

Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 25 January 2017

Present:

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, in the Chair.

Councillor James, Vice Chair.

Councillors Bowie, Mrs Bridgeman, Cook, Mrs Foster, Loveridge, Lowry (substitute for Councillor Dann), Dr Mahony, McDonald (substitute for Councillor Sparling), Tuffin and Tuohy.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Dann and Sparling.

Also in attendance: Pete Aley (Head Of Neighbourhood & Community Services), Dawn Auger (Interim Joint Strategic Director Transformation and Change (Transformation)), Councillor Mrs Beer (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Alison Botham (Assistant Director for Children, Young People & Families), Councillor Bowyer (Leader of the Council), Councillor Mrs Bowyer (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care), Carole Burgoyne (Strategic Director for People), Councillor Downie (Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities), Matt Garrett (Head of Community Connections), Andrew Hardingham (Interim Joint Strategic Director for Transformation and Change, Finance), Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health), Judith Harwood (Assistant Director for Education, Participation & Skills), Ross Jago (Lead Officer), Tracey Lee (Chief Executive), Craig McArdle (Director for Integrated Commissioning, NEW Devon CCG and Plymouth City Council), David Northey (Head of Integrated Finance), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Councillor Ricketts (Cabinet Member for Transport and Housing Delivery) and Lynn Young (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 6.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors in accordance with the code of conduct.

27. Chairs Urgent Business

Councillor Mrs Aspinall advised members that Councillor Bowie was present in her capacity as Chair of the Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel and had been invited to attend this meeting in that role.

28. **Budget Scrutiny**

Councillor Bowyer (Leader of the Council), Councillor Mrs Bowyer (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care), Carole Burgoyne (Strategic Director for People), Andrew Hardingham (Interim Joint Strategic Director for Transformation and Change (Finance)), David Northey (Head of Integrated Finance) along with senior officers presented the draft budget for 2017/18 which highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been approved by Council on 21 November 2016 and outlined measures to address the funding gap of £37 m over the next three years;
- (b) the forecast budget gap for 2016-17 was £2.5 m, and it was acknowledged that some difficult decisions needed to be taken to address this gap;
- (c) the Council had accepted a four year Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement from the Government which provided a level of certainty and would alleviate some budget pressure for future years;
- (d) a modest increase in Council Tax was planned, however the increased cuts to Governments grants had exceeded the proposed increase, with the continuing demand for Council services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care causing additional financial pressure;
- (e) the Council faced a number of pressures to their budget (in addition to the loss of grants and funding) including –
 - staff pension fund costs;
 - significant demand for Council services;
 - loss of the New Homes Bonus;
 - pressure of the Living Wage;
 - cost of the Apprenticeship Levy;
 - cost of Housing Benefit Subsidy;
- (f) the People Directorate recognised the complex and challenging financial circumstances they faced, and were trying to be innovative with the resources available to them.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- the number of children currently in care, in particular those in residential care, and the measures being taken to reduce this number;
- the source of additional funding to support a higher number than anticipated of children in residential care;
- the level of support (both financial and training) offered to the Council's foster carers;

- the budget for Children, Young People and Families for the next financial year;
- what steps the Council were taking to retain the city's 'Dementia Friendly' status;
- the training opportunities available within the care sector in Plymouth;
- the number of staff who were currently absent due to long-term sickness, and the steps being taken to address this;
- the action being taken to deal with delayed discharges;
- the steps being taken by Public Health to improve the health of Plymouth's residents, particularly in light of budget cuts;
- the number of rough sleepers in the city and the steps being taken to address the issue of homelessness;
- the number of 16-17 year olds housed in bed and breakfast for a period longer than six weeks;
- what help was being offered to help educational organisations within the city with the apprenticeship levy;
- how schools were using the Pupil Premium;
- whether school governors were being fully supported;
- whether the risks associated with the need to make efficiency savings were known;
- the projected reduction in the workforce.

Agreed to –

- (1) note the draft budget;
- (2) express the Committee's significant concern on whether a sustainable, quality service and savings can be delivered in 2017/18 given rising demand and chronic underfunding of services by national government. As such recommend to Council to call upon national government to deliver a fair and sustainable settlement for the future of local social care.

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