

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, ADULTS AND HEALTH COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee held in the Luttrell and Wyndham Rooms, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY, on Wednesday 7 December 2022 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr R Woods (Chair), Cllr G Oakes (Vice-Chair), Cllr H Bruce, Cllr N Cottle, Cllr B Ferguson, Cllr A Govier, Cllr F Smith, Cllr C Sully and Cllr S Osborne

Other Members present: Cllr D Denton, Cllr E Pearlstone, Cllr T Robbins, Cllr A Dingwall, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr M Lovell, Cllr H Shearer, Cllr M Stanton and Cllr L Trimnell

Apologies for absence: Cllr A Hendry and Cllr C Lawrence

10 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

The following Councillor declared that they were now on the Shadow Taunton Town Council: -
Councillor Fran Smith

11 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on 12 October 2022** - Agenda Item 3

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

12 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

13 **Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee Work Programme** - Agenda Item 5

The Committee discussed the Work Programme and considered it important to have a number of agenda items to be added to the programme. There was a recognition that this was putting down proposals for any new Scrutiny Committee to be agreed by Full Council and for the new Somerset Council after vesting day.

These items were: -

- **NHS Dental Services** – the Committee raised grave concerns around the provision across the County.
- **The South west Ambulance Service** -the Committee expressed concerns about response times across the County.

- **NHS Workforce planning** – the Committee were keen to perhaps have this as a topic for one of the regular workshops.
- **Mental Health Services** - County wide provision as well as the closure of St Andrews Ward in Wells.
- **The Armed Forces Covenant** – how is this working in Somerset.

14 **2022/23 Budget Monitoring Report - Month 6** - Agenda Item 6

The Committee had before them the Budget Monitoring Report -Month 6. This covers the spend up to the end of September 2022. This was the first Adult Services budget monitoring report submitted to the Committee. It was proposed in future these would be brought reports bi-monthly to the committee to discuss and make recommendations.

The Adult Services information in the report was taken from the Executive Committee month 6 budget monitoring report submitted on the 16th of November 2022.

After taking into account all service expenditure and contingencies the projected outturn position is £405.5m against a net budget of £383.3m. This gives an £21.2m adverse variance which represents a variance of 5.5%. Overall, there has been a favourable movement of £0.8m since the Month 5 position. This continues the down trend from Month 4 which was a forecast overspend of £23.9m for year. The action plan approved by the Executive in Quarter 1 is having a positive impact against a very challenging financial environment.

The significant variances are:

- Adult Services has a £12.7m adverse variance against their budget (7.9% of service budget); an improvement in position of £0.3m from month five. The improvement mainly relates to home care/supported living, as several placements within Supported Living have come to an end.
- Children's Services has a £16.8m adverse variance against their budget (15.9% of service budget); a deterioration of £0.3m from month five. Most of this pressure is seen in the children's social care budget (external placements) which is forecasting a £12.1m overspend due to increased complexity and several very high-cost placements, as well as an increase in unregulated care placements.
- Economic & Community Infrastructure (ECI) has a £0.2m favourable variance against their budget (0.3% of service budget); a strengthening in position of £0.3m from month five. This improved position is due to some additional rental income and cost savings.

- Corporate Costs has a £3.9m favourable variance mainly due to an increase in investment income following interest rate increases.
- Corporate Contingency is a favourable variance of £3.3m after taking account of the potential additional costs of the national pay award at an average of 5.5%.

The 2022/23 Budget included over £5m of savings, income generation, and transformation savings with £1.1m achieved, £2.3m on track, £1.1m at risk, and £0.6m unachievable.

Current estimates are that the year-end position of the Capital Programme will be £148.7m against an overall budget of £174.1m, giving a £25.4m total variance. £16.1m of this variance will be reprofiled into future years with a £9.3m underspend projected.

The Committee discussed the report and the following detailed points were raised: -

- Additional 'Winter money'. That money has not yet been received and so is not included in the budget. The Committee were informed that that money came with very specific targets on discharges from hospital. If these targets were not met the money would not be released. It cannot be allocated generally so will not show in the overall 'pot'.
- The Committee noted that spending on people with Learning Difficulties had increased. This was due to increased travel costs, families needing more respite care and Carers over 75 years old needing more support.
- The Committee asked if they would be involved in the renewal of the Homecare contract in 2024. The Director for Adult Care assured them that it was critical that the Committee were involved and scrutinised any proposal for a new localised model for this provision.
- The Committee asked about District Council Lotteries after Vesting Day and were informed that there is a plan to merge these.
- The engagement with the Voluntary Sector was noted as an essential element in achieving the best for Somerset residents.
- The Committee asked about the increase cost of care against such budget constraints. It was acknowledged that not all statutory duties can be delivered as things stand. Adult Social Care have asked some consultants to go through every detail to ensure that at every stage best practice is adopted to deliver on budget.
- There was a concern raised by the Committee that there is already evidence that Dementia cases have increased as well as a greater decline in the health of those already suffering Dementia due to isolation caused by Covid. Although the data is not yet available the Committee were concerned that this trend was increasing.

The Somerset Scrutiny for Policies Adults and Health Committee: -

Noted the Adults Services forecast overspend of £12.7m and the key risks, future issues and opportunities detailed in the report which will be closely monitored and updated throughout the year.

15 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 7

There were no other items of business.

(The meeting ended at 11.45 am)

CHAIR