

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 30th July, 2019 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor F. Taylor (Chairman)
County Councillor L. Brown (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: R. Edwards, M.Groucutt, M. Powell and
S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Eve Parkinson	Head of Adult Services
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
John Woods	Community Care Accountant
Louise Corbett	Strategy & Policy Officer - Affordable Housing

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors L.Dymock, R. Harris and P.Pavia

1. Declarations of interest

County Councillor F. Taylor declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 9 Adults Select Committee Forward Work Programme as a Member of the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. Social Housing Grant Report: Performance report on spending of grant monies.

Members discussed the Social Housing Programme Delivery Report and the presentation which provided examples of case studies demonstrating how the grant is able to impact upon people's wellbeing as well as housing need. The officer explained that key issues for Monmouthshire in respect of affordable housing are:

- Affordability for people wishing to purchase their own home, the average house price in Monmouthshire being £301,900. This is in comparison with the Wales average of £185, 529 and means that affordability in the lower quartile of earners would require borrowing of 9 times their salary. Purchasing a property is out of
- There is pressure on housing waiting lists, with 3,269 people registered on the Homesearch waiting list for affordable housing, this including social rented housing and intermediate housing (low cost home ownership and intermediate rents). During a 1 year period between 2018-19, there were 1711 new applications registered on Homesearch, with only 630 properties available and from the 3,269 people registered, only 471 were housed.
- We have seen a year on year increase in homeless presentations and last year, we received 835 presentations by people who were at risk of homelessness, with 304 households being threatened with homelessness within 56 days. 244 of the 304 households were found to be actually homeless and needing assistance and support.

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The officer advised that just over £5.2 million had been received in social housing grant monies and that most of this had been spent, with a small underspend of £194,376k being returned to Welsh Government, due to land prices posing challenges for delivery of schemes. The money has enabled the delivery of 84 new builds, has helped 10 people buy a property of their choice on the open market, has financed 17 ex-council house buy back properties and 1 rent to own property. The committee was advised that schemes with different funding streams have particular stipulations and that following a recent review of Social Housing Grant monies grant monies may decrease and changes cannot be predicted at this time.

Challenge:

- Members questioned the use of the Rural Allocations Policy for a new build developments rather than existing properties that may become available. The committee recommend that the officer explores the application of the policy to properties that are not solely new-build. A review of Homesearch is being undertaken and this will be taken into consideration as part of this review.
- The Committee highlighted that some bungalows provided by Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA) for older people are unsuitable due to steps ~ this would be discussed with MHA.
- Can Social Housing Grant monies be used to assist people with deposits ~ Unfortunately there are stipulations with the funding and it cannot be used in this way, however there are other new products available through Welsh Government that can assist people with deposits.
- If funding is to be reduced, what proposals do we have to meet the gap? Welsh Government have reduced the funding, but the substantial money available to date was specifically for the delivery of new housing targets and was expected to drop, but initiatives such as the 'Innovative Housing Scheme', 'Rent to Own' and 'Self-build programmes' are different new funding streams that will be available.
- Members queried the Joint Project for accommodation for people with high level needs that is a joint initiative between the council and the health board and how this would be managed. The project would be managed by the health board as its funding derives from the Integrated Care Fund. Whilst the council would be responsible for the planning aspects, the health board would be responsible for the care and support required and the housing association would be the responsible landlord.
- The extent to which the housing register was reviewed was discussed and the officer confirmed that people are contacted annually to assess whether circumstances have changed.

Outcome:

- Members clarified the options appraisal within the report and agreed the importance of having a Programme Delivery Plan in place (option 1) given that affordable housing is a key priority for the council.
- Members recommend the officer explores the wider application the Rural Allocations Policy, not solely for new builds.
- The Committee advocates exploration of land ownership and the use of council land ownership for creative uses of land to deliver affordable housing as part of the Local Development Plan renewal.
- Members highlighted the need to raise awareness of the different available options for people, including 'Rent to Buy' schemes.

4. Revenue and Capital Outturn report: Budget monitoring report for quarterly scrutiny.

Revenue and Capital Outturn Report: Budget Monitoring

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The budgetary outcome position for 2018/2019 was presented and the relevant parts within the committee's remit were discussed. Members challenged the 989k underspend in the Adults Select portfolio as follows:

Challenge:

Members requested explanation of the 989k underspend and were advised these related to:

- Adult Services (£181k overspend) – resulting from a significant drop off in community meals income, together with £155k staffing pressures, a £120k net pressure caused by limited capacity in the external domiciliary care provider market, compensated for by vacancies and management savings of £97k.
- Community Care (£1.073m underspend) – savings within Mental Health Care team budget and Frailty pooled budget (collective £1.4m) compensate for an inherent pressure to adult disability care provider costs and client needs (£323k overspend).
- Commissioning (£104k underspend) – predominantly the effect of reviewing service contracts, and a staffing saving, compensating for Drybridge Gardens income shortfall caused by a tenancy vacancy.
- Resources (£7k overspend) – net effect of increased transport costs.

Members challenged officers on the following:

- The Number of agency staff in domiciliary care ~ they were advised that agency workers are employed for times when there sickness or maternity cover required, not as part of the longer term operating structure and that certain projects such as the Integrated Care Fund project may require agency staff for short term projects.
- The reduction in take up of Community Meals and the fact that if there is a lower take up, there are fewer people who will be benefiting from the social interaction that would take place and whether that poses a concern for the department. Members were advised that the Success of reablement has meant that some people are more independent and together with the luncheon clubs at Mardy Park and the marketing of Wiltshire farm foods (where the costs are comparable) has led to a reduction in take up of the service. The committee heard that the Community Meals Team undertook a review in which they asked if people would like the driver to spend some time with people when delivering the meal, to have a chat and that the team is now working on how this can be factored into the timetable to make the experience more of a social interaction in which relationships can be developed.
- Members challenged officers as to whether they can confirm that nobody is being disadvantaged by the cost increase. Members asked whether service users have been asked why they are not taking up meals and whether a socio- economic assessment has been undertaken to ensure that people are not suffering due to financial reasons. Members were advised that as far as we know, people are not being disadvantaged and that when asked, if finance has been identified as a problem, options are considered to help them.
- Members expressed that the social interaction aspect is crucial and that if people decide not to have meals, they may not realise the impact on their loneliness and isolation. There were questions relating to whether consideration is given to the size of the meals and the amount of time given to the visit. Officers confirmed that a trial has been completed which found that not everyone wants their meal at a certain time, which was something they hadn't anticipated. People can order smaller meals and make choices. The aim would be that visits would be at least 15 mins if the person was happy with the contact and that this is being explored further.
- Members asked finance officers whether they feel the budget monitoring process is robust enough to identify underspends and overspends. The officer advised that a move to

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monthly budget monitoring as opposed to quarterly because of the fluctuations in the budgets will assist significantly in terms of timelier monitoring.

- Members queried whether the underspends that have occurred through using internal reablement staff as opposed to external domiciliary care is something that should be encouraged. The committee was advised that reablement staff have had to provide additional support because there hasn't been the availability in the private sector and that this has had an impact on the teams' ability to support other people. Members heard that whilst this has provided a short term saving, this would not be achieved over the long term and would not be a desirable position to be in. A shortfall of 250 hours in the Usk area has had a huge impact on people living in Usk. In rural areas, we have had to give an external provider 'guaranteed hours' in order to provide them with reassurance in order for them to recruit and lease cars for their staff. Members heard that specifying guaranteed hours has proven very successful in terms of providing service stability.

Outcome:

- The Committee would like oversight of the Monmouthshire Meals report, together with detail on whether pricing has been identified as an issue for the lower take up in meals. Members are looking for reassurance that people are not being disadvantaged on price, so information such as the previous take up figures compared to currently and the reasons identified through the audit/survey of service users. Members supported the new proposals in relation to visits and increased social interaction.
- The Committee approved the move to monthly budget monitoring which will assist in monitoring variances in underspends and overspends.
- The Committee would like oversight of the Monmouthshire Meals report, together with detail on whether pricing has been identified as an issue for the lower take up in meals. Members are looking for reassurance that people are not being disadvantaged on price, so information such as the previous take up figures compared to currently and the reasons identified through the audit/survey of service users. Members supported the new proposals in relation to visits and increased social interaction.
- Members requested that a full report on the fragility of domiciliary care market be brought back to the committee.

5. Adult Services Co-option Report: To consider potential options for co-option onto the Select Committees. E.g. Access for All Forum, Mind, Age UK, GAVO, Carers' Group.

Co-option onto Adults Select Committee Report

The Scrutiny Manager presented a report which highlighted an opportunity for the committee to consider co-opting individuals onto the committee to offer insight and expertise. There was broad support for the proposal which will enhance the effectiveness of the scrutiny, whilst there will still be an opportunity to engage with stakeholders on a topic by topic basis and ensure democratic input to decision-making.

Outcome:

- Agreement to proceed with a report to council to co-opt individuals in a non-voting capacity, with a review at end of administrative term.

6. To confirm the minutes of the previous Ordinary meeting held on 18th June 2019

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th June 2019 were confirmed as a true record.

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7. List of actions following the last meeting

- Housing Policy: The Select Committee recommended a hybrid approach. The Cabinet Member, Enterprise, decided to pursue Option 1 but acknowledged the point made by the Adults Select Committee.
- Impact of Rollout of Universal Credit: A letter (circulated to Members) was written to Cabinet Members to reaffirm our approach and to consider an increase to discretionary housing payment. An acknowledgement was received from County Councillor S. Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Community Development requesting a meeting to consider options. The Chair will meet with the Cabinet Member and will advise Committee of progress.
- Annual Housing Performance Report: Regarding the link to the LDP – look at what information needed and the role of housing in social care. This work is in progress.

8. Adults Select Committee Forward Work Programme

Adults Select Work Programme:

- An update report to be requested from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) on the Critical Care Centre ~ clarification on services and the distribution of public information. Report to include the impact on other hospitals and a list of current inpatient and outpatient services before and after the changes, with timescales.
- A workshop to be requested with the health board during October on 'How can we engage with communities better? What are we doing well together to deliver a healthy wales? What aren't we doing well?'
- A request for ABUHB to present the position on 'Pooled Budgets and Joint Working' ~ a snapshot paper on how we can best hold that work to account.
- Future scrutiny item on Mental Health Services, the challenges and aftercare arrangements when someone leaves the Mental Health Service.
- To request the publicised information on the take up of flu vaccines.
- For the 24th September, a report on Domiciliary Care, inviting some providers to discuss how 'Turning the World Upside Down' is implemented and how we sustain this going forward, how we move away from a task orientated service to a more relationship focussed service and respond to challenges, future proofing services, ensuring that employment in these services is attractive. Members would be invited to attend Mardy Park to have discussions with service users in advance of the scrutiny activity.
- For the October Select Committee ~ scrutiny of a report on the impact of Disabled Facilities Grants and the interface between housing and social care.

9. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

The Council and Cabinet Work Planner was noted.

10. Next Meeting: 24th September 2019

The meeting ended at 12.10 pm