

Minutes of the meeting of the Adults and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held virtually on Monday 10 January 2022 at 2.30 pm

Committee Members Present:	<p>Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst (Chairperson) Councillor Trish Marsh (Vice-chairperson)</p> <p>Councillor Carole Gandy Councillor Tim Price Councillor David Summers Councillor Kevin Tillet</p>
Officers:	<p>Paul Smith – Acting Director Adults and Communities Andrew Lovegrove – Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer Kate Coughtrie – Head of Law and Business Partner (Adults) Joanna Morley – Democratic Services Officer (Clerk) Jen Preece – Democratic Services Officer (Technical Support)</p>
In attendance:	<p>Councillor Pauline Crockett, Cabinet Member – Health and Adult Wellbeing Councillor Liz Harvey, Cabinet Member – Finance, Corporate Services and Planning Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council Christine Price, Healthwatch</p>

---o0o---

The Chair opened the meeting and explained that the meeting was being held virtually in response to the Government's direction to work from home wherever possible. Although there was an absence of legislation authorising remote decision making, Scrutiny committees were not decision making bodies and therefore by holding the meeting virtually could still debate the issues publicly and make recommendations to Council.

---o0o---

35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Harrington on behalf of the Independents for Herefordshire as he had been unable to find a substitute for Councillor Seldon

36 NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

38 MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

39 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received from members of the public.

40 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No questions had been received from Councillors.

41 2022/23 BUDGET SETTING

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report the purpose of which was to seek the views of the Adults and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the budget proposals for 2022/23 as they related to the remit of the Committee.

During the debate the following key points were raised:

- Councillors were disappointed that there was not more detail within the report as this made it difficult to scrutinise effectively. Councillors asked that there be a more consistent approach to producing budget reports as comparisons were made with the Children and Young People Budget Scrutiny agenda pack which contained a more detailed breakdown of costs. The Chief Finance Officer highlighted that it was always a challenge to work out what level of detail to include but was happy to provide the Committee with further information.
- The mitigation measures outlined on page 24 of the agenda pack had been acted upon and would be live from 1 April.
- The paper outlining the proposals for all ages commissioning (birth to end of life) was being produced and would be circulated to Cabinet and made available for all other Members. Officers were absolutely confident that this was the right approach for the Council to take as there would be a negligible variance in costs but many more potential efficiencies that could be exploited.
- The Independent Living Service (ILS) had been subject to an extensive internal review, heavily supported by Verto, to look at how a redesign of the service could improve outcomes. The long overdue but modest investment would pay dividends by increasing the productivity of DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) assessments and targeting resources to reduce waiting times for customers who required those services.
- The £718k of savings that had been identified would not result in cutting any services but was instead about better use and management of resources, more integrated and collaborative work with NHS partners, and use of Talk Community.
- The projection graph shown on page 30 of the agenda pack highlighted that without the changes to the services that had been implemented, including triage and the Talk Community initiative, there would have been an additional 300 service recipients. These people were now being channelled through more appropriate routes and being cared for in a better way.
- Councillors felt that despite them supporting the Talk Community initiative and the hubs that had been set up, residents were failing to engage with it and there needed to be better communication of the services that it could offer. This was especially so

in view of the importance attached to utilising the service to better meet demand and ultimately reduce costs.

- The Portfolio Holder for Health and the Director for Public Health were working with Talk Community and through the Health and Wellbeing Board to find ways to address such issues as fuel poverty and economic inactivity; this included a debt management service and working closely with HBOS and the voluntary sector to promote their schemes. This integrated way of working would help to reduce pressure on Council services and the NHS.
- The investment that the NHS was making in the Home First scheme, via the Better Care Fund was the first major investment made by the NHS exclusively in a social care service and was a huge step forward and yet another indication of better integration.
- There was recognition that art and culture was an important contributor to health and wellbeing, and the move of libraries, museums and leisure centres in to the community and wellbeing directorate was indicative of this. A capital programme of £21m to enhance the libraries and museums in Herefordshire was just about to start and would transform the offer in this sector. There were also opportunities for the third/voluntary sector, with the support of the Council, to greatly increase funding in this area.
- The Council was running a pilot scheme with Aspire called 'Just Checking' which was about using technology to allow those with learning disabilities to live more independent lives.
- The Director for Adult and Communities confirmed that, following an extensive recommissioning exercise, the Council's new Homecare contract was now up and running.
- Within the budget for Home First there was monies for increased use of technology to support those living in their own home including a call monitoring system, a scheduling system and a call management system.
- The Chair requested that the Homeshare scheme be further explored by the Council. Homeshare matched someone who needed help to live independently in their own home (house-holder) with someone who had a housing need (homesharer). In return for low cost accommodation the homesharer would provide a minimum of 10 hours of support per week to the householder. The Director for Adult and Communities offered to undertake some research into this scheme and report back to the Committee later in the year.
- The Council had invested heavy in the Business Intelligence Team to look at how they could enhance data availability. The Social Care Reform Act that would come into effect in 2024-5 required Councils to effectively treat self-funding people in the same way as Council funded clients; gathering better intelligence on this group would help the Council in the future when these self-funders started to commission services from the Council.
- Discharge to Assess was not a care issue but a system issue and investment by the NHS in Home First was recognition of this and a move to a more integrated system and a more collaborative way of working.
- The Council had a discretionary Housing Grant scheme which covered such things as rent arrears and the cost of moving but could also be extended in some instances to cover the cost of white goods. Anyone who needed assistance in this area was encouraged to get in touch.

The recommendations below were proposed and seconded and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

The Committee recommended that:

1. A breakdown of the base budget and how much is being spent in each area be provided to the Committee. It was further expected that in future there should be consistency in the level of detail contained within the reports produced for each scrutiny committee.
2. Given the importance assigned to Talk Community to manage demand, an element of its budget be skewed towards better communication of its services and access to hubs so that there is more visibility and engagement with the Community.
3. The Director of Adult Services investigates the Homeshare programme and its possible benefits and reports back to the Committee.
4. The Director of Adult Services provides the Committee with more information on the levels of satisfaction with the service generally and also a response to the points raised by Care Leavers in the budget consultation.
5. The costs involved with a move to All Ages Commissioning, specifically mental health services, be provided to the Committee.

The meeting ended at 4.05pm

Chairperson