

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

5 November 2015

Chairperson: Councillor Mrs.D.Jones

Councillors: Mrs P.Bebell, J.S.Evans, L.M.Purcell and D.Whitelock

Officers In Attendance N. Jarman, Mrs.A.Thomas, N.Evans and G. Powell

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors J.Rogers

1. **CONSULTATION ON BUDGET STRATEGY PROPOSAL AND DRAFT SAVINGS 2016/2017 AND 2017/2018**

Members considered the budget proposals and draft savings for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 for the Social Care and Housing Directorate.

The Director of social Services Health and Housing provided Members with a document that highlighted 5 themes in relation to the proposals before Members.

The proposals were grouped around:

Alternative Delivery Model/Plan B – Members were advised that this issue was work in progress following Cabinet agreement to progress to a full business case and Members would have an opportunity at a later date to consider the full business case.

Direct Payments – Members were advised that it was necessary to encourage as many individuals as possible to use direct payments. This will give individuals responsibility for their own budget to commission their own services and thus free up £500,000 savings.

Gwalia Contract – the forthcoming year sees the fifth anniversary of the contract and the Council will now enter discussions to possibly renegotiate part of the contract.

Learning Disabilities – there is a need to explore the current packages as there may be some that are over resourced.

Domiciliary Care – there are significant opportunities within this service area and there is a requirement for it to become more competitive.

Members asked what the benefits were of increased Direct Payment usage and were advised that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act encourages Council's to maximise its usage. This would be an opportune time to drive this forward and the Director suggested that the Council publicises this with maximum effect. Members acknowledged the importance of Direct Payments and requested that an all Member seminar is organised to highlight the important issue.

Members asked how many people currently used Direct Payments and it was confirmed that currently there was 250 individuals using the Direct Payments. This is a small ratio compared to the number of people who receive a service.

Members questioned the saving in relation to Community Meals and were advised that all the staff had applied for ER/VR and if this was accepted then the plan would be to advise people who needed the service that they should commission it from elsewhere.

Members were concerned to read that sickness absence still seemed a problem within the home care service. Officers stated that the service was losing approximately 200 days to casual sickness and it cost £46,000. If agency staff were reduced or removed this could result in an additional £100,000 being available. The introduction to two dedicated HR Officers had begun to assist the situation. It was further noted that there needed to be a culture of individuals who want to work because if they did not then it has a knock effect on the service user as they would not have the continuity of care. Members requested a dedicated report on sickness absence to be presented to a future meeting.

A request was made for more information to be presented to the next meeting in relation to savings attributed to respite day care. It was agreed that this would be done.

Members requested clarity on the proposal to improve the productivity of Social Work teams. Members asked how this could be done given that morale is not good and could worsen given the budgetary issues. It was confirmed that this was being addressed through a programme of cultural change.

Officers suggested that Members may benefit from a visit to Cimla and Tregelles Court to understand more fully the Integrated Health and Social Care teams.

Members asked about merging services and it was stated that this was an opportunity to avoid duplication. The Chief Executive has decided that Environmental Health and Trading Standards should merge within the Environment Directorate although the current manager would remain within the Directorate as the new Substance Misuse Manager.

Members requested the current situation in relation to the savings for 2015/2016 and were advised that all savings have been delivered and the Department was now showing a £1.5 million underspend.

Members raised concern about the contingency plan now that the Head of Community Care had left the post. Officers stated that they would not fill the post initially because the local pool was not experienced enough and the market testing had shown the Council could not afford to attract anyone from further afield. Members were advised that the Director had taken on some responsibilities but generally they had been passed to the senior managers. Members asked for an up to date contact list to be circulated following the departure of the Head of Service.

Members asked what was the risk of compulsory redundancy from these proposals. It was confirmed that if all the proposals were agreed and implemented it would result in no compulsory redundancies.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

CHAIRPERSON