



Leicester
City Council

DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2017 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cleaver (Chair)

Councillor Dempster
Councillor Khote

Councillor Riyait
Councillor Thalukdar

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54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chaplin (Vice Chair), Councillor Hunter, David Henson (Healthwatch Representative) and Councillor Palmer, Assistant City Mayor for Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

60. ADULT SOCIAL CARE ELEMENTS OF THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2017-18

Members were asked to consider the Adult Social Care elements of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2017 -18. Comments made by the Commission would be considered by the Overview Select Committee at their meeting on 2 February 2017, prior to the budget being approved by Council on 22 February 2017.

The Strategic Director, Adult Social Care presented the Adult Social Care element of the budget and stated that the future of Adult Social Care funding was challenging both locally as it was nationally. There was a continued growth in demand for the service as a result of an ageing population and increasing frailty; these factors along with the impact of people with multiple health conditions placed significant cost pressures on the service.

The Chair stated that she was pleased that the budget would be increased to deal with the pressures facing Adult Social Care but the situation was still volatile. She questioned whether the Strategic Director was comfortable that the budget would be sufficient to meet demand. The Chair and Members sought assurance that there would be an opportunity for meaningful scrutiny if any changes to the service or to the budget were being proposed.

The Strategic Director responded that Adult Social Care was a demand led service and needs had to be responded to. The budget had been based on what was known at the time, but a relatively modest increase in demand could incur additional significant costs. It was hoped however that the service would remain within budget.

A Member referred to the actions that the department was taking to live within its resources (para 7.7d) and concerns were expressed about any potential risks that may arise from reducing staffing levels to make savings. The Strategic Director responded that the Council's staffing levels were above regional comparatives with other authorities, but to enable a reduction in staffing, the work load needed to be reduced and risk managed effectively. There were ongoing projects to look at ways of reducing workload pressures; these included for example a system to manage care reviews more efficiently.

A Member referred to the issue of staff stability and stated that when staff knew that a review was forthcoming, they often resigned in order to work elsewhere. Concerns were raised around the difficulties in recruiting social workers. A suggestion was made that it would be useful for the Commission to receive a report with data on staffing levels, such as starters and leavers.

A Member commented that one of the problems faced by Leicester City Council, as opposed to Leicestershire and Rutland authorities, was that the City generally had had a low wage economy which meant that pensioners were often unable to save money towards their care support. The Strategic Director acknowledged that the demographics in Leicester presented budget pressures as there was a lower proportion of those self-funding their care and support and subsequently seeking statutory funding support from the Council.

Members commented that more money was needed from the government to fund the costs of providing adult social care. It was noted that the Government allowed Councils to increase council tax to raise funds for Adult Social Care and concerns were expressed that this was a tax on the poor and placed the blame for the situation local authorities. Views were expressed that the Council and Members needed to be more proactive in explaining to the public that because of the Government's spending cuts, there was a crisis in funding adult social care.

The Strategic Director stated that Adult Social Care locally and across the sector in England had been efficient in making savings but now fundamental efficiencies were having to be made because of the budget cuts. The service was now under extreme pressure and in Leicester for example, the

demographic pressures had not been addressed through the funding arrangements made available by the Government.

At the suggestion of a Member, it was agreed that the minutes of the discussion on this item should be sent to the Labour Members of Parliament for Leicester, with a request for them to raise the concerns expressed in the House of Commons.

A number of questions were submitted on behalf of the Vice Chair who had submitted her apologies:

The Vice Chair questioned whether any provision had been made for any overspend (if there was one) in 2016/17 or 2017/18. The Strategic Director responded that an overspend for 2016/17 was not predicted; if there was an overspend in 2017/18, this would either be met by underspends in other service areas or by reserves.

The Vice Chair also submitted some questions for the Executive. These related to reducing corporate reserves and/or asking people if they would be willing to pay more in council tax in order to increase funds available for Adult Social Care.

In a further question, the Vice Chair stated that the Executive had promised to carry out some work on the mental health impact of the budget and she questioned when this would be available. The Vice Chair also asked for details of the proposed savings from the review of Community and Voluntary Organisations and the groups that might be affected. It was agreed that these questions would be forwarded to the Deputy City Mayor as Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing as he was unable to be present at the meeting.

Concerns were expressed as to the risks to the service if savings could not be made on time; and the need for early engagement with Scrutiny was reiterated.

A Member also expressed concerns about drawing on reserves to deliver the service; she expressed a view that it was preferable to manage the budget in such a way that reserves were kept for emergencies. The Strategic Director responded that efficiencies would be delivered and that it was not expected to have to draw on the reserves during the current year and where possible, if savings could be delivered earlier than originally planned and in an effectively managed way, then this would likely ease the use of reserves.

AGREED:

- 1) that the Adult Social Care element of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2017-18 be noted; and
- 2) that a minute extract of the Commission's discussion on the budget be forwarded to the Labour Members of Parliament for Leicester, with a request for them to raise the concerns in the House of Commons.

