

ADULT SERVICES AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Mohammed Ilyas (Chairman), Michael Airey (Vice-Chairman), Charles Hollingsworth, Lynne Jones and John Lenton

Also in attendance: Councillor David Coppinger, Gargi Caur (Healthwatch WAM)

Officers: Andy Carswell, Alan Abrahamson, Alison Alexander, Angela Morris and Rob Stubbs

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Diment and Sheila Holmes.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on November 23rd 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX

The Head of Finance gave a presentation to Members on the proposals, reminding Members that an increase in core Council Tax and an acceptance of the Adult Social Care Precept had been recommended for approval by Cabinet.

The Head of Finance told Members that the proposals had taken into consideration a number of factors, which included an increased demand for social care, changes in profiling of some recipients of social care, the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and additional funding to cover the loss of the main Government grant.

The Head of Finance said that an investment need of £2.5million in Adult, Children and Health Services had been identified. For services in other priority areas the investment need had been identified as £1.6million. However the Head of Finance added that potential savings of £5.9million had also been identified. These savings had already been considered by Cabinet in September and full Council in December, along with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Members were told that the proposed budget would mean a Band D charge for 2017/18 would be £961.46, which would incorporate the Adult Social Care Precept. Members were told that the charge for 2016/17 was £925.09 and the proposal therefore meant a total increase of £36.37 per annum for a Band D property.

The Head of Finance informed Members that the Council needed to borrow in the region of £73million; however significant returns on investment had been forecast through the completion of the Regeneration Programme, which would outweigh the amount that needed to be borrowed.

The Finance Partner told Members that an extra £3.6million had gone into providing services for older people during the previous two years. Significant investment had also been made on

residential and nursing home places, home care packages, services for people with mental health issues, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding and being able to meet demographic growth within the Royal Borough.

Cllr Hollingsworth asked how much of the money allocated towards meeting demographic growth was provided towards refugees and immigrants. The Finance Partner said there was separate funding specifically for this.

Cllr Jones said she had asked for analysis of trends within Adult Social Care to identify either where savings could be made, or where extra funding was needed. She informed Members that she had raised this at other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The Head of Finance said they were aware of Cllr Jones' enquiries and would provide this information for her. He added that the data is likely to indicate an increase in the number of clients, complexity of cases and costs.

Cllr Lenton asked what assumptions had been made based on the trends in the Retail Prices Index. The Head of Finance said the fees and charges had been based on a two per cent rate; however the current rate was 2.5 per cent.

Cllr Lenton asked about the Council's attempts at recruiting new staff members. The Head of Adult Social Care and Health said recruitment in the domiciliary care sector was proving challenging, although staff had been recruited for internal services. She added that the Council was working more closely with its provider networks in order to recruit more staff, and endeavouring to make early contact with them if contingency plans needed to be put in place.

Cllr Airey asked about investment into temporary accommodation for the homeless, and whether those eligible for it are either rough sleepers or people who had been identified as being at risk of becoming homeless due to the benefit cap. The Managing Director and Strategic Director of Adult, Children and Health Services said it would be provided for people in both of those categories and told Members that families who had been identified as being at risk due to the benefit cap had been visited and advised that the Council would make up the gap in their funding for a period of time in order to allow them to adjust. She added that rough sleepers had to demonstrate residency of the Royal Borough within the last few years in order to receive support. This was to discourage the arrival of an influx of rough sleepers from outside the Royal Borough.

Cllr Airey asked about the proposed six per cent increase to the Adult Social Care Precept up to 2019/20. The Head of Finance said that when the Precept was proposed there was an expectation any increases would be two per cent each year. Cllr Airey asked if there was any dialogue with the Government over the Precept. The Lead Member for Adult Services and Health said there was a dialogue through the LGA Wellbeing and Community Board, of which he was a member.

Cllr Jones noted that savings had been identified due to a reduction in the demand for services, and asked if this had been built into the base budget. The Managing Director and Strategic Director of Adult, Children and Health Services said that predictions on the number of older people accessing services could now be made more accurately. This was partly due to them being brought to the Council's attention by the partnership arrangement with the CCG. The Managing Director and Strategic Director of Adult, Children and Health Services reminded Members that services would in future be provided in conjunction with Optalis and added that trends relating to services for older people would be monitored in the future.

Cllr Airey asked for more detail on the Apprenticeship Levy. The Head of Finance explained that the Government had instructed Local Authorities to fund an Apprenticeship Programme, and the Council had set a target of finding 33 apprentices. So far 10 had been found and were working in various roles throughout the Council.

Cllr Airey asked if any apprentices could be taken on within the adult social care sector. The Managing Director and Strategic Director of Adult, Children and Health Services said that apprentices were being sought for all areas of the Council, but particularly for schools. She added that a Cabinet paper relating to apprenticeships, which would contain further information, was being produced.

Cllr Jones said that she was concerned the costs of recruiting apprentices would be passed on to schools, particularly smaller community schools, and informed Members that she had raised her concerns with the Head of Schools and Educational Services.

Cllr Jones asked what were the greatest identified risks in Adult and Social Care. The Managing Director and Strategic Director of Adult, Children and Health Services said changes in policy requiring the Council to respond differently to residents; changes in rulings on how Local Authorities have to be responsible for people originally from within the Royal Borough but now living outside of it; and possible increases in the number of people up to the age of 25 living in residential care being supported in education had all been identified as risks.

Cllr Lenton asked what business rates the Council would be expected to pay. The Head of Finance said the rates would vary depending on when each project was brought before Cabinet, but said that rates would generally be higher when the Council borrows long term. The Head of Finance added that the Council received a preferential interest rate from the Public Works Loan Board.

The Chairman noted there had been a projected increase in users of Home to School Transport and asked why this was the case. The Managing Director and Strategic Director of Adult, Children and Health Services said this was due to changes in the demographic growth and more young people being eligible for Home to School Transport; an increase in the number of parents with children with Special Educational Needs applying for schools long distances from their homes; and an increase in people aged 18-25 returning to education who needed transport.

It was

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the report and approved all of the recommendations to Cabinet:

i) Detailed recommendations contained in Appendix A which includes a Council Tax at band D of £915.57, including a 0.95% increase of £8.62.

ii) Adult Social Care Precept of 3% (an increase of £27.75 on the £18.14 precept included in the 2016/17 budget) to be included in the Council's budget proposals, making this levy the equivalent of £45.89 at band D.

iii) Fees and Charges contained in Appendix D are approved.

iv) Capital Programme, shown in appendices F and G, for the financial year commencing April 2017.

v) Prudential borrowing limits set out in Appendix L.

vi) Business rate tax base calculation, detailed in Appendix O, and its use in the calculation of the Council Tax Requirement in Appendix A.

vii) Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Members for Finance and Children's Services is authorised to amend the total schools budget to reflect actual Dedicated School Grant levels.

viii) Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance is authorised to make appropriate changes to the budget to reflect the impact of the transfer of services to Achieving for Children and Optalis.

ix) Responsibility to include the precept from the Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority in the overall Council Tax charges is delegated to the Lead Member for Finance and Head of Finance once the precept is announced.

(Four Councillors (Cllrs Ilyas, Airey, Hollingsworth and Lenton) voted in favour of the recommendations. Cllr Jones abstained from the vote after announcing that she would be making a presentation to Full Council on the Budget.)

Cllr Lenton asked if it would be possible for the Housing Associations within the Royal Borough to give a presentation to the Panel. The Managing Director and Strategic Director of Adult, Children and Health Services requested that the presentation be given to the Planning and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel and asked that Cllr Lenton be invited to the meeting. Cllr Jones requested that all Adult Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members be invited to the meeting, which was agreed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion took place on item 6 on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 7.43 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....