

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 12th September, 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Howarth (Chairman)
County Councillor (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: L.Brown, L.Dymock, M.Groucutt, J.Pratt,
R. Harris and R. Edwards

Also in attendance County Councillors V. Smith and A. Easson:

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Julie Boothroyd	Head of Adult Services
Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Claire Marchant	Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Housing
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Paula Harris	Democratic Services Officer (Acting Scrutiny Manager)
Ian Bakewell	Housing & Regeneration Manager
Karen Durrant	Private Sector Housing Manager
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor P.Pavia

1. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interests were made.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present. Duncan Marshall, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales [CSSIW] was present as an observer.

3. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th July 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th July were confirmed and signed as a true record.

4. White Paper Consultation: Services Fit for the Future - Quality and Governance in health and care in Wales

It was explained that there had been a misunderstanding regarding today's date as the expected presentation from Welsh Government on the White Paper Consultation 'Services Fit for the Future'.

The Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health offered to present the slides, but, following discussion, it was agreed with the Chair of the Children and Young People's (CYP) Select Committee that the Welsh Government officers would attend the CYP Select Committee meeting scheduled for Thursday 14th September 2017. The arrangements for that meeting were changed to a pre-meeting at 9.00am and meeting start time to 9.30am. This new item will start at 10.00am.

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Committee's Conclusions

- With the agreement of the Chair of the Children and Young People's Select Committee, the presentation would be received at the next meeting of the Children and Young People's Select Committee on Thursday 14th September 2017.
- It was agreed that, following consideration, a draft response to the consultation would be prepared to present to Council for endorsement and submission to the Welsh Government.

5. Budget Monitoring - Period 2

Context:

To receive information on the revenue and capital outturn positions of the Authority based on activity data at month 2.

Recommendations Proposed To Cabinet

- i. That Members consider a net revenue outturn overspend of £164,000.
- ii. Members consider a capital outturn spend, forecast by service managers to agree with budget.
- iii. Members note that the low level of earmarked reserves, which will severely reduce the flexibility the Council has in meeting the financial challenges of reducing settlements and consequent need to redesign services.
- iv. Members note the significant forecast reduction in the overall school balance at the end of 2017/18 and supports the continuing work with schools to ensure that the Council's Fairer Funding scheme requirements are met and that the overall schools balance reverts to positive position at the earliest opportunity.

Member Scrutiny

The Chair asked why the monitoring months had been altered. Information was provided that this year a change of approach is being piloted. Instead of quarterly reporting, monitoring will be at Month 2, Month 7 and at outturn. This allows SMT and DMTs more opportunity to reflect on and actively influence figures. Monitoring will be more meaningful and reassurance was given that managers and officers will receive interim monitoring information. A proposed enhancement to the ledger facility will allow officers and Members to access financial information in real time.

It was explained that Month 7 was preferred because it is the month following the start of the academic year and is therefore more convenient for Headteachers. It was queried if Month 3 would be better than Month 2 and responded that both would provide similar information but the preference was to use the earlier date to obtain an initial position and forecasting purposes.

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In terms of both Adult and Children and Young People Services, it was questioned if there is enough money in the budget to continue to provide services if pay rises above 1% are realised. It was explained that the potential pay rise is a smaller element of the budget and is not as relevant as the budget for adult social care. Of more concern is the increase in capital threshold limits for adult care which creates a draw on local authority funding at an earlier point, also reference was made to the impact of national minimum wage. It was explained that there are grants available from Welsh Government which won't necessarily cover the total liability. Full advantage is taken of the grants available and that position is reflected in the forecasts. The challenge to provide services, within limited resources, increases every year and it was commented that there is a national issue regarding adult social care budgets not being sustainable in view of improved life expectancy.

The Head of Adult Services added that the adult social care budget is closely monitored to look at all costs and their impact. For example, in terms of capital threshold, it was detected that there was an increase in take up in the south of the county. Detailed analysis illustrated that the increase was not from practice placements but more people self-funding. Their capital had then dropped below threshold and the authority assumes responsibility. There is a further impact from new care homes being built and people migrating to the area who may be self-funding and then fall below the capital threshold leading to unpredictable costs. It was added that the authority has a good record of cost avoidance and has been successful in holding demand back through the current operational model.

