

Minutes of a meeting of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 22 January 2024.

PRESENT

Mr. T. J. Richardson CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC

Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC

Mr. B. Champion CC

Mr. J. Miah CC

Mr. N. Chapman CC

In attendance

Mrs. C. Radford CC – Lead Member for Adults and Communities

Mr. T. Parton CC – Cabinet Support Member

44. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

45. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

46. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

47. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

48. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

49. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

50. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

51. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Adults and Communities and Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2024/25 to 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Adults and Communities Department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. C. M. Radford, Cabinet Lead Member to the meeting for the item.

Arising from discussion, the following points arose:

Proposed Revenue Budget, Other Changes and Transfers

- i. Members questioned if the revenue budget had been compiled included pay and inflation increases. The Director reported a contingency for pay and inflation was held centrally and allocated in year when the budget was set.
- ii. Members acknowledged the challenge faced with external factors outside the control of the authority affecting ever-diminishing resources.

Growth

- iii. A Member questioned the appeared lack of rehabilitation being provided to patients on discharge from hospital which had to be picked up by family members. The Director reported that the NHS had pressures which it had to address, and that there was a different discharge process post pandemic, whereby a discharge decision used to be multi-disciplinary was now an NHS decision, which had caused some problems on the over-prescription of care on discharge. It was noted the Council had worked closely with NHS colleagues over the past 12 months on the three 'Rs': Rehabilitation, Reablement, Recovery elements. Community hospitals had recently provided additional beds for rehabilitation and recovery.
- iv. There had been some changes to the way NHS out of hospital services have been commissioned. It was reported that pre-pandemic there had been a substantial amount of community nursing and therapy services that would work with people on discharge, but that service was no longer available. However, resources had been re-directed to the development of virtual wards which had been very successful, for example, working with people with respiratory and coronary conditions. The NHS were also under immense pressure with regards to waiting lists and people waiting for

various forms of treatment. The Council was working with the NHS to address totality of need, but there was a £3.2million shortfall of funding as outlined at paragraph 34 in the report.

- v. Members queried the 30% year-on-year growth in older people demand and asked how the increase was calculated. It was reported that in order to forecast growth, finance worked on the number of service users and average costs, and used a national formula on the prediction of the number of people coming through as new entrants, which would usually be different each year.
- vi. Members queried the Discharge Fund increasing by 50%. It was reported that the growth figure was actual demand and costs which was then netted off with extra money from the NHS further down in the accounts. It was noted that the Discharge Fund was limited to certain periods of time.
- vii. Members noted the increase in costs over the next few years and asked if enquiries had been made of central government for additional money. The Director reported that conversations had been held with the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, neither of which had suggested there would be any more funding made available. It was further noted that much of the social care funding for 24/25 had been announced in 2022/23, a two-year settlement at that point. The Director commented that he was not aware of any additional funding coming through, though every opportunity would be explored by the Leadership of the Council.
- viii. The Director reported that considerable savings had been made in the past through the Target Operating Model, thought to be in excess of £10million, though likely to be much more when applying inflation. It was noted that this had alleviated some of the budget pressures being experienced currently.
- ix. Members noted that the increase in the National Living Wage (NLW) added significant pressure on the Council's budget, in particular for adults social care. This was because the majority of social care services were delivered on the basis of the NLW for care staff, of which there were in excess of 17,000k care staff the Council supported through contracts. The NLW was set to cost the Council over £20million, which was more than the Council could raise through the adult social care precept on Council Tax.

Adult Social Care – Savings

- x. A Member queried under AC16 (Eff) how the demarcation between care and non-personal care was made, and how, if the situation arose that a person would not do a job because it wasn't allocated to them would be addressed, or if a person on a lower hourly rate was being sent some distance to undertake a five-minute job. The Director confirmed that each individual circumstance would be looked at on its own merits, and that nothing would be implemented without reviewing all roles prior to any changes being made. It was noted that home care fee rates in the county compared well with other authorities, with upwards of £26 to £27 an hour being paid which, if being used for shopping, could be delivered through working with the volunteering community sector for £15 to £20 per hour, therefore some significant savings could be made, but only if not detrimental to the individual.

- xi. A Member questioned under *AC6 (Eff) – Direct Payment Commissioning Efficiencies, if surplus balances would be taken back from people. The Director reported that the review of Direct Payment packages was undertaken every year and was considered to be good housekeeping. It was noted that people were given direct payments into a bank account to pay for their own care with a contingency of at least four weeks in advance. Where people built up a surplus balance, they would be asked to return anything over a four weeks need they had not used, the sums of which could be in the thousands of pounds of public money. Members noted that largely people returned it when requested to. Over £40million had been made in Direct Payments, with around 3-4% being returned. It was further noted that if people were given the opportunity to purchase care, they would often purchase less than when Adult Social Care services arranged it, often relying on family and friends instead. Members raised a concern that, if people were not spending the money sent to them, were they receiving adequate care. Members requested that during the course of the year, a report on direct payments be brought to the committee to allay the concern that Members had made.

Communities and Wellbeing

- xii. In response to a Member's query regarding *AC19 (SR) Review Green Plaque Service, and if sponsorship had been considered, the Director reported that sponsorship had been looked at with potentially joining or integrating with some of the district council that ran similar schemes in the past. However, this had not been a viable option. Other options had also been considered before ceasing the service, the decision for which had been made in the previous financial year by full Council, though it had only recently been implemented.

Savings Under Development

Transitions Review

- xiii. Members noted the work to be undertaken over the next 12 months with Children and Family Services to look at the way people moved from Children's Services into Adult Services. The Director confirmed there would be no changes until the outcome of the review was known.

Health and Social Care Integration

Better Care Fund

- xiv. Members noted that the BCF at £82.5million for 2024/25 and £22.9million as a minimum contribution of the NHS allocation would be used to sustain adult social care services, with a further £8million of NHS funding going towards adult social care services, therefore it was vital the funding was maintained.

Other Funding Sources

- xv. Members noted the smaller grants expected for 2024/25 which were received to sustain adult social care services, the most significant of which was the market sustainability improvement fund worth over £10million.

Capital Programme

- xvi. Members noted the main source of external funding of the capital programme totalling £22million was the BCF grant programme of £19.4million passported directly through to district councils for the disabled facilities grant, leaving a balance of just under £3million of discretionary funding to be used for the social care investment programme.

Future Developments

- xvii. Members noted the disabled facility grants had brought in a substantial amount of money to the district councils, and the way the scheme had run, particularly Lightbulb, and the way the County Council worked with district councils was exemplary.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report regarding the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the information now provided be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 29th January 2024;
- c) That the Director be requested to provide a report on Direct Payments to a future meeting of the Committee.

52. National Performance Benchmarking 2022/23 and Performance Report 2023/24 - Position at November 2023.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Adults and Communities, which highlighted the comparative performance position in 2022/23 through national benchmarking and presented an update on the Adults and Communities Department's performance at the end of November 2023. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were made:

- i. Members noted that the proportion of people who felt they had as much social contact as they would like, remained low at 39%, which was below the national position of 44%. Members queried if this was as a result of keeping people in their own homes rather than in the care environment. The Director commented that it would be worth considering the results against service provision to see if this might be a factor.
- ii. Members questioned how, with the population increasing, pro rata, the number of people receiving a service had gone down and asked what the Authority was doing to ensure people were not accidentally being missed from receiving a care. The Director clarified that the number of people going into residential or nursing care on a permanent basis had reduced because more people were being supported in their own home, where they would rather be.
- iii. Members questioned why permanent admissions to care (aged 18 to 64) per 100,000 population appeared to be performing below the latest national average or local target. The Director explained that the Council's performance was not yet known as

the national average for 23/24 had not been confirmed to make a proper comparison. Members suggested that the figures should remain green until the full picture was known, as it could cause confusion and suggested that Leicestershire in certain areas was not performing well, which might not be the case.

RESOLVED:

That the National Performance Benchmarking 2022/23 and Performance Report 2023/24 – Position at November 2023 report be noted.

53. Creative Learning Services.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities which provided an update on the purpose, performance and outcomes of Creative Learning Services (CLS). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Prior to consideration of the report a short video was played to the meeting on Creative Learning Services: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaYX-BPE18c&t=49s>

Arising from the discussion the following points were made:

- i. Members noted that the service was provided across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and the peripheries promoting the County Council's museums and heritage sites. Two-thirds of the take-up was by primary schools, but more was spent in secondary schools as they were larger. Digital provision had also been used over the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ii. Members questioned what was being done to get other schools to join. The Director reported that initial contact with schools was made to understand what they wanted, noting that they were price sensitive due to budgets. Work continued to improve the website with new information, and events were held in schools which were usually expanded out to others to broaden coverage and share cost.
- iii. Members noted that, as take up of the service in different locations would require more people and resources to deliver, it would not necessarily bring subscription costs down. Members questioned if free trials in schools had been considered, the use of volunteers, or discussions held with school governors. The Director reported that all approaches were considered and to increase uptake time was taken to talk to schools about budget options, in particular primary schools with a lower budget. To help, a pay-as-you-go option had been introduced with the option of topping up subscriptions.

RESOLVED:

That the report on Creative Learning Services be noted.

54. Future of the Transitions Learning Programme.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, which sought the views of the Committee on the future of the Transitions Learning Programme (TLP) delivered by the Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS) prior to presentation

of the report at Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 9 February 2024, and subject to its approval, would be the subject of a formal consultation exercise. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- i. In response to a Member query, the Director reported that new enrolments to the service had paused in order that vulnerable learners avoided disruption should any changes be made to the service following the consultation. Assurance was provided that learners with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) would receive appropriate education and support.
- ii. In response to a Member's query, the Director reported that the service had been last subscribed in the 2022/23 academic year, at which point changes to the service were already being looked at because of financial viability. The service had been run at capacity for a number of years, with staffing having been reduced, and consultation on the management of resources which had required balancing when acquiring the services of specialist staff. It was noted that some staff with contracted hours had been using their skills in supporting other adult learning programmes.
- iii. Members noted that service users' views would be sought during the consultation and that the consultation would expand on options, including access to other commissioned advisers. The Director undertook to circulate to Members the draft consultation document when the report to the Cabinet was published in order for Members to feedback any further comments on this direct to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on the future of the Transitions Learning Programme delivered by the Leicestershire Adult Learning Service be noted.
- b) That Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the proposal to formally consult on the future of the service.
- c) That the Director of Adults and Communities be requested to circulate the draft consultation document to Members when circulating to Cabinet, and that comments from Members be forwarded to the Director of Adults and Communities, and Cabinet Lead.

55. Community Managed Libraries.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of Community Managed Libraries (CMLs), the services they offer and the support package made available by the County Council. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Members applauded the average opening hours of a CML which was 17 hours per week and hoped encouragement and support could be given to those CMLs and volunteers that wanted to grow their hours further.

Members were encouraged by the success of the service, which they believed demonstrated that the more done to get people volunteering, the more communities thrived.

RESOLVED:

That the report on Community Managed Libraries be noted.

56. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 4 March 2024 at 2.00pm.

2.00pm to 3.52pm
22 January 2024

CHAIRMAN