

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD AT BY ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2023**

PRESENT: County Councillor A Jenner (Chair)  
County Councillors G E Jones, G Preston, G W Ratcliffe, L Rijnenberg, C Robinson,  
C Walsh and C Kenyon-Wade

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: County Councillors S Cox (Cabinet Member for a Caring Powys), S C Davies and S McNicholas (Cabinet Member for Future Generations), D Thomas (Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation), and J Gibson-Watt (Leader)

Officers: Michael Gray (Head of Adults Services), Jackie Pugh (Finance Manager), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services), Lynette Lovell (Director of Education and Children), Nina Davies (Director of Social Services and Housing), Rachel Evans (Head of Commissioning), Sharon Powell (Head of Children's Services), Emma Palmer (Director of Corporate Services) and Jane Thomas (Head of Finance)

Other Members in Attendance: A Davies (Chair of the Finance Panel)

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors B Breeze, G Morgan, J Ewing and J Wilkinson.

An apology for absence was also received from County Councillor P Lewington (Vice-Chair of the Finance Panel, invited to the meeting).

<b>2.</b>	<b>DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST</b>
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There were no declarations of interest from Members relating to items for consideration 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>DRAFT 2023 - 2024 BUDGET</b>
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**Documents Considered:**

- Draft 2023 – 2024 Budget
  - Scrutiny Report – Budget Questions
  - Cabinet Report
  - Mid Term Financial Strategy
  - Finance Resource Model
  - Cost Reductions
  - Fees and Charges Register
  - Fees and Charges Report
  - Pressures

- Reserves Policy
- Capital and Treasury Management Strategy
- Impact Assessment – Council Tax and Overall Budget
- Budget Survey 2022 Report
- Individual Impact Assessments relating to the Cost Reduction Proposals

**Issues Discussed:**

- The proposal included a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for a five year period from 2023 to 2028 and a financial resource model, a draft revenue budget and capital programme for the same five year period.
- The budget plan was developed in an extremely challenging economic situation, linked to inflation and the impact of the war in Ukraine on prices.
- There was an expectation of a challenging period over the next five years with public sector spending under challenge for many years.
- A provisional settlement had been received from Welsh Government with the final settlement confirmed on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.
- Within the settlement there was an element relating to social care. This recognised the Council’s role in supporting residents which included funding to support the continued roll out of the real living wage. However, in terms of the sum allocated (£70m across Wales) Powys’ share was unlikely to meet the full cost for delivery by the Council. The total pressure was included in the budget plan.
- In terms of the settlement Powys had received an increase of 8.7% equating to an additional £18.298m. There was a proposal to increase Council Tax by 5% but also with a requirement for over £16m savings.

**Questions:**

Question	Response
What is the specific funding in the settlement for social care.	Officer Response: The sum is not identified separately in the settlement, but is estimated around £2.8m. The cost to deliver the real living wage across all providers is over £4m so the sum received will fall short of what is required.
A figure of 3% is included for pay award for next year. This is different to figure submitted to the Cabinet	Officer Response: A 3% figure was built into individual service budgets. The difference was held corporately but would be allocated amongst services together with an adjustment for National Insurance contributions.
Will this additional allocation be provided before the Council meeting in February	Officer Response: The budgets are not amended as yet as the Council was waiting for the final pay settlement to be confirmed. However, the Finance Service was reviewing this as Members would want to know the effect on individual service budgets.  The Standard Spending Assessment

	was an indicator of spend but it would be for each Council to determine spending for individual services.
Is rurality taken into consideration in the formula	<p>Officer Response:</p> <p>Probably not as much as rural authorities would like. There were some elements for rurality in the social services data which was changed to recognise the costs of delivering services in a rural authority.</p>

**Children’s Services:**

- A review of the budget was undertaken in the autumn of 2022.
- Children’s Services Overview.
  - Base budget (£27.897m).
  - Pressures (£2.201m)
  - Savings (£2.796m)
  - Undelivered savings (£1.278m)
- Pressures:
  - New responsibilities – unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (£418,660) (The allocation was 20 young people, originally the Council had 13 young people placed in London area, but since the Autumn of 2022 some were living in or closer to Powys)
  - Placements (£865,063) (Full year effect of previous part year 2022-23 in 2023-24, step downs and changes in service provision)
  - Contractor Provider uplifts (£763,647)
  - In House / Return to Home Residential (£154,130)
  - Total £2,200,500.
- Savings:
  - Placement:
    - Closer to Home / Reduction in Children Looked After (£1,050,000)
    - Leaving Care / Post 18 (£1m)
    - Special Guardianship Orders Project (£90,200)
  - Staffing:
    - Cost Saving – using permanent social workers instead of agency staff (based on grow your own project) (£139,000)
    - Reduction in staffing expenses / family time expenses due to closer to home (£10,000)
  - Third Sector:
    - Adoption – decrease contribution to Mid and West Wales region (£40k)
    - Therapy external commissioning (£45k)
    - Using additional income effectively (£200k)
    - Young Carers – Third Party Contract (£17,510)
    - VAWDSW – Third Party Contracts (£34,520)
  - Transformation:
    - Staff - transformation and service redesign (£170k)
  - Total £2,796,230

Undelivered Savings:

- Shared costs with PTHB for CLA (£243,770)
- Continuing Care for Children and Young people (£800k)
- Grow Your Own – Agency reduction (£83,760)
- Agency - convert 5 workers to permanent social workers (£150k)
- Total £1,277,530

The Director of Education and Children’s Services commented that in terms of undelivered savings the position at quarter 1 was £3.5m. That position had improved by quarter 3 with further work ongoing to make those savings.

**Questions:**

Question	Response
<p>£418k pressure for unaccompanied asylum seeker children. Is there any specific funding from UK Government or Welsh Government for these children for their social or education support needs. Are we expected to absorb these pressures.</p>	<p>Officer Response: We do receive some provision per child from Welsh Government but it does not cover everything they need. When a child arrives they are assessed as to the complexity of their needs, as needs vary. A care plan was then prepared for the child based on those needs. There were specific entitlements and specific roles and responsibilities which the Council adhered to for a Child Looked After by the authority.</p>
<p>Are there contributions from other agencies following the assessment for example in terms of health needs.</p>	<p>Officer Response: There would need to be a conversation with the health provider wherever the child was placed but there would be a contribution.</p> <p>The Council has been reviewing how to address this pressure in other ways with provision in Wales rather than elsewhere in the country.</p>
<p>Placements costs over £865k. Could you provide a breakdown of this and where are the specific pressures. Are placements breaking down. Inflation increases have been accounted for elsewhere. Can you provide more detail on how the cumulative net figure was calculated.</p>	<p>Officer Response: There had been consideration of where there might have been a placement breakdown, or a change in circumstances. That could lead to escalating costs which could not be predicted. Trends had been reviewed for Children Looked After for the past year and the Service then mapped out likely pressures for the forthcoming year and tried to be realistic about predictions.</p>
<p>In last year’s budget additional funding was provided to stop placement breakdowns. Has it had an impact</p>	<p>Officer Response: Yes it did have an impact but there was further work to do. There were increasing costs in residential care settings and there was a limit as to what the Council could do to address that unless it had alternative arrangements in</p>

	<p>place. That was why the Coser to Home Board scrutinised the costs and whether the Council could do things differently. The Service was aware of the high cost placements and were reviewing how to reduce the numbers of high cost residential provision by developing in house or alternative provision.</p> <p>ACTION: The Committee to review predictions and outcomes relating to Children's Services placements on a quarterly basis when considering financial reports.</p>
<p>£153k for the development of a residential home and use of emergency accommodation. This was in place of using unregulated placements or holiday accommodation. Do those pressures come with an associated cost. Is there a separate budget line for savings which sits alongside those pressures.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Sometimes this was difficult to quantify as doing something differently did not necessarily mean a saving. The current residential provision was costly due to having to rely on agency staff. It was hoped to reduce the overspend by the recruitment of permanent staff with job fairs undertaken to attract new staff.</p>
<p>When the Committee reviewed the quarter 2 budget there was a significant overspend shown for Y Bannau. There is nothing in pressures for 2023-24 for Y Bannau. Why is that the case.</p>	<p>Officer Response: It was not identified specifically but was taken into account in the overall pressures for residential provision.</p> <p>In relation to recruitment, it was hoped to reduce the reliance on agency staff. Vacancies had recently reduced from 10 to 6 following recruitment to positions.</p>
<p>In relation to unsupported Asylum seekers with 13 placed and an allocation of 20, how certain is the Council that the increase would happen in 2023-24.</p>	<p>Officer Response: There is significant certainty. Numbers were small initially then increased from 7 to 13 over the Autumn, 2022. There is confidence that the figure of 20 would be achieved by April 2023.</p>
<p>Cost reductions normally have a RAG rating but this is not the case this year. Why was this not done this year and what are the greatest risks for savings not being delivered. Is there an assurance that the budget this year is more realistic than last year.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Everything proposed as savings in this year's budget is achievable. Some items are easier to achieve than others e.g. therapeutic budgets and use of grants in another way rather, by comparison to the closer to home and 16+ provision. Mapping has been undertaken for the children looked after and as long as the current trajectory continued there was no reason why the savings targets should not be achieved as they achievable.</p>
<p>If these are realistic and if you had to find another £500k would those be achievable.</p>	<p>Officer Response: If other savings were required there would be a need to go back and</p>

	<p>scrutinise the budget again in its entirety to find those savings. The savings proposed were realistic and achievable.</p> <p>The Head of Finance indicated that any expectation on any service to try to find additional savings this close to a new financial year would have to be questioned in terms of its robustness.</p>
<p>Why are RAG ratings not used this year.</p>	<p>Officer Response: They were used last year but were not included this time.</p>
<p>Utilisation of additional funding. £200k would be reduced from base budget as applications would be made during the year for grants to backfill the budget. There was always concern when money was taken out of the budget as it might be thought that that jobs would be lost or there would be a lack of continuity of service. Can you indicate what are you seeking specific funding for, and how do you do that without creating gaps.</p> <p>If there is a specific area of transformation should be more detail.</p>	<p>Officer Response: This is about transformation and reshaping Social Services rather than removing posts. It is about providing opportunities to be more innovative such as developing s service for babies and preventing babies coming into care. This would allow the service to look at posts and funding in a different way.</p>
<p>Welcome the grow your own staffing model. Are people dropping out which will affect savings targets as staffing numbers not being achieved. Is there an ambition to increase those numbers and does the cost of training reduce the efficiencies possible.</p> <p>Growing your own was not fully achieved last year, but the service is hoping to do more this year. How are we incentivising and encouraging students to stay with us.</p> <p>What is the figure completing the course this year as the impact assessment stated 10 qualifying this year and the presentation stated 7.</p> <p>Comment: Concern about grant funding being used for posts as that is short term and then if grant funding lost or not replaced then could impact on support packages provided.</p>	<p>Officer Response: It was a projected figure of 10 this year but due to changes of circumstances some have delayed their course for a year. Last year 5 people qualified. The number has dropped to 7 this year who are due to qualify.</p> <p>All the students mentioned earlier had come through the Open University route but the Council has also opened up the opportunity to consider Masters students and this year 2 students from Cardiff University were sponsored and undertook their placements were intending to stay with the Council once they qualified. This was undertaken as a trial and had been successful. Other staff within the council with degrees were eligible to apply for the Masters course with 10 applications for 2 places in the current year.</p> <p>In terms of supporting staff, a decision had been made to move staff back into offices for 2 days a week to create the culture of support for students and newly</p>

	qualified students. The Service was also looking to use grant funding to create a practitioner post supporting newly qualified staff.
Welcome staff going back into offices. When staff qualify do they have to stay with Powys for a certain period.	Officer Response: Yes there is a contractual obligation for 2 years post qualification for staff to remain with the Council.
In the Adults budget pressures there is a figure for children moving into adults service. Is there an equivalent figure for efficiencies in the children's budget linking into this.	Officer Response: Yes in appendix F under the £2.4M for placements.

**Adult Services:**

- Service specific pressures of £8.26m had been identified, most of which were due to contractor cost uplifts. Covid Pressures of £980k as well as the conflict in Ukraine. The savings proposed were just over 6.4% of the baseline budget, with the Service offering 29% of the savings proposed from across the Council.
- What had guided the Service was the ongoing transformation objectives in dealing with budget setting. The budget proposed was a continuation of previous years' efficiencies.
- Base budget - £73,938m
- Pressures - £8,260m
- Covid Pressures - £980k – these were being funded from the Covid hardships Grants funding in 2021-22.
- Savings - £4,768m
- Request for service for 2023-24 - £80,303m.
- Adults Growth Demography – Learning Disabilities children transitioning to adults services next year once they are 18 - £490,910
- Service Pressures:
  - Demography 2022-23 - £500k
  - Not in forecast outturn - £500k – full year costs of people needing services
  - Contract provider uplifts - £7,180,647 (including real living wage requirement mandated by WG)
  - Statutory requirements - £79,500 (backfill of AMHP [approved mental health practitioners] training)
  - Total - £8,260,147
- Adults Covid and Ukraine Pressures:
  - AMHP - £112,152 (funded from Covid / hardship fund previously and funding now stopping so need to be funded)
  - Older Social Work Team - £159,228
  - Hospital Team - £159,228
  - Loss of Income due to pandemic etc - £220,000
  - External Provider increase in travel - £220,000
  - Contract recommissioned - £109,456 (supported living etc)
  - Total - £980,064

- Savings:
- Transformation:
  - Full year effect of part year savings - £500k
  - Direct Payments - £200k
  - Where people live - £100k (reduction in people in care homes and specialist homes – moving people back into supported living options)
  - Funding Body Review - £750k
  - Care and Support Transformation Project - £1m
  - Travel efficiency 10% target - £64,280
  - Mobile phone 10% target reduction - £6320
  - Disability Day Opportunity redesign - £10,185
  - In House Supported Housing redesign - £27k
- Removal of Non-statutory services from the budget
  - Older day provision review - £120k (Consultation to be undertaken in 2023-24)
  - Advocacy – Independent Professional - £39,780
- Recommissioning / Decommissioning:
  - Respite for Learning Disabilities - £50k
  - Void management - £123,395
- Income:
  - Income from additional clients - £250k
  - Increase fees for appointee and deputyship services - £27k
- One Off: (Funding to go back into the base budget the following year)
  - Funding Body Review - £1m
  - Direct Payment refunds -£500k
- Total - £4,767,960
- The Service would not be carrying forward any savings from previous year as on track to deliver them. These are continuing savings on previous years.

**Questions:**

Pressures:

Question	Response
<p>In relation to Covid Pressures and some posts that need to be filled permanently. Are these pressures due to people not getting hospital operations when they were needed during the pandemic, so what would have been health issues previously have become social care issues.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The Service was contending with a legacy of people who did not have health care interventions due to the pandemic which had led to a greater need in the community, higher complexity and demand for social care support. This was why this was a Covid related pressure.</p>
<p>In relation to demography pressures, ONS data is used by the Service. How do you make sure there is no double</p>	<p>Officer Response: There was a level of uncertainty in the modelling so that when the FRM was</p>



<p>counting e.g. those entering the system following Covid might have been entering the system at some point anyway.</p>	<p>prepared the Service did not know the likely level of demand coming through the system. The modelling needed to be updated regularly. In terms of demography the Service considered Stats Wales data. Covid related pressure were those demands over and above expected demographic data.</p>
<p>How do you account for the difference not included in the demographic data.</p>	<p>Officer Response: This could be accounted for in terms of monthly performing reporting and the demand coming through the front door every month and the levels of assessments required compared to previous financial years. Therefore, could give an assurance that there was no double counting.</p>
<p>Contracts with other organisations. Local Authorities have been locked into contracts which due to rising inflation have become unsustainable. Some of the cost was due to the real living wage commitment. Has there been a review of contracts and a judgement made as to whether any of them are poor contracts. What work is being done to ensure value for money for Council Tax payers.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The commissioning and contracts management team worked to ensure value for money for the Council. However, there were greater pressures than accounted for with the real living wage, higher inflation levels than expected. There was also a responsibility for the Council to ensure the sustainability of the market, to ensure an adequate provision for residents.</p> <p>There was a robust contract management system in place. Part of that was seeking regular financial information to understand where budgets were under pressure. It would also mean looking to see if organisations had strong financial processes in place to come within contracts and manage those pressures. There was a good relationship with contractors, with an exchange of information and joint resolution of issues.</p>
<p>Contract provider uplift inflationary pressures. Does this include care home utility bill pressures.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Yes it would incorporate utility pressures as well.</p>
<p>Have we checked to see if those organisations received specific support from government for utility support. Care homes were included in that support to business. Have we done an exercise to see if the care home received support that the Council is not also being asked to cover this cost as part of the contract.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Part of the financial monitoring was to get an assessment of all income received by that organisation which would include any support provided from elsewhere. The open book accounting process will assist the Council in judging whether there was a need for additional income. All financial uplifts would be</p>

<p>Pressures from Covid. Has there been any drop off in the pressures or is this consistent. What does this look like in terms of workload for individual practitioners.</p>	<p>based on evidence of a financial need.</p> <p>Officer Response: There was no drop off currently. In relation to the number of new contacts through Assist in Dec 2021 – over 330 contacts. December 2022 - 509 which was a reduction from October 2022 (618). The demand for social care and support was outstripping the Service's ability to meet that demand.</p> <p>In terms of the impact on staff, the Head of Service was aware of impact on staff, leading to higher than usual caseloads which was compromising the Service's ability to undertake a strength based approach. This was not dissimilar to other Councils in Wales in relation to Adults Services. This was compounded by a national recruitment and retention crisis with difficulties in filling vacancies. The demand remained high, the impact on staff was negative and the Service was prioritising demand as it came in and was looking to redeploy staff to business critical roles where it could.</p>
<p>Some of the pressures in the current year were funded from the risk reserve. What is the level of the risk reserve.</p> <p>Increase in travel cost –this is only until the end of March so will this need to be reduced.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The risk budget was not a reserve but was a base line budget included in the revenue budget. It had been £2m for a few years but was proposed to be increased by £1m this year due to the increased risk in the budget.</p> <p>In terms of the 50p per mile that was only approved for Council staff so would need to be reviewed.</p>
<p>£79.5k AMHP training. When staff are doing this training their role has to be backfilled. Is the training a legal requirement and what benefit does it bring to the Council. Do we retain these staff once they have completed the training.</p>	<p>Officer Response: It was a requirement to practice as an AMHP. A local authority would not be able to allow an AMHP to practice without that training. It was also part of the wider "grow your own" strategy. The risk of staff leaving was a risk the Council needed to bear. There was an obligation to train staff and many of those who had undertaken training had decided to stay in Powys. The alternative would be to rely on the agency market which was significantly more expensive than training a permanent AMHP provision within the Council.</p>

	It was a legal requirement to have an AMHP on duty 24/7 which included covering emergency team duties.
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Cost Efficiencies:

Question	Response
Where is the biggest risk in terms of achieving the cost efficiencies. How realistic is the budget	<p>Officer Response:</p> <p>The budget was realistic and was a continuation of savings themes which the Service had saved against in previous financial years. The biggest risks were associated with those savings requiring significant staffing resource to achieve them e.g. where you live which required commissioning and operational resource. Similarly the care and support transformation project in terms of strength based reviews which required targeting higher level packages of care between the Council and other agencies. There was also a risk with the funding body review. This was a realistic budget but the Council needed to be realistic about the resources required.</p>
Direct Payments. Is there any assistance for an older person to procure their own care. Is there a register of personal assistants / pool of staff. What happens about monitoring	<p>Officer Response:</p> <p>A direct payments support service was available for clients. This had made it easier to administer the work related to direct payments this over past years through a virtual wallet (on-line bank account). There was a care and support provider which a Personal Assistant could join so they will be visible on their website. Clients could view the website to see the personal assistants available in their area.</p> <p>The direct payment is in place of a commissioned service delivered internally. The individual would be assessed and a care and support plan would be drawn up and the cost to deliver the care and support plan assessed. That would be the level of direct payment received by the individual. Care and support plans would be reviewed to ensure that they were still relevant for the individual.</p> <p>Individuals would request an assessment first to see if a care and support package was required and then</p>

	<p>there would be consideration of a direct payment. Powys was one of the leaders in Wales on the take up of direct payments.</p>
<p>Do you review care and support packages more often than a year as the need is assessed as higher.</p>	<p>Officer Response: That would be on a case by case basis with individuals proactively contacting the Council so that a review would be undertaken where circumstances changed.</p>
<p>Additional Income for home care support. What impact assessment has been done to assess whether people can afford the support given the impacts of the cost of living increases.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Everyone has their unique financial circumstances. In order to determine the financial contribution, a financial assessment is undertaken. The maximum contribution for community care set by Welsh Government is £100 per week. There was a minimum income guarantee which individuals needed to have at the end of the assessment. Should Welsh Government guidance change then it would affect the Council's assessment criteria.</p>
<p>For those people not asked to contribute for home care, when do we reassess them, or is this on an annual basis. Are we concerned about people falling into financial difficulty due to the economic position.</p> <p>Comment: This is only a resource available online so not suitable for some older people.</p> <p>Recommendation: Council should use Councillors to disseminate information to residents as well as an online process.</p>	<p>Officer Response: This was a concern and financial circumstances would be undertaken as part of each review. Work had been undertaken corporately to develop a cost of living hub, which provided information about support available by the Council and elsewhere. This was being promoted by Adults Services.</p>
<p>Technology is a way to take things forward in terms of efficiencies. Have difficulties with broadband been factored into the risk assessment of savings as it might not be available in some areas.</p>	<p>Officer Response: This was not taken into account in detail and would be considered on a case by case basis. Much of the technology enabled care did not rely on a broadband connection.</p>
<p>Reduction in travel and phone costs by 10%. Looking at the Impact Assessment (4b) there could be an impact on staff well-being. Does this also affect staff supervision.</p> <p>Also under point 6b it refers to impact on workforce as none. Is this a different type of impact to that mentioned earlier.</p>	<p>Officer Response: In terms of travel, there is a potential initial impact on front line staff but the majority of the reduction will be achieved through non front line staff. It should not have much impact on whether front line staff travel or contact residents by phone as traditional ways of working with clients would need to be preserved.</p>

<p>Concern about the impact on service users in more rural areas. How are you going to give guidance to staff about deciding whether to travel or contact people by phone.</p>	
<p>How are staff going to be given guidance. How will you achieve the 10% in practice.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The 10% will be achieved through the non front line practitioners reducing their travel. Decisions on travel by practitioners will be based on a case by case basis. This will need management oversight on a team by team basis. Staff travelling from home to the office were not paid for that travel so were not affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Cabinet Member Response: In relation to peer to peer support for staff, a range of measures had been established to support staff well-being.</p>
<p>Children’s services are encouraging staff to go back into offices two days a week. Are there any similar proposals for Adults Services.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The Service was encouraging this and teams asked to have discussions to decide what was best for them.</p>
<p>Provision of informal advocacy. Informal advocacy is provided by other means. Are service users aware of how they can access the informal advocacy service.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Those individuals would be made aware of this through the assessment and care and support process. This would be identified on a case by case basis when an advocate was required and the service was already provided.</p>
<p>Provision for learning disabilities and one centre not fully utilised. How long has this been going on and why was it not being used.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The setting was not being used as post covid numbers returning to the setting were very low. The service could be provided at another location, so the decision was taken not to continue renting this location.</p> <p>There was a continuity of support for those using the centre prior to Covid who would be using the alternative setting.</p>
<p>There was no Impact Assessment for the review of day centres. What is the total budget for day services and how has the £120k figure been calculated.</p>	<p>Officer Response: The Impact Assessment was available but not published in time. The cost of running in house day centres was approximately over £1m per year based on staffing costs. Some external day provision was also commissioned.</p> <p>It was believed that there were cost</p>

	<p>efficiencies which could be made but a consultation with clients and others was necessary before coming forward with proposals for day services. The proposal was to undertake a consultation. Following that proposals could be produced and more detailed Impact Assessments produced. The £120k was an estimate and there were also contracts with other providers and there could be opportunities to deliver the service differently. There would be a business case for any proposals following the conclusion of the review.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutiny to see the results of the consultation and the proposals.</li> <li>• Local members need to be involved in the consultation.</li> </ul>
<p>Scrutiny does not know what this cost saving means.</p> <p>There is a need to consult Members at an early stage in the process.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Scrutiny and local members need to be engaged in the consultation and reviews.</p>

**Commissioning:**

Base budget - £3,647m  
 Cost Pressures - £0  
 Saving -£97k  
 Request for 2023-24 - £3,805m

- Savings:
- Adults:
  - Reduce Live Well - £29,180 (vacant post)
  - Reduction in travel - £10k
  - Manage vis staff slippage and recruitment - £7,826
- Childrens
  - Realign Grade 10 p/t - £13,228
  - Reduction in travel - £10k
  - Repurposing of grant - £3k
  - Repurposing of grant other services - £14,030
  - Repurposing of grant – Integrated Youth Training - £10k
- Total £97,264

**Questions:**

Question	Response
For staff using their own phone are staff	Officer Response:

being reimbursed	This was Council policy regarding bring your own phone and processes were already in place for this so staff were not reimbursed.
<p>Staff using their own phones – are they covered in terms of protection of data.</p> <p>Concern about grant ceasing and then funding having to be reinstated.</p>	<p>Officer Response: Bring your own phone was in line with Council policy and there was a range of safeguards in place to protect data so there was a limited risk in relation to personal data. There were also clear instructions regarding the use of the phone.</p> <p>In relation to grants (children and communities grant), there was a high level of certainty that the grant would continue in the future. There was a high level of confidence that the grant would continue. There was also flexibility in the use of these grants.</p>

**RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).**

The Committee considered further information in relation to Day Centres, the Funding Body Review and Legacy Children’s cases.

**Scrutiny made the following observations to the Cabinet:**

**General:**

The Committee noted that:

- The budget for Social Care included an estimate of the additional funding provided from Welsh Government for the roll out of the real living wage. However, this estimate would not cover the full cost of the scheme.
- The current budget included a 3% increase for pay awards. This would be updated once the pay settlements had been confirmed.

**Children’s Services**

The Committee welcomed:

- The presentations and the open and comprehensive responses provided by officers to the questions asked by Members.
- Assurances by the Head of Service that the savings identified in the budget proposals were achievable and realistic, although some of the savings were more difficult to achieve than others.
- That the Service was seeking ways to be more innovative in the way it worked particularly utilising additional grant funding.
- When questioning regarding the ‘Grow Your Own’ ambitions the encouragement of staff to return to the office for two days a week so that

peer to peer support could be provided as well as the intention to use grant funding for a practitioner post to support newly qualified staff.

- The opportunity provided to staff who already had a degree to undertake a Masters degree linking with Cardiff University.

The Committee noted:

- The detailed information provided regarding budget pressures (£2.2m), savings identified (£2m) and unachieved savings from 2021-22 (£1.277m).
- That the position in relation to the undelivered savings had improved from quarter 1 2022-23 to quarter 3.
- Following committee questioning on the financial pressures associated with unaccompanied asylum seeker children, that whilst the Council did receive some provision per child placed with the Council, this did not cover the full cost. In addition, these children also had specific entitlements as children looked after by the Council.
- For the budget pressure of £865,063 (Placements) this was an estimated cost based on previous trends relating to placement breakdowns or a change of circumstance for a child in the authority's care. This also related to the closer to home project which sought to reduce the need for high cost residential provision elsewhere and bringing children back into county. The Committee has asked for detailed breakdowns of how this pressure materialises during the next financial year and will monitor this as part of future scrutiny of the budget.
- Following committee questioning on financial pressures that the overspend in relation to Y Bannau had been accounted for within the pressures associated with residential provision and that the number of vacant posts had decreased.
- That whilst the number of staff qualifying as social workers under the "grow your own" scheme would be less than anticipated due to changes in circumstances for some of the individuals, 5 staff had qualified last year and 7 were expected to qualify in the current year. The committee questioned regarding the future ambitions of 'grow your own' as a cost efficiency and it was noted that officers are hopeful that these are achievable projections
- That the increase in travel rates for domiciliary care staff was only until the end of March 2023 and would need to be reviewed which could impact on the budget.

The Committee expressed concern regarding:

- The use of grant funding for posts as these could be short term which could affect Service provision long term if the grant funding ceased.
- Whether the pressures associated with placements are due to placement breakdowns and whether the extra resource provided to prevent placement breakdowns (in last year's budget) is having a positive impact

The Committee requested:

- That the papers should reflect officers' views on the achievability of proposed savings, highlighting whether any are of high risk in relation to achievability.
- That Scrutiny are provided further information in relation to the higher cost placed children in their quarter 1 finance update meeting. This relates to the £800,000 pressure identified regarding the cumulative placement costs.



The Committee recommends that this pressure be tracked as it materialises and information on this be brought back to committee.

- That the committee be provided with a timely overview of legacy children's cases and associated costs which are forming part of the pressures, together with the timeframe that these cases impact the budget. It is noted that this overview would need to be confidential. The Committee requests that if it has further comments/recommendations to make on this matter that they can provide them in writing to the Cabinet and Senior officers.

### **Adults Services:**

The Committee welcomed:

- The presentations and the open and comprehensive responses provided by officers to the questions asked by Members.
- An assurance by the Head of Service that the budget proposals were realistic, but noted comments from officers that the Council would need to be realistic about the resources required to deliver some of the savings.
- That the budget setting process and the proposals presented were a continuation of the work to redesign the Service.

The Committee noted:

- The budget pressures (£8.2m), pressures due to Covid (£980k), and the proposed savings (£4.7m)
- That the Service was needing to respond to a legacy of individuals who did not receive health care interventions during the pandemic which has led to a greater need for community and social care support.
- Following committee questions regarding pressures associated with contractual uplifts and any contractual negotiations with third parties, that in relation to contractual arrangements with other organisations there was a robust contract management system in place, good relationships with contractors, and the Council used open book accounting processes to assist the assessment of requests for a cost uplift, to ensure value for money for the Council. It was noted that any government utility support provided to third party residential homes, this would have been taken into account in contractual negotiations
- That there had not been a decrease in demand for Adult Services with contacts to the front door service remaining high. This meant a higher than usual caseload for social work staff with the Service prioritising requests for support as they present themselves.
- The largest risk to the cost efficiencies were those savings requiring staffing resources to achieve them, as the Service currently had vacant posts and there was a national shortage of staff.
- Following committee questions regarding cost efficiencies associated with projected additional income from service users and the cost of living impact on this, that service users were being signposted to the Council's cost of living hub and also other sources of support to address concerns about the cost of living crisis.
- Following committee questions and concerns raised regarding the travel and phone cost reductions, and any impact to service users (particularly those in rural areas) and staff wellbeing and supervisions, that these savings were expected to be achieved from non front line staff who were working at home rather than having an impact on front line staff who dealt directly with service users. That there had been concerns raised by the

Portfolio holder regarding the impact to staff wellbeing. That this would be managed on an individual case by case basis.

- In relation to committee questions on AMHP (Approved Mental Health Practitioner) training, that having a qualified AMHP on duty at all times was a legal requirement for the Council and training staff was part of the “grow your own” strategy and less expensive than having to utilise agency provision. It was further noted that training opportunities are part of encouraging staff in their career development.
- In relation to committee questions on the saving for informal Advocacy – Independent Professional, an advocacy service was being offered to service users by other means currently on a case by case basis as part of a care package. It was noted that service users are already using this alternative informal advocacy and that they are aware of it.
- That in relation to the saving for day centres this was a part year estimate but would be reviewed following the proposed consultation with service users about the day service provision. Any proposals made following the consultation would be subject to a business case.

The Committee expressed concern:

- That the travel and phone efficiency targets would not impact on the service provided to service users and on staff themselves. The Committee sought assurance regarding the provision of guidance to staff on how to achieve the savings and that supervision would not be impacted.
- Regarding the impact of the Cost of Living linked to the charges.
- Regarding the £120,000 efficiency savings in respect to day centres and how this level of efficiency will be achieved. At the moment there is not enough information for Committee to be assured that this saving is realistically achievable or that the impact on any services users will be mitigated against.

The Committee requested:

- That the authority to consider further how to communicate with the hard to reach and vulnerable members of the community to share support and contacts relating to financial matters, and also to consider further how it utilises both the individual County Councillors and the members of the Town and Community Councils in order to communicate such matters.
- That in relation to day services the Committee be provided with the opportunity to scrutinise the outcome of an engagement exercise with service users together with any proposals resulting from the engagement.
- That local Members be engaged in the engagement exercise for day services.
- That the Impact Assessment for day services be circulated to the Committee.
- That in relation to travel and phone efficiencies the Impact Assessment should reflect any assurances provided to Members that these targets would not impact on service users and the support they receive.
- That contract related pressures should be treated as a separate column and not included with other pressures and growth items.

**Commissioning:**

The Committee welcomed:

- The presentations and open and comprehensive responses provided by officers to the questions asked by Members.
- An assurance by the Head of Service that in relation to the repurposing of grants there was a high level of certainty that the levels of grants being provided would continue into the future.

**Scrutiny's Recommendation to Cabinet:**

- 1. That in order to mitigate cost of living impact on any income projected from service users, that alternative means of providing information to hard to reach and vulnerable members of the community about financial matters other than websites be considered, including utilising local Councilor's as many older people do not have access to the internet**
- 2. That in relation to the future of day services the Committee be provided with the opportunity to scrutinise the outcome of the engagement exercise with service users together with any proposals resulting from the engagement at the earliest opportunity before any options are pursued.**
- 3. That local Members be engaged in the future engagement exercise for day services**
- 4. That before making any final decisions regarding Children's Services budget, that Cabinet awaits any further comments from scrutiny regarding the impact of Children's legacy cases on the budget**
- 5. That before making final cabinet decisions on the Adult's services budget, the Cabinet awaits any further comments from scrutiny in relation to the cost efficiencies associated with Day Services**

**County Councillor A Jenner (Chair)**