

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD AT ON WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**PRESENT**

County Councillors A Jenner (Chair), S McNicholas, L Rijnenberg, K M Roberts-Jones, D Rowlands, A Williams and J M Williams

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: R Powell and MC Alexander

Officers: Alison Bulman, Corporate Director, J Coles, Head of Children's Services  
Michael Gray, Head of Adult Services, Jacqueline Pugh, Finance Manager and  
Wyn Richards

Other Officers In Attendance:

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors S Hayes, J Gibson-Watt, L Roberts, G Morgan, E Jones, P Pritchard and from Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer)

<b>2.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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There were no Declarations of Interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS</b>
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The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member had been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

<b>4.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2021 as a correct record.

<b>5.</b>	<b>FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND FORECAST</b>
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**Documents Considered:**

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance – Financial Forecast for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (as at 30 June 2021)

**Issues Discussed:**

- The Corporate Director (Children and Adults) referred to Appendix A and outlined some of the challenges in achieving the required efficiency savings. Some of the inability to meet the efficiencies are due to the

pressures faced by the service due to increased demand for services and also the ability of staff to focus on transformational projects.

- Adults Services.
  - The Head of Adults Services referred to the cost pressures, both current and future. Current pressures includes loss of income and costs of additional agency staff to meet increase in the number of referrals. It is anticipated that these additional costs would be reclaimed from Welsh Government's hardship fund. There were also additional pressures such as increased carer breakdown; requirement for additional home based respite options; pressures on the community equipment store; additional, alternative community based services.
  - In terms of future pressures there will be uncertainty regarding future needs and potentially increased costs of support for those who used to attend day services. The impact of the pandemic and future hardship funding from Welsh Government is also uncertain. It is believed there will be pressures from winter pressures and a potential increase in demand. There is an issue around the future stability of care providers as well.
  - The potential for additional costs for carers who provide care overnight and sleep in is currently unclear following a recent judicial review, and the judgement is awaited. A potential increased payment to these carers would have an impact on the budget. There has been clarity for external carers but the position for Council staff is awaited.
  - The risk following the ending of furlough at the end of September was highlighted with the ending of the furlough payments being an additional burden.
  - Cost underspends - £234,000 underspend around staffing, also a significant reduction in travelling; £160,000 reductions due to services not occurring due to Covid restrictions.
  - Cost reductions – The target of £5.09m reductions is currently on target with £1.04m being achieved. There are assurances of delivery of a further £3.95m with £0.1m being unachievable due to the invoking of business continuity in March 2020. The budget pressures will be carried forward to the 2022-23 budget.
  - Welsh Government Grant not claimed - £395,000 to cover loss of income and increased agency staff.
  - Mitigating actions – maximising grant underspends and continuing to pursue the strength based approach.
  - The Corporate Director (Children and Adults) commented that in relation to Community Equipment Stores the Services was also seeing some supply chain issues and increases in the price of products. Winter pressures were already occurring with greater demands expected and work was ongoing with Powys Teaching Health Board and PAVO to ensure that there was system resilience plans in place.
  - Another theme was District General Hospitals at alert level 4 with consequent pressures on Social Care to move Powys residents out of hospital as soon as possible.
- Questions:

<p>What is the £100k unachieved cost reduction relate to.</p>	<p>This relates to the staffing structure with any significant management of change proposals not being possible due to business continuity.</p>
<p>Cost pressures due to day centres not being open of £168,000 – will this cost pressure be taken into account when the future of day service provision is being considered as this cost will have a knock on impact together with the social and personal impact that the closure of day centres may have had on residents.</p>	<p>All pressures are currently being accounted for in terms of Integrated Business Planning in Adult Services. The Portfolio Holder advised that a wide ranging review will be undertaken following the pandemic to see what worked and what did not.</p>
<p>When Community equipment is required is it all provided as part of a package free or is it means tested. Have we asked families who have received equipment previously to return that equipment if no longer required.</p>	<p>The provision of equipment depends on the financial assessment undertaken and whether someone has eligible needs. There is a certain amount the Council can charge up to £100 per week but that depends on the individual's financial circumstances. Community equipment would be part of a care and support plan. The Council does look to recycle equipment as far as possible, but it is uncertain how proactive the council currently is in approaching families to get equipment returned. The Corporate Director advised that an all Wales amnesty for the return of equipment was being proposed.</p>
<p>Day Centres – it is hoped that there will be robust and meaningful consultation regarding the future of day centres.</p>	<p>The Portfolio Holder indicated that service users will need to be asked what they want and need following the pandemic. The types of service that service users may require, or the way it is delivered, may have changed as a result of the pandemic. The Corporate Director advised that the Service needed to engage with the population of Powys as a whole and at an individual level. The Service has found creative ways of supporting people over the past eighteen months. Currently the service is providing an outreach service to service users, with services provided in a different way in communities. This is why conversations on an individual basis</p>

	are so important to determine what current and future service users will require.
How will the service consult with those service users who cannot speak for themselves.	The Corporate Director indicated if a service user could not speak for themselves, for example if they lacked capacity, the Service would be looking to provide advocacy support for individuals to make sure that their views are known or taking best interest decisions. The Corporate Director assured the Committee that there are mechanisms to ensure that individuals' voices were heard.
Sleep-in staff and potential pressures on budgets. If this is resolved and staff have an additional payment, will it ease the pressures on staffing. Will it incentivise people to come into the service.	The Service does not have sufficient detail to respond in the meeting, but a more detailed response can be provided following the meeting. The Corporate Director indicated that the budget pressure related to a risk of retrospective payments having to be made. Anything that changes terms and conditions of any staff, Council or agency, will assist in attracting people into the market.

- Children's Services
  - In quarter 1 it was identified that there was £1.2m increased costs of children in the Council's care, a £200,000 increased cost due to demand in short breaks, £60,000 from general support to families.
  - It is difficult to identify future pressures as the position for families due to the pandemic is more uncertain than normal and therefore it is difficult to predict the impact on the Service's budget. However, the Service is committed to working with families to keep children at home, where this is in the child's best interests.
  - In relation to the £1.2m additional costs for placements, the placements team has had to be strengthened to meet the increased demand with available placements being limited for a variety of reasons such as a positive Covid cases in a home causing that home to close for a period.
  - There is a sustained increase in demand at the front door (between 30% and 50%) with most of that being managed through early help. The support received from the Council to bolster the early help and prevention services has been a benefit to the Service in the current circumstances as these services reduce the numbers of children coming into care.
  - Cost reductions - £1.5m savings has been delivered by working with children and over time reducing the intervention required by individuals. It is anticipated that the remaining £1.7m can be delivered as well. However it is difficult to deliver the savings

around shared costs with continuing care, which are costs shared with Powys Teaching Health Board.

- The Service is working to deliver a balanced budget. Grant funding is received during the year. Powys is able to influence the National agenda in relation to what the additional funding could be used for.
- The Portfolio Holder for Adult Services advised that one current challenge related to the care of people with substance abuse problems which was a joint project between the Council and Health. Double the numbers of people have come forward this year for rehabilitation and the Council is not able to provide all the services and relies on its partners to provide those services. Services for people with substance misuse problems may be a subject which the Committee may wish to review in future.

- Questions:

<p>In terms of undeliverable savings, there have been issues in the past in getting Powys Teaching Health Board to contribute to services. Is this a common issue with Health Authorities or just in Powys.</p>	<p>The Corporate Director advised that work is ongoing locally to agree an operating procedure. It is recognised that the council and the Health Board do not always have the same understanding in relation to for example guidance, so work is ongoing in partnership with health to resolve these issues. Work has commenced in Adult Services and will be commenced in Children's Services relating to continuing care for children. New guidance has been issued which takes effect from November and a gap analysis is being undertaken on current provision and the requirements of the new guidance.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advised that this is an issue for all authorities and has been raised at the Social Care Policy Group which is attended by both Portfolio Holders.</p>
<p>How does Powys Children's Services compare with other authorities in Wales as everyone must be in a similar position. Are there more issues in rural areas than urban areas.</p>	<p>There is no comparative data across Wales. There is a sustained increase in demand generally with an increased complexity in issues.</p> <p>The Corporate Director advised that most authorities are facing additional challenges with additional demand and workforce challenges. What is unknown is how Powys compares in terms of budget with other Councils.</p>
<p>Is there any hope that the increased demand that has been seen recently</p>	<p>The increased demand has been impossible to predict. In March 2020</p>

<p>will reduce as we return to a new normal.</p>	<p>demand was quieter, in June 2020 it increased by 30% and that increase has sustained and recently increased again. There are no current signs that the demand will settle down and in fact may increase now that schools have reopened. This demand is not a one-off but recurring support for individuals and families.</p>
<p>Does the Council have a response ready for any further increased demand.</p>	<p>The Council is responding to all its priorities and moving staff to ensure that priorities are covered which is challenging with limited staff, and prioritising social worker availability. The Corporate Director advised that the Health Board had been approached with regard to providing mutual aid for Children's Services.</p>
<p>How many Social Care staff are furloughed, are they still on furlough. Is it as helpful having untrained staff working within the Service, is this adding pressure to the trained staff. Was the Service happy with the programme of activities for disabled children which was run over the Summer, and was the uptake good and value for money.</p>	<p>The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services asked if the queries could be forwarded to her by email for a response. These activities were optional and not part of the Summer of Fun activities for children and young people. The Corporate Director indicated that a response regarding staff furloughed could be provided following the meeting. Whilst it is not as helpful to have untrained staff assisting the Service, the Service is grateful for all the support it is receiving from across the Council, which removes administrative tasks from Social Workers and allows them to optimise their time with service users. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Services advised that staff were furloughed where their role was not required at present as the service was not operating. However, these staff were usually redeployed to undertake other tasks rather than being furloughed. No Children's Services staff have been furloughed.</p>

**Outcomes:**

- It was suggested that a local press release is issued (as well as the national message) about the amnesty for the return of equipment that was no longer required. In addition it was suggested that this should be a joint press release with Health as it was believed that some equipment was being sent to recycling sites for disposal.
- That the Committee consider the Continuing Costs of Care and Substance Misuse at a future meeting.

<b>6.</b>	<b>MID WALES GROWTH DEAL</b>
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The Committee noted that as there were a number of Members who could not attend the meeting, and the need for the appointment to be from the Independent Group, it was agreed that consideration of the item be deferred and that nominations from Independent Group Members be sought by email.

<b>7.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The Committee noted the Work Programme.

September - the Committee would be considering the Model of Care and Safer Accommodation. In October.

October - it was hoped to recommence the Working Groups. Complaints and the Customer Charter would be reviewed as an online exercise as well as the annual report.

November – Shared Lives Scheme and Warden Service.

Meeting ended 15:39

**County Councillor A Jenner (Chair)**