

SPECIAL SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 10TH DECEMBER 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room, Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor M. Longhi (Chair)
Councillor E. Russell (Vice-Chair)
Councillor G. Clarke
Councillor D. Hazell
Councillor A. Hicken
Councillor I. Shires
Councillor S. Coughlan
Councillor J. Rochelle
Councillors K. Phillips
Councillor P. Bott

Portfolio Holders Present

Councillor E. Hughes (Care and Safeguarding)
Councillor R. Martin (Public Health and Well-being)

Officers Present

Keith Skerman – Executive Director (Adult Social Care)
Lloyd Haynes – Senior Finance Manager
Barbara Watt – Director of Public Health
Nikki Gough – Committee Business and Governance Officer.

.../15 Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors E. Hazell, I. Robertson, T. Jukes, and D. Coughlan.

.../15 Substitutions

The following substitutions were received for the duration of the meeting; -

- Councillor D. Hazell for Councillor E. Hazell
- Councillor S. Coughlan for Councillor D. Coughlan
- Councillor K. Phillips for Councillor I. Robertson

.../15 Declarations of interest and party whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

.../15 Resource allocation 2016/17 to 2019/20

The Committee considered a report [annexed] setting out the portfolio plans for future service delivery for the Adults Social Care element of the Care and Safeguarding Portfolio and the Public Health and Wellbeing portfolio.

Members considered the report and made the following comments for further consideration by Cabinet:-

Response to the draft budget

Adult Social Care - Care and Safeguarding

Saving reference 7 – Increased investment in adult social care from the Better Care Fund (Policy)

The Committee sought clarity that this proposal related to potential new income from the Better Care Fund for adult social care and did not relate to a reduction in funding for adult social care. The Director confirmed that this was accurate. The Committee supported endeavours to pursue funding for adult social care from the Better Care Fund.

Saving reference 9 - Reduction in adult social care commissioning budgets for older people (Policy)

The Committee questioned the impact of this proposal. Officers confirmed that more regular reviews and investment in technology should achieve reductions. Officers stated that no one with a statutory entitlement to care would have their needs not met although adjustments to individuals circumstances would be considered as appropriate and that Officers were satisfied that this was a deliverable proposal.

The Committee noted the significant savings that the Council needed to achieve. Despite assurances Members expressed uncertainty about the deliverability of this saving. The Committee stated that it was important that minimum care standards were maintained at all times.

Saving reference 10 – Reduction in adult social care commissioning budgets relating to the carers development fund

The Committee was assured that they could safely surrender the saving and that carers would not be denied the legal entitlement to support under the Care Act.

Savings reference 11 – Good practice reviews of clients with complex needs

The Committee noted the savings proposal and received assurances from the Executive Director that associated risks were low and safeguarding processes had been followed in the resettlement and use of supported accommodation.

Savings reference 12 – Housing 21 contract review (Policy)

The Committee heard that efforts had been made previously to reduce costs relating to this contract and that no new referrals would be made to the scheme whilst alternatives were put in place. The Committee welcomed the savings proposal.

Savings reference 28 - Increase of the community based charging policy to charge 100% of client's disposable income

The Committee expressed concern that this level of contribution from a client would not allow flexibility in a person's income to live a dignified life. Cabinet is requested to review this to consider the impact on clients.

Savings reference 33 - Review of complex needs contracts within the voluntary sector to focus on commissioning those contracts with a proven impact on reducing demand. (Policy)

The Committee noted that the voluntary and community sector would be under pressure to achieve its commitments in the future.

Savings reference 44 - Adult social care, employment and day opportunities review (Policy)

Members of the Committee expressed concern relating to this savings proposal. However the Portfolio Holder stated that the provision of this service was not sustainable in its current form. Members agreed that individuals should be integrated into communities and not in institutional settings.

The Committee noted the proposal with concern and requested feedback, before May 2016, to provide further assurances that clients using the employment and day opportunities are receiving adequate support to access alternative services.

Public Health and Wellbeing portfolio

The Committee expressed great concerns around Government proposals to fund public health services through business rate retention in the future and the impact that this may have on Walsall Council's public health department.

Savings reference 174 - Drugs and alcohol - reduce capacity of services

Members questioned the impact of the reduction in capacity of these services. The committee were informed that there may be a potential impact on waiting times. It was noted that savings would be made through re-procurement of contracts.

Savings reference 175 - Lifestyles Services - Procure a more Integrated Model of Service Delivery

Members noted the cumulative effect on families of cuts to public services.

Savings reference 177 - Reduce spend on public health services in schools e.g. school nursing, mental health, sexual health programmes (Policy)

Cabinet are asked to consider alternative options such as a contribution from those schools who receive the service. Partnership working should be pursued.

Savings reference 180 - Achieve efficiencies through proposal to establish a charitable body to deliver welfare advice and support (linked with proposal 184)

The Committee noted the proposal and the wider impact of closure of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Committee expressed concern at the proposal to close the CAB.

Resolved that;

- That Cabinet be requested to take note of the comments made above during deliberation of the budget.
- Cabinet be requested to review savings reference 28 to consider the impact on clients.
- The Committee noted Savings reference 44 with concern and requested feedback, before May 2016, to provide further assurances that clients using the employment and day opportunities are receiving adequate support to access alternative services.
- In relation to Savings reference 177 Cabinet are asked to consider alternative options such as a contribution from those schools who receive the service. Partnership working should be pursued.

.../15

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 8.55 p.m.

Signed:

Date: