staff – with pressures potentially much higher than £1.952m. She asked how much funding had been set aside in the MTFs to meet the 'Real Living Wage' and additional care provider costs and how much support the Council receive from Welsh Government (WG). In response the Chief Executive advised that a letter from all six Council leaders in North Wales, supported by Police, Ambulance, Health and other partners, was being submitted

to WG with a costed requirement around all of the issues raised to ease the pressure.

In response to a question from Councillor Dave Mackie regarding future business pressures in relation to the Children's Services Group Homes, the Senior Manager – Children and Workforce advised that a business case had been developed which had identified a need to develop two new group homes for the next 3 years. He added that if the Council moved forward with that ambition the budget pressure would be for this financial year and then replicated twice. He added that two new group homes would be developed and that whilst notionally asking for a commitment for three years, he recognised that as part of that programme each year there would be a gateway review.

Councillor Carol Ellis expressed concerns around the pressure on the Homecare service and asked what support was available from the Health Board. The Senior Manager Integrated Services, Lead Adults advised that the Health Board was part of the community response and the Council worked jointly with Community Response Teams (CRT's) which included nurses, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists. She added that some funding had been made available for additional capacity to support people with mental health for both diagnosis and treatment.

In response to a question on funding from the Health Board the Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults outlined the contribution available through the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) and the Health Board. Councillor Carol Ellis expressed concern that the ICF care fund ceased at the end of the financial year and asked if it would be replaced.

The Chair requested that an update on the Integrated Care Fund and future arrangements be brought to a future meeting. This was supported by Councillor Dave Mackie.

In response to the concerns expressed by Councillor Carol Ellis on the Transformation Fund which ceased at the end of the financial year the Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning agreed to provide the information requested following the meeting.

Councillor Marion Bateman: asked if there was funding available to help the refugees that were arriving in Flintshire The Chief Officer – Housing and Assets advised that the Afghan refugees were funded from central government and that Flintshire received funding to support them in terms of accommodation etc.

Councillor Dave Mackie asked if the £1m joint pressure for out of county placements took into account the pressure in the current year. The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce explained that the £0.897m for out of county budget pressures for this year was expected to rise to £1m for next year.

Councillor Hilary McGuill: asked if National Insurance costs had been factored in to the budget. The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce, explained that National Insurance costs hadn't. He said a meeting was to be held on 21 October and all the providers for the children's residential care had been invited to meet with himself to understand what was likely to happen.

Councillor Carol Ellis referred to the shortfall of £16.75m and asked if this would increase by £1m. The Corporate Finance Manager advised that the £1m was already included in the figure. He explained that out of county placements was a volatile and high risk area. Councillor Ellis added that she felt Welsh Government needed to provide support for local authorities in funding out of county placements.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Senior Manager – Children and Workforce, advised that if someone moved to Flintshire and the child lived in Flintshire then they had ordinary residence and the child would become the responsibility of Flintshire County Council.

Councillor Carol Ellis drew attention to the information in section 1.07 of the report regarding the Integrated Care Fund and that future funding had been approved by the WG from April 2022 to March 2027, however, the details such as the funding allocations and eligibility criteria had yet to be shared. She asked how much was the current ICF funding, when would the Council find out what it would be replaced with, how much would it be, and what the implications for the budget were.

The Senior Manager Integrated Services, Lead Adults advised that the ICF fund was a 5 year allocation but it was not yet known how much the allocation would be. She added that it was hoped that it would be known by October and that officers were currently in liaison with the Welsh Government regarding this. Officers advised that the projects currently funded by ICF which were relevant to Flintshire amounted to around £3.5m. The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults suggested that when the allocated funding and criteria was known a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. The Corporate Finance Manager reported that the UK Spending Review had been confirmed for end of October which would feed into the WG budget. The WG overall budget would be made known on 20 December and Provisional Settlement on 21 December.

It was agreed that whilst the Committee supported the cost pressures presented, Members had significant concerns around the scale of the changing and not fully quantifiable impacts going forward for services currently supported by the Integrated Care Fund and increases in National Insurance contributions which would be fed back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The following recommendations were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Mike Lowe.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the Social Services portfolio cost pressures;
- (b) That there are no further cost efficiency areas identified by the Committee to be explored further; and
- (c) That the Committee's significant concerns around the scale of the changing and not fully quantifiable impacts going forward for services currently supported by the Integrated Care Fund and increases in National Insurance contributions be fed back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

36. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.32 pm)

.....
Chair