The Chief Officer directed Select Committee Members to the following report:
<http://www.health.org.uk/publication/path-sustainability>

The Chair raised the £1m overspend last year and questioned if there is a reserve. It was confirmed that it has been possible to access corporate reserves for staffing restructure, redundancies etc but there are no reserves within the department budget as in some councils. It was confirmed that the authority operates a holistic reserves policy with some exceptions in which the net bottom line is analysed before looking at replenishing or utilising reserves. It was recalled that whilst there was an overspend in social care, this was mitigated by other underspends which were used to replenish reserves. It was commented that there is little headroom to facilitate service change. Reserves are currently held at 5.08% which falls within acceptable guidelines. Welsh Government advise that councils should not retain large balances during this period of austerity.

The Chair sought clarification if the redevelopment of Mardy Park and the refurbishment of the caretaker's bungalow at Abergavenny Leisure Centre were examples of capital expenditure. The Committee were informed that there are small elements of capital spend in relation to adult services which is likely to be from different projects and budgets.

The Chair queried if long term plans might see the development of the health centres in Hubs and it was responded that council considers the capital programme for the coming year and revenue budget in January/February which determines priorities and unmet demand. Last year, for example, a potential replacement for Severn View in a few years was considered which may present opportunities for co-location of services.

It was clarified that Budden Crescent is rented from Charter Housing.

Considering the development of Hubs as a strategic direction, the authority already has Mardy Park, Monnow Vale and Chepstow Hospitals which offer integrated provision. Monnow Vale houses a range of services and intervention in an integrated health and social care facility. Mardy Park is moving to a fully integrated hub with e.g. memory services, clinics from Nevill Hall

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Hospital and significant community engagement element. Consideration of the development of Chepstow Hospital as a hub is in progress and a sub hub is being developed in Usk with similar plans for the Caldicot area to provide health and social care.

A Member commented that this approach will attract top doctors to the area. The Member noted that it can be difficult to access services.

Considering capital resourcing, the Select Committee were informed that an Integrated Care Fund is available through the Greater Gwent Partnership to further the strategic intent to develop hubs. Additionally, Welsh Government has funds for primary care development. There will be further opportunities to access pots of capital outside of the Council's capital programme.

In response to a question, it was explained that the Abergavenny hub is not in the 2017/18 capital programme this year as there is no quantified cost. Members will have control when this item is added.

Committee Conclusions

The Committee scrutinised the report and Members were interested in the updates provided on current and strategy and the potential for co-location of services.

The recommendations were endorsed to proceed to Cabinet.

The Committee recognised the challenges and unpredictability of the cost of adult social care and Members were directed to <http://www.health.org.uk/publication/path-sustainability>

6. To consider whether to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, on the grounds that it involves the information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act (Proper Officer's view attached).

It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, on the grounds that it involves the information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act [Proper Officer's view attached].

7. Future of Private Leasing Scheme: Due Diligence & Options Report

Purpose

The Council's contract with Melin Homes to manage the Private Leasing Scheme (PLS) is due to end in June 2018. The purpose of the report is to make the Committee aware of the findings of a due diligence exercise and to consider the options for the future management of the scheme. The report also provides an update on Welsh Government temporary accommodation funding and its relevance to the PLS.

