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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 29th
January, 2019 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor (Chairman)
County Councillor (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: M.Groucutt, R. Harris, J.Pratt and
S. Woodhouse

Also in attendance County Councillor(s):

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Julie Boothroyd	Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant

APOLOGIES:

Councillors D. Blakebrough, L.Dymock, R. Edwards and P.Pavia

1. Apologies for absence

2. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest made by Members.

3. Public Open Forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

4. Capital Strategy Assessment and Capital Budget Proposals 2019/20

Purpose and Context:

Chartered institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) produced a revised regulatory Code in December 2017, which included a need for local authorities to produce a **Capital Strategy**. The requirements were staggered with an aim for reporting compliance during 2018/19 with a full **Capital Strategy** implemented for 2019/20. This report concentrates on the former in evaluating the governance, planning and priority setting involved in presenting 2019-20 capital budget proposals and the 3 years thereafter making up the collective capital medium term financial plan.

CIPFA report that a **Capital Strategy** should be tailored to individual circumstances and consequentially don't volunteer a prescriptive format. The overall intent is that any **Capital Strategy** should allow Members to understand how stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability will be secured. The overall purpose of a capital strategy being to provide opportunity for engagement with Full Council to

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ensure overall strategy, governance procedures and risk appetite are fully understood by all elected members

The code, in describing the **Capital Strategy**, reports it can be delegated to Cabinet (or similar body) with Full Council being responsible. MCC's approach is to report budget setting process through Cabinet, with consideration and approval of the future capital programmes resting with full Council. The Council's Constitution is consistent with compliance requirements. It is anticipated that the actual resulting capital strategy will be reconciled and consistent with a wider financial strategy and both available for consideration during Spring cycle of meetings.

Member Scrutiny:

With regard to update on the Welsh Government approving the capital business case for Crick Road or the possibility of a contingency plan being in place in relation to project spend for the rest of the financial year, the Assistant Head of Finance reported that he could confirm that grant funding may be an element that is being considered. The ICF funding allows for the land purchase to go ahead but has to be secured by the end of March.

The Chief Officer confirmed that Welsh Government had approved the funding for 3 years and was confident that the land transaction would be secured before end of March.

Although the Council were operating on a 32 bed perspective, with the help of prospective partners, there was a possibility on the facility being upgraded to a 48 bed set up. A speculative bid had already been submitted with some options regarding nursing care being actively pursued.

Following a question regarding the consideration of increasing the Disability Facilities Grants, it was noted that over the last two years the Council had supplemented this amount by 300K and will continue to work to see where additional funds will come from. It was noted that it was the Cabinet's intention to find the 300K and will be topping this up.

Recommendation:

To consider and provide feedback upon the budget assumptions, pressures and savings proformas affecting this Select portfolio area.

Committee Conclusion:

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation.

5. Revenue Budget proposals 2019/20

Purpose and Context:

This report is being shared with all Select Committee members so that they can understand the holistic budget position being considered by Cabinet. The holistic nature of the report recognises that savings proposals should not be viewed in isolation, and may be necessary to allow other service priorities to be maintained.

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Subsequent to the consultation process and feedback from individual Select Committees and other representative groups on particular proposals, the resulting report will be provided to full Council in their consideration of settling a balanced budget for 2019/20.

The abridged report seeks to ensure that all proposals have a designated scrutiny oversight, and the tables below highlight those illustratively earmarked to the Scrutiny role of Adult Select Committee for specific feedback.

Member Scrutiny:

It was reported that consultation would be going ahead with a gap in deliberations of £594k to find. With Welsh Government cuts of 0.3% and additional pressures imposed by external factors the Cabinet Member agreed to expand but mentioned that All Member sessions were arranged next week for more detailed information.

With regard to the revenue pressures and savings in line with the national living wage it was confirmed that Monmouthshire County Council is committed to paying the living wage whilst making sure that external providers also adhere to the same standards.

Due to an issue raised at Full Council recently, Members wanted reassurance that it was categorically correct that all private contractors for social care are being paid living wage. This was confirmed by the Finance Manager at the time of appointment of employee.

With regard to savings and cost cutting – car parking charges were a concern that proposals are counter-productive. Businesses are struggling in high streets already without removing Christmas free parking and charges on a Sunday. Also issues with disabled parking accessing pay machines and the effect of congestion in towns. Main concern is with loss of revenue especially with Morrison's parking in Abergavenny and issues like this need to be considered when setting budgets.

Concerns were raised regarding blue badge charging plus the understanding that badge holders can park on double yellow lines if it does not cause an obstruction. It was confirmed that this act, regardless of whether the owner is a blue badge holder or not, is illegal. The concern was that if we charge for blue badge holders in the car parks, a minority will park on the high street thus causing congestion.

With regard to updating car parking machines, it was reported that although pay machines were the most effective way of dealing with the service, the authority do not use registration controlled parking as it doesn't have the legislation to use AMPR managed car parking or the staff to maintain this.

The Cabinet Member reported that the increase was not exclusive to Monmouthshire, who are one of the last authorities to bring this in, but although valid points had been raised, the relatively small increase was a decision that has to be taken.

The Business case states that the car parking proposal will generate £215k but will cost £100k to install new machines and would take place in October, half way through the financial year, resulting in a limited amount of revenue for this year regardless of grant aid.

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A question was raised regarding the number of Blue Badge holders in Monmouthshire County Council, to which the Head of Operations agreed to look into but explained that not all the badge holder visitors to our towns were Monmouthshire residents.

The Head of Operation confirmed via email the following figures:

- Badges are usually issued for a period of 3 years.
- 2043 badges were issued in 2016/17, 455 were cancelled due to death or other reasons.
- 2135 were issued in 2017/18, 468 were cancelled.
- In 2018/19 from 1st April 2018 to date 1626 badges have been issued, 342 cancelled.
- So over a 3 year period we have issued 5804 and cancelled 1265. According to the Blue Badge report there are 5467 badges on issue.

A number of issues were raised with regard to Social Care and Health Changes. Increasing the budget for Mardy Park under Section 33 Agreement – this is a legal agreement around services shared with health partners. It is a legal instrument to pull money and deliver services together.

With regard to transport, whilst being aware of the wider rural issues, it was confirmed that this related in the main to people who fall under the remit of social services i.e. day care provision rather than the general public. Modernisation of the policy took into consideration people using their own Motability cars, newer vehicles, fuel efficiency and planning routes rather than mobility. Also it was noted that when the policy was introduced, our own stock was taken into consideration and rationalised downwards to realign the budget.

There was a need to ensure that savings are not going to lead to a deterioration in services.

Regarding Respite care – The Care Act, at the moment charges are per hour for overnight care but policies are being re-aligned to charge a blanket fee for respite. The service will not differ regardless of how much a person can pay. Welsh Government have put a ceiling on what the authority can charge. By 2020 the ceiling will be £100.

Practice change since 2011 has resulted in a budget saving of 536K. This is due to the way people are assessed, delivering more service and creating independency rather than individuals accepting or needing all the support being channelled towards them.

With regards to the recoupment of continuing health care discretionary fees and charges saving £93K, the figure cannot be set in stone as people who have complex needs and peoples' health may deteriorate. The figures are tracked and although some may not be relevant to this committee, they come under discretionary fees and charges.

The question was raised about representations to the Welsh Government regarding allowances allowed in savings/property. Welsh Government will be increasing the allowance to £50k on 1st April which works in favour of the individual but a pressure for the authority. Individuals undergo a financial assessment and a protocol is followed as to whether the authority funds someone or not, and what capital they can retain.

Recommendation:

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That Select Committee consider specifically the table of pressure and saving in the report, with a view to providing pertinent feedback on the adoption or otherwise of such by full Council in its subsequent consideration.

Committee Conclusion:

The Committee accepted the recommendation, and added a recommendation that car park charges be further discussed at the Joint Select Committee on 18th February 2018.

6. Month 7 Revenue & Capital Monitoring Report

Purpose and Context:

Members were presented with a report to provide all Members with holistic information on the revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority at the end of reporting period 2 which represents the financial outturn position for the 2018/19 financial year based on October inclusive activities.

This is to be considered by Select Committees as part of their responsibility to:

- assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place,
- monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework,
- challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspends,
- monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.

Member Scrutiny:

The Assistant Head of Finance explained the report and noted that the report will be going to Cabinet. For ease, items were colour coded that referred specifically to this Committee. There was a forecast underspend of £316K surplus at month 7. Within that figure, approval will be needed for capitalisation of revenue expenses which will be discussed at a special Full Council meeting in February.

With regard to the Directors' Commentary, concern was raised about the wording '300 weekly hours of unmet need'. Being very careful with the language used in terms of 'unmet need' it was explained that this figure does not accurately reflect the number of people, as individuals could be within or receiving different aspects of health care at one time for differing periods of time. Actively working alongside providers within Relationship Management maximises what we can offer and maximises delivery.

With regard to individuals who are financially able to seek help from private providers or other potential organisations other than the council, it was noted that in relation to personal care, the organisation would need to be registered with Social Care Wales.

Committee Conclusion:

The Committee resolved to accept and approve the report.

7. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting: 23rd October 2018

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The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

8. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting: 26th November 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

9. Forward Work Programme

Noted.

10. To note the date and time of next meeting as Tuesday 12th March 2019

Noted.

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm