

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

31 October 2014

Chairman:	Councillor Mrs.S.M.Penry
Vice Chairman:	Councillor
Councillors:	Mrs P.Bebell, J.S.Evans, J.Miller, Mrs.D.Jones, A.Taylor, R.Thomas and J.Warman
Officers In Attendance	Mrs.C.Marchant, Mrs.A.Thomas, N.Evans and N. Jarman
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors P.D.Richards and J.Rogers
Observers	Councillor Mrs Audrey Chaves Councillor Mrs Suzanne Paddison

1. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

The following Members made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting in relation to the joint report of the Director of Social Care Health and Housing, Head of Community Care and Housing Services and the Head of Business Strategy and Public Protection on Budget Proposals for 2015/16 and confirmed their dispensations to speak and vote:

Cllr. J Miller

An employee of ABMU Health Board

2. **JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL CARE HEALTH AND HOUSING, HEAD OF COMMUNITY CARE AND HOUSING SERVICES AND HEAD OF BUSINESS STRATEGY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

Members were advised that this report followed on from the report that was considered by Cabinet on 1st October. It was now for the Committee to consider in depth the budget savings strategies before them.

Members were reminded that the total sum of cuts required from the Directorate was in the region of £8.5 million. Members agreed to consider the budget proposals individually.

SSHH1 Workforce Senior Management Proposals

Members were informed that the Directorate were aiming to work at what is termed “irreducible minimum”. This will look at the whole workforce and ensure that all statutory obligations are delivered with the minimum workforce. This proposal was to reduce by six posts and this would mean there was no slack in the system.

Officers continued that the roles of managers had expanded and they are expected to expand further going forward. Targeted ER/VRs will assist in meeting this savings. Workforce and age profiling had been used to identify potential individuals for ER/VR but it was stated it was disappointing to see people leave local government.

SSH2 Common Commissioning Unit

Members were advised that this proposal entailed bringing two teams together and on the same site and become one team.

SSH3 & SSH4 – Review of Capacity and Skill Mix within Assessing Functions.

Members were advised that this would mean changing job profiles and ensure the service operates at maximum efficiency. Members queried how many service users wanted to leave and it was stated that many cases had not been closed down and further stated that individuals do not need a social worker for life. The Council has been providing services for some who may not have still required it.

Members questioned whether it was possible to change between one service area and another and how much training is required to facilitate any changes. Members were advised that in the case of social workers some had been replaced by unqualified staff termed Local Area Co-ordinators. The training regime allows for staff from other areas of the Council to be considered viable alternatives.

Members asked whether the new Job Profiles and Person Specifications would be detrimentally affected by the job evaluation process. Officers confirmed that this process had been undertaken and there had been no detrimental effects.

Concerns had been raised previously by staff that they required assurances that they would not be left vulnerable. It was confirmed that officers were constantly talking to staff to take on board their concerns.

Service users who are cleared from the system do have options to come back into the system if required and this has worked well with Mental Health and it is now important to get this message across the Board. Members asked if a case was closed and the user required services again would there be a wait to access those services. It was confirmed that there would not be a long wait and the services would be provided as soon as possible.

Members were also informed that currently Adult Social Workers spend 4 days in the office and 1 day out visiting this needs to be reversed so that they are spending more time visiting.

SSHH7 – Adult Safeguarding

Members questioned whether there was a policy for dealing with a post that has been vacant for a period of time. They were informed that there was no formal policy in place and that it was generally accepted that across the Council that if a vacancy is in existence for a long period of time then officers should question whether it is required.

Members asked how many expressions of interest had been received for ER/VR. Officers stated that there had been 201 expressions of interest but not all would be allowed to go. Members were further informed that some may have only expressed an interest to find out what their figures are. Officers stipulated that they would not compromise service delivery, although in some areas individuals will need to be allowed to leave and we will have to see where we are.

Pathways to Independence.

Members were advised that two thirds of this budget is contracted services and that officers had only scratched the surface when reviewing services that are delivered. It was further confirmed that Direct payments will be absolutely key to achieving these levels of savings.

It was asked how confident officers were that the step change would be achievable. It was stated that some areas will be easier than others to deliver i.e. domiciliary care. Members were right to ask how easy it would be because it is fine giving an individual the direct payment the most important thing was providing the advice about what services are available.

Smart Commissioning

Members were advised that in effect this is in relation to reviewing contracts to ensure that all services are delivering optimal outcomes and value for money. One area to be investigated was the subsidies to provide extra care housing but as the Council didn't know what it gets in return for these grants then they need to go.

Members were further reminded that previously the plan was to provide payments for good provision of care in homes but now this was to change and they would only be given the recognition. Members queried what sort of quality care are we looking at and they were informed that sometimes the perceived top of the range care isn't always the best and the older people's commissioner has found some shocking examples of poor care. The Council will always look for the best care.

Members questioned what was the future of Mental Health residential homes and it was confirmed that this will be straightforward there is currently no value for money. Demand has not increased at Trem Y Mor since it was built and there is the belief that there is capacity to merge Learning Disabilities and Mental Health at if it was successful further down the line physical disabilities could also merge.

Officers confirmed that consultation was underway with a wide range of groups including service users

Business Strategy and Public Protection

Members considered a report in relation to the proposal to disband the existing Complaints and Representations Unit and relocate the revised duties within the Directorate Support Office. Members questioned the use consultants and what was the cost. Members were advised that this was Graham Williams who had been engaged by the Director to look at the whole complaints process. The costs were circa £400 a day for 10 days. As a matter of course the service does not use consultants but given Mr Williams work with Children's Services it was thought he was the best option. The proposals aim to strengthen this area as previously it had been chaotic.

Following Scrutiny the Committee were supportive of the proposals contained in the report.

3. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEM(S) PURSUANT TO SECTION 100A(4) AND (5) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE RELEVANT EXEMPT PARAGRAPHS OF PART 4 OF SCHEDULE 12A TO THE ABOVE ACT.**

4. **COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE**

Community Meals Service

Members considered the private report in relation to the Community Meals Service. Members appreciated that the Equality Impact Assessment stated that there would be a negative impact and wanted confirmation on what would happen should an individual not be able to afford the service would an alternative provision be made. Members were advised that if this occurs then officers will work with individuals.

It was agreed that once consultation had been completed a further report will be presented to the Committee in the future.

Following scrutiny the Committee was supportive of the proposals.

CHAIRMAN