Key Issues

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- Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the Council has a duty to both respond to homelessness and to prevent homelessness. The Act also provides the power to discharge the associated duties into the private rented sector. In recent years it has been a priority to strengthen prevention activity, including engaging with private landlords to enable access to the private accommodation as an alternative to over relying on social housing and the need to utilise bed & breakfast.
- The Council has operated a PLS for over ten years. It was initially established due to the lack of social housing. The scheme supports the Council to discharge its statutory duties and helps to minimise bed & breakfast use. The PLS was transferred to Melin Homes in 2009 having tendered for the contract. This ends in June 2018. A decision now needs to be made about the future of the PLS and the Council is actively preparing for the end of the contract and undertaking a process of due diligence. See Appendix 1. Melin no longer wish to manage the scheme, in part, due to Welfare Reform changes.
- Of relevance is the Department of Work & Pensions decision from April 2017 to remove the ability to claim a £60 pw per property temporary accommodation management fee subsidy, through housing benefit. Welsh Government have replaced with additional Rate Support Grant.
- Although the Council continually seeks to access private rented opportunities, the ability to deliver the required number of properties is limited for a number of reasons including:
 - Homeless applicants typically are low income households and in receipt of benefit.
 - Lettings agencies and landlords are often reluctant to accept households on benefit.
 - Many households cannot afford to meet local rents and upfront private sector costs. The Council only has a limited ability to support in this respect.
 - Vulnerable households are often perceived, often incorrectly, as a risk to landlords
 - Some households with complex needs are difficult to accommodate in any sector
- The following options, which are fully evaluated in Appendix 1, are available:
 - Option 1 – Transfer back to the Council and continue to operate whilst seeking to retain but re-negotiate with landlords. The PLS would operate alongside the Shared Housing Scheme. Option 1 is considered the most appropriate option in order to most effectively meet statutory duties. It also supports the development of Monmouthshire Lettings.
 - Option 2 – Transfer back to the Council and phase out the scheme. This would impact negatively on preventing homelessness due to the lack of social housing and other housing options. It would also be detrimental to applicants and other costs would be incurred, such as bed & breakfast and Prevention related expenditure.
 - Option 3 - Identify a new provider, although it is believed there will be little interest due to the unique nature of the service. Equally, it is considered that the Housing Options Team is best placed to manage the PLS directly due to the need for maximum flexibility, particularly in relation to supporting vulnerable households.

Recommendations:

- To consider how the PLS supports households accessing it, the Council's duties in relation to homelessness, other responsibilities (eg Public Protection) and to consider the budget implications for the Council.

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- The Council explores the available options for meeting its responsibilities for the on-going provision of temporary accommodation, as per the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and for the Committee to receive a further report as soon as possible.
- Continue to work with Melin Homes and prepare for the ending of the private leased contract in June 2018, including seeking to reduce or eliminate costs wherever possible.
- To continue implementing the process of due diligence include giving particular regard to rent arrears and property condition.

Member Scrutiny:

Members scrutinised the report presented by the Housing and Regeneration Manager and the Private Sector Housing Manager. County Councillor R. Greenland spoke as Cabinet Member.

Committee's Conclusions

The report was scrutinised, and note was taken of the Cabinet Member's input.

The recommendations outlined in the report were agreed.

8. Actions Arising from the last meeting.

- **Actions:** Regarding action points from previous meetings, it was discussed that responses are often sent to Committee Members individually, or as a group, and therefore not formally reported back to the Select Committee. To address this issue, it was agreed that such information should be included in the Action List from this point on. It was further agreed that Officers should be advised that any information they provide, in response to an action point, will be in the public domain.
- **Performance Report 2016/17:** It was agreed that the table below provided after the last meeting with the number of people entering residential care during the year and percentages of the whole by age group should be published in the minutes:

Age Groups	# of people entering res care in the year	% of people in each age group
18-64	16	15%
65-74	6	6%
75-84	25	24%
85+	57	55%
Grand Total	104	100%

- **Affordable Housing:** Concern was expressed about an example where 2 of 20 affordable homes on a development were purchased shortly after allocation. It was queried if this would reduce the number of affordable houses delivered. The eligibility criteria for such circumstances was questioned as affordable homes should be for everyone not to be sold. It was questioned if the number of houses sold were included in the figures for affordable homes.

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A further question centred on the availability of s106 recreation and s106 education funding allocations. It was commented that affordable housing is almost always allocated to Registered Social Landlords. It was confirmed that applications for s106 consider the type of affordable housing. It was explained that if anything deviates from the affordability criteria should be monitored.

A Member wished to ensure that affordable houses are genuinely for local people and that they have priority in the first allocation. It was explained that the rural allocations policy applies which uses very strict eligibility criteria to ensure that dwellings are allocated to local people.

It was suggested that the Chair of Strong Communities Select Committee noted the discussion.

9. Adults Select Committee Forward Work Programme

The Forward Work Programme was received and noted.

10. Council and Cabinet Forward Plan

The Council and Cabinet Forward Plan was noted. Members were reminded that the Plan is updated every week and circulated every Friday.

11. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting as 24th October 2017 at 10.00am

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm