

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 25 March 2024

Present: Councillors Chris Moriarty (Chair), Mark Howard (Vice-Chair), David Buckley, Maureen Hunt, Helen Price, Gary Reeves, Julian Sharpe, Julian Tisi and Mark Wilson

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor Lynne Jones

Officers: Mark Beeley, Stephen Evans and Becky Hatch

Officers in attendance virtually: Elizabeth Griffiths, Clare Walsh and Radhika Thirunarayanan-Govindarajan

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Minutes

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Council Plan 2024-28

Stephen Evans, Chief Executive, introduced the council plan which was the most strategic document for the council and was designed to set out the aims and goals of the organisation. The plan covered performance metrics which could be used by residents to determine how well the council was performing. It was important to note that not everything was included in the council plan but it was designed to give a strong sense of what the council would be aiming to achieve. The plan was designed in coordination with the budget which had recently been agreed by Full Council. Any recommendations made by Corporate would be considered by Cabinet on Wednesday 27th March, where Cabinet would be asked to agree the council plan. This final document would then go to Full Council in April for final approval and adoption. Engagement events had been held with staff and Councillors, with feedback reflected in the document. Following adoption, there would be a series of all staff briefings. The plan would be kept up to date with an annual review while progress on targets would be reported to Cabinet and the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis.

The Chair suggested that the Panel should consider any overall questions and comments about the council plan, before considering each overarching aim in chronological order.

Councillor Price felt that it was disappointing that there had not been much engagement from employers at the engagement events and considered what lessons could be learnt.

Rebecca Hatch, Assistant Director of Strategy and Communications, explained that the team had tried to organise two engagement events with businesses which did not have a huge take

up and a survey had also been sent out. There were ongoing successful engagement events with businesses and as part of these sessions the team had been able to understand their priorities and these had been incorporated. However, having a separate session on the council plan struggled to gain interest.

Councillor Price commented that there was a role for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel in adapting the council plan as circumstances changed.

Stephen Evans commended the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the level of scrutiny which had taken place on Quarterly Assurance Reports over the past six months. He anticipated the Panel being involved in the review for the council plan each year, in advance of the Cabinet and Full Council discussion.

Councillor Reeves mentioned the key implications table which was part of the cover report, it would be useful for these implications to be quantified so the Panel could scrutinise this in a more effective way. The 'unmet' implication had been quantified so he questioned why other levels of implication could not also be linked to the number of KPIs achieved.

Rebecca Hatch responded by explaining that it was difficult to set a number, for example a certain number of KPIs being achieved meant the council had exceeded because the council wanted to set challenging targets. She could look into a range being added to the implications to further quantify this for the Panel.

Stephen Evans added that there was a balance between how the council was performing overall as an organisation and also considering the detail for each area.

Councillor Hunt agreed with the point made by Councillor Reeves, this would allow the Panel to be informed in their scrutiny of the KPIs.

Stephen Evans added that the Quarterly Assurance Report included a piece of narrative for each directorate area which added further information for the Panel.

Councillor Wilson felt that a clear criteria for each category in the key implications table would be useful to see added. This would then make it clear which level the council was performing at while noting that some individual KPIs would be of greater importance.

Councillor Sharpe believed that the council plan was a missed opportunity and felt that residents would not benefit from the document. He felt that it was focused on internal decisions and work which did not affect or benefit residents. Councillor Sharpe highlighted the section on education, this was focused on children in care and did not comment on other children who were going through the state school system.

Councillor J Tisi said that the aims were outward looking, considering the type of borough which the council wanted to see delivered. The plan had gone through a significant amount of consultation, with Councillors being given great input in the process of shaping the aims. He commended the process which the council plan had gone through to get to the current stage.

Councillor Howard echoed the positive comments on the process. He suggested that numbers could be added to each of the priorities listed under each main aim. The consultation had gone well but he would have liked to see engagement with partners be further embedded in the priorities of the council.

Stephens Evans felt that things were moving in the right direction but it was inconsistent across the organisation. This could be brought out further in the final version of the council plan.

Councillor Price disagreed with the remarks made by Councillor Sharpe, she said that targets on Ofsted inspections and the green environment aim were examples of where the council plan was for all residents.

Councillor Reeves commented that the council plan was designed to deliver what was best for residents, particularly as this had an impact on the budget. The council needed to have a good financial footing to deliver essential services for residents across the borough who were most in need. Councillor Reeves noted a £13 million investment in council infrastructure, he asked if this included the CRM, CMS, the public facing website and other systems used by children's and adult services.

Stephen Evans confirmed that this was the place-based physical infrastructure of the borough. The plan had been kept brief and clear which was driven by the KPIs and metrics. Considering education, there was an Education Standards Report being taken to both the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet shortly, the extended detail on some of the priorities would be the focus of separate reports and strategies.

Councillor Wilson endorsed Councillor Howard's point on relationships, parish councils were a key focal point and should be involved in the work of the borough council.

The Chair said that on the KPIs, it would be useful to see shifts in performance towards the current aims. It was also important to consider targets across the year to ensure that they were still appropriate, for example on EHCPs being completed in 20 weeks, where the target could be difficult to achieve.

Recommendations from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **Amend the key implications table in the cover report so that it contained evidence based KPIs so these implications could be quantified.**
- **Add numbers to each strategic priority which sat beneath each of the five main aims.**
- **Ensure that engagement with partners was further embedded in the priorities of the council.**

Aim 1 - Put the council on a strong financial footing to serve the borough effectively

Councillor Reeves noted that a performance and resources board would be set up and considered whether the outcomes from these meetings could be incorporated into the Quarterly Assurance Reports.

Stephen Evans explained that the Quarterly Assurance Report was initially considered by the performance and resources board, which included key assistant directors who were close to the operational delivery. The report was then considered by the Executive Leadership Team, before going on to Cabinet and scrutiny at public meetings.

Councillor Howard noted the strategic priority around 'optimising the use of buildings', he was surprised that this was not included as part of the existing arrangements with the RBWM Property Company.

Stephen Evans said that the council needed to consider the assets which it owned and whether these were needed for operational reasons. An example was the pensions team, who were located on a separate site and there was a plan to bring this team back to being based at the Town Hall. The council currently had around £200 million of debt and this needed to be

tackled by gaining capital receipts. There was a plan already in place but this was being developed with a new framework based on the financial situation.

Councillor Howard noted that the target on 'maximising the income we receive' was difficult to attach a KPI. However, the plan seemed to be based on cost rather than doing more based on what the council already had.

Stephen Evans felt that it was a fair challenge, there were opportunities to consider innovation. He suggested that this could be picked up by the Panel as part of the annual review process rather than having a separate KPI at this stage.

Councillor Price preferred optimising to maximising. She assumed that aim 1 was the priority as delivery of the aim was essential to the other four aims being possible. Councillor Price questioned that if resources were tight, was there a priority order for the other aims.

Stephen Evans highlighted that aim 1 was key, without this aim being prioritised it would be difficult to deliver any of the other aims which made up the council plan. All of the aims were important and the finances needed to be right otherwise the consequences would be significant.

Councillor Wilson considered the transformation programme and how this would be reported. It would be interesting to see the savings delivered by this programme and also the savings which had been delivered from elsewhere.

Stephen Evans confirmed that the council was committed to reporting the transformation programme publicly. Each directorate would have an individual transformation board which would be overseen by the main transformation board which would be chaired by the Chief Executive. Updates on the programme would be delivered as part of the budget monitoring reports, while delivery of the programme would also be fed into the Quarterly Assurance Report.

Councillor Reeves said that there was investment being made in various systems, he asked if these could be cross charged or used by other local authorities to help save money. On contract management, there did not appear to be any measurement, for example on timing, value and effectiveness on specific contracts.

Stephen Evans responded that the systems were about efficiencies, the current adult social care system was called Paris and this was outdated. RBWM and Optalis used different systems and this could make transactions between systems challenging, so while it would be an initial cost it would bring long term benefit to the adult social care directorate. There was a balance on contract management on how much was put into the council plan. A procurement and contract management plan was needed as a separate document.

Councillor Reeves suggested that a measure from the separate plan could then be incorporated into the council plan.

Councillor J Tisi questioned events which would be coming up, with the transformation programme due to be finalised in April 2024. He asked how recruitment of contract management staff had been so far. Councillor J Tisi raised a clarification point on KPIs, with smaller adverse variance being better and the granularity, specifically whether this would be done at a directorate level.

Stephen Evans confirmed that the individual directorate transformation boards were all and running, with the corporate transformation board meeting in May.

Elizabeth Griffiths, Executive Director of Resources, said that the Head of Procurement had drafted job specifications. Two temporary members of staff had been recruited and this would then allow for recruitment of the permanent roles. On the granularity question, she said the

plan was to report on savings and dashboards would form part of the monthly budget monitoring reports which would deliver some clarity.

Councillor Hunt considered the priority deliverables and asked if the first was the priority of if they were for all deliverables. Some processes had been established but it was not noted how this had been progressing along with the costings.

Rebecca Hatch highlighted that the list of deliverables under each priority were not prioritised. They were designed to give a snapshot of the activities which underpinned each priority and would be updated on an annual basis. The process being established meant that work was underway. Reporting on this would take place as part of the Quarterly Assurance Report.

Stephen Evans said that many of the governance measures for scrutiny of the budget helped to achieve this aim.

Recommendations from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **That a contract management plan was created and that a measure from this plan could then be incorporated into the council plan.**

Aim 2 - A cleaner, greener, safer and more prosperous borough

Councillor Howard considered the priority on supporting the local economy and that it was essential to support businesses. Considering the KPIs which were related, which included the number of working age people in employment, Councillor Howard did not see this as a measure of building successful relationships with local businesses. They did not seem to link together and he suggested that this wording could be reviewed.

Rebecca Hatch explained that it was difficult to quantify a metric which accurately measured the quality of relationships with local businesses.

Councillor Howard suggested that something more qualitative than quantitative could be included as this was an interpretation.

Councillor Price noted that there were three different KPIs; numbers, baselining and track and report. She asked what track and report meant.

She was informed that domestic violence was an example, where reports were encouraged but it was a negative if the number of cases of domestic abuse were increasing.

Councillor Price noted the metric around food law being at 80% and whether this related to food premises hygiene ratings, as 20% not being up to standard was significant.

ACTION – Rebecca Hatch to confirm the context behind this metric.

Councillor J Tisi commented on the enforcement approach with businesses and encouraging a 'right touch, light touch' approach. It was unclear whether this meant more regulation or less regulation and it would be useful to clarify what this meant.

Stephen Evans explained that the council did not have the capacity to do everything but worked in close partnership with other organisations. The wording on this could be clarified.

Councillor Wilson welcomed the references to sustainable transport and recycling. Following on from Councillor Price's question, he asked what 'broadly' meant in relation to the metric on food law. On missed bins, there was small percentage missed but for every resident affected it

was a significant frustration. Councillor Wilson wondered whether this target could be refined further.

Rebecca Hatch confirmed that 'broadly' in relation to food law meant receiving a three, four or five rating for food hygiene. The missed bin target was the one set in the contract and the council were currently exceeding this target.

Stephen Evans added that the target was designed to show if there was a widespread problem with missed bins.

Councillor Reeves commented on the KPIs related to fly tipping as this was a cost to the council. He queried why there was not a prosecution measure for those that fly tipped to prevent repeat offenders. Councillor Reeves referenced a recent example in his ward where the address on fly tipping was seen twice in a matter of weeks and it was important to be strong on prosecution. Councillor Reeves also considered grass cutting, who was setting the targets and that some areas needed to be encouraged as wilding areas.

Rebecca Hatch said that the grass cutting was part of the metric with Tivoli, who delivered the contract on behalf of the council. The wilding areas were taken out and were not part of this target, this was part of the 'adopt a verge' project.

Councillor Reeves said that this could be made clear in the council plan and that any targets which were set through contracts were noted. The wilding areas could be measured as a metric as a positive outcome.

Mark Beeley, Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview and Scrutiny, added that there was a scrutiny review on Tivoli and grass cutting being proposed for the April meeting of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Sharpe felt it was important that measurements to residents reflected what the council was trying to achieve and making sure that these were appropriately aligned.

Councillor Howard suggested that the KPIs should be clear and allow officers and residents to feel empowered to achieve things.

Councillor Reeves picked up the housing and rough sleeping strategic priority. The KPI just stated 'track and report' but it was not clear what the council was trying to achieve.

Rebecca Hatch said that the council wanted rough sleeper numbers to be as low as possible. The target for temporary accommodation was not currently being met but a number were being housed in Slough which was not far away. It had been decided that this metric should be tracked for the time being but a numerical target was not made.

Councillor Reeves suggested that the target should be discussed in conjunction with scrutiny to determine what the target should be.

Stephen Evans linked this point with the new homelessness and rough sleeper strategy which was being developed. The Assistant Director for Housing had been developing relationships with partner organisations and agencies. This would be a strategy which could be brought to Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Hunt felt that there should be figures on homelessness from the previous year to understand the direction of travel. It would also be useful to know the amount of temporary accommodation which was available and if this was at capacity.

Recommendations from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **Consider a qualitative metric on building relationships with local businesses.**
- **Clarify the wording on the 'deliver an improved enforcement policy for businesses' deliverable.**
- **Clarify the wording around 'the percentage of food businesses which are broadly compliant with food law'.**
- **An additional metric should be added to show the level of enforcement and prosecution on fly tipping.**
- **Clarification added to any KPIs which were also part of contract performance arrangements with contractors.**
- **An additional metric should be added to show the number of 'adopt a verge' projects which were currently in progress.**

Aim 3 - Children and young people have a great start in life and access to opportunities through to adulthood

Councillor J Tisi said that there was great focus on the KPIs on those that were often 'left behind'. On supporting all children to achieve meaningful outcomes, the deliverables were based around those that were currently disadvantaged. He suggested that there should be a target included around improving attainment at specific key stages, for example. It was also important to measure the number of pupils meeting a greater depth standard.

Councillor Reeves questioned a target of 'developing an in house registered children's home provision and supported accommodation model for care leavers'. He asked if this meant the council was planning to build a children's home or if this was just provision. Councillor Reeves felt that care leavers were undergoing an important transition into adult life. The percentage of care leavers in education, training or employment was set a target of 60%, Councillor Reeves believed that this target was too low.

Stephen Evans said that the ambition was high and this would be a challenging target to achieve. The council would be looking at the opportunities which could be provided to care leavers.

Rebecca Hatch added that the target had recently been increased from 50% to 60%, while the national average was 56% so this was a stretch target.

Councillor Price asked if there was a target based around further education or training for school leavers.

Rebecca Hatch explained that apart from care leavers, this was not something the council was currently able to put resource in to.

Councillor Howard suggested that future information being provided on the school allocation process could help save money on home to school transport and reduce traffic.

Councillor Reeves acknowledged the remarks by the Chief Executive on care leavers being able to join the council, it was a good idea.

Councillor Sharpe asked how many children there were in total attending schools run by the council. He felt that the aims and priorities were based on a narrow range of children and they were not based on children who were in the standard education system. He suggested that there should be a target around improving education attainment for the majority of children.

Stephen Evans wanted the strength of support for schools to be clear in the council plan, which reflected the excellence in the education system and the key statutory duties around protecting vulnerable young people.

Recommendations from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **An additional KPI was included around attainment for all school children who were achieving the expected standard and above the expected standard.**

Aim 4 - People live healthy and independent lives in supportive communities

Councillor Price highlighted the priorities on equalities, but the deliverables were all based on health. She had expected to see something around moving people out of deprivation.

Rebecca Hatch said that there were deliverables across this strategic priority, particularly with economic disadvantage and poverty. She took the point that this could be strengthened to maximise residents income and show cost of living support examples.

Councillor Wilson mentioned the KPI which considered attendance at leisure centres. He considered if this could be expanded to include sports club across the borough.

Councillor Howard commented on adult social care and how the council was looking at working with partners for funding.

Stephen Evans agreed that there was an issue with making sure local authorities claimed care costs where they were due from health partners. It was not a level playing field as local authorities could go bankrupt, where as NHS Trusts could not.

Councillor Reeves said that there were benefits in creating a nursing home in house, options would be considered but he felt that it should then be considered, for example by the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Stephen Evans explained that it would be about developing a business case and this could be something brought to the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel if appropriate.

Recommendations from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **Cost of living deliverable to be expanded to highlight the current and planned work in this area.**
- **Consider whether the attendance at leisure centres metric could be added to also include other measures of physical activity, for example attendance at sports clubs.**

Aim 5 - A high-performing council that delivers for the borough

Councillor Price highlighted that none of the deliverables supported the council's desire to be more transparent.

Councillor Reeves did not see anything in the council plan about consultations and how these would be utilised.

Rebecca Hatch said that there was a deliverable around improving the engagement framework which included public consultation and increasing engagement from vulnerable groups.

Councillor Wilson commented on governance and transparency and agreed with the view of Councillor Price that the deliverables could be stronger in this area. The 'report it' system could be used as accountability for residents but this was not mentioned.

Councillor Sharpe said that the strategic priorities seemed to be things which would be expected. The KPIs were important and needed to be meaningful to residents.

Councillor Howard argued that there were a number of stakeholders in the council plan, the council included more than only the residents. He could not see a strategic aim for planning, it was an emotive subject and needed to be addressed.

Councillor Wilson echoed the point made on planning. He considered the percentage of complaints upheld, it would also be interesting to see the volume of complaints to put the number of upheld complaints in context.

The Chair said that communication of the council plan with residents was important and the tracking of KPIs on an ongoing basis by the Panel.

Recommendations from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **Strengthen the deliverables around the council's aim to be more transparent, for example the 'report it' system.**
- **The number of complaints received be added so that this could be considered in context with the number of complaints upheld.**

Mark Beeley explained that the minutes of the meeting would go forward to Cabinet on Wednesday, who would be able to consider the recommendations made by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel discussed potential recommendations and agreed that these would be highlighted in the minutes of the discussion, under each aim.

Vote to continue the meeting

In accordance with C25 of Part 2 of the RBWM Constitution, the Panel needed to vote on whether to continue with the meeting.

A named vote was taken.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the meeting would continue until all agenda items had been considered.

Think Family/Inequality Project

Rebecca Hatch introduced the item and explained that the Panel had requested an update on the inequalities project, with 'Think Family' being the main piece of work in the research phase. There were clusters of deprivation in the borough, with around 5-10% of households currently financially struggling. The key themes of the project were:

- Poverty and low income – lack of resource and households in debt.
- Housing – access to affordable, quality homes.
- Life skills – struggling to navigate daily life.
- Health – mental and physical illness.

- Relationships – negative relationships or relationship breakdowns.

George Holder, Policy and Projects Officer, outlined the approach taken to the Think Family project. Research and pilot design had taken place over the past six months, with pilot delivery due to start shortly. The pilot would be a cross council escalation pathway for households who required support from three or more services. This would be overseen by the children and families transformation board and their own project board. Early deliverables for the wider programme were anticipated to be training, workshop opportunities, toolkits and communications across services.

The Chair suggested that questions from the Panel could be sent through to officers by email after the meeting.

2023/24 Month 10 Budget Monitoring Report

John Baldwin had registered as a public speaker and addressed the Panel for three minutes.

Councillor Hunt said that she had watched back the meeting where the Executive Director of Adult Services, Health and Communities explained that there would be a significant increase in costs by the adult social care providers, of over 15%. This was more than was in the budget and left a big gap, which was a concern.

Councillor Wilson noted the points made by Mr Baldwin but pointed out that officers could not be criticised on every specific word used during a live public meeting.

Elizabeth Griffiths explained that any contractual increases which were known had been factored into the budget and any which were yet to be negotiated were an informed estimate. Each contract was considered separately and each increase was negotiated separately too. The comments made by the Executive Director of Adult Services, Health and Communities were designed to show the pressure the council was coming under from providers from increased market prices. There was a big difference between the budget monitoring reports for the 2023/24 budget and the budget which had been set for the next financial year 2024/25. Growth had been added to the budget for next year to cover some of these additional costs from adult social care providers. The budget set for next year had the support of the Executive Director of Adult Services, Health and Communities.

Stephen Evans added that the adult social care budget was increasing by over £5 million which reflected that the current budget was not adequate in this area. The council did not just accept the higher fees offered by providers, these were negotiated downwards.

Councillor Hunt argued that in 2023/24 there had been an increase of 7% but in 2024/25 the increase was 5% and expressed concern that the budget was not balanced. The forecast overspend was significant and she felt that Cabinet needed to consider this issue urgently.

Elizabeth Griffiths reminded the Panel that the council was currently still in the 2023/24 financial year and so the budget monitoring report was based off of last year's budget. It was a contract uplift rather than a budget uplift.

Councillor Hunt asked for assurance that the estimate which had been included for 2024/25 would be adequate and would not see the council overspend.

Elizabeth Griffiths said that it was a demand led service and was the best estimate for the year ahead. The council had re-baselined to cover all of the people who were currently in the adult social care system.

Councillor Wilson asked if there had been any events which had taken place since the budget was approved which could jeopardise the assumptions which had been made.

Elizabeth Griffiths responded by saying that there had been nothing specific but it was a constantly changing environment.

Councillor J Tisi commented that there was always uncertainty on the budget, outturn could not be guaranteed. The 2023/24 budget had underbudgeted the cost of adult social care but this should not be confused with the new financial year which was about to start. A 'bottom up' budget was an appropriate way of estimating, while the rate of inflation had come down. Councillor J Tisi felt that a lot was being made of some individual words said at previous meeting which had been taken out of context.

Councillor Reeves made the point that the Panel was considering the budget monitoring report from the previous month, scrutiny had already been undertaken on the 2024/25 budget. The Panel could check that assumptions had been estimated correctly over the coming months. It had been acknowledged that the baseline figure had been recalculated and things were being put in place to mitigate the issue. Councillor Reeves was interested to understand how many of the requests for increased costs from providers were being accepted.

Elizabeth Griffiths did not have the detail on this, it came under the remit of the commissioning team at Optalis, she was not currently aware of any fluctuations.

Councillor Reeves asked for information on if adult service providers had increased their costs to the council so that this could be closely monitored. He suggested that this could be added into the next budget monitoring report which was considered by the Panel.

Elizabeth Griffiths said that the team needed to be careful around publicly reporting contractual negotiations with care providers. These could be flagged as part of any variances to the forecasts.

Councillor Sharpe asked if there had been an increase in parking revenue following the increase in parking charges earlier in the year.

Elizabeth Griffiths confirmed that there had been an increase in parking revenue and the council were encouraging usage but there had been low numbers of people using car parks.

Councillor Sharpe asked if the increased charges had resulted in higher revenue.

It was confirmed that there had not been drop in the number of users of car parks across the borough.

Councillor Price reminded the Panel that the budget monitoring report highlighted the council's financial position up until the end of January. The increased car parking fees had not been introduced until February so would not be show as an impact in the report which the Panel was considering. Councillor Price noted on the in depth forecasting, another pressure was revealed and she asked what prompted this to have been revealed. Planning income was down due to a lack of development but this could free up capacity for pre-planning advice to be given and could be an income opportunity to be explored. Under risks, a new system for temporary accommodation had been implemented but this had not been a success and Councillor Price asked what lessons had been learned.

Elizabeth Griffiths responded that the forecasting pressure was from Achieving for Children when calculating how much would be needed for agency staff. For the questions on the opportunities in planning and the temporary accommodation lessons learned, these would need to be referred to the Executive Director of Place.

ACTION – The Executive Director of Place to provide a response on the questions around income opportunities in pre-application planning advice and the lessons learned from the new temporary accommodation scheme.

The Chair had noted the approximately £1 million movement in a month, he asked how confident the Executive Director of Resources was about the next few months.

Elizabeth Griffiths said it was difficult to say as there were no trends. Movements and demand led services meant that things changed quickly and varied greatly each month. The team were reconciling the balance sheet, which was something which had not been done in a while. Each day progress was made in controlling the finances at the council.

Councillor Hunt explained that she wanted to put a recommendation forward to Cabinet that urgent consideration was needed on the high costs being charged by adult social care providers. She felt that Cabinet needed to be made aware.

Councillor Reeves did not understand why the Panel would put forward a recommendation on the 2024/25 budget when it was considering the budget monitoring report from January. He had highlighted earlier in the discussion that these increased costs should be highlighted to the Panel as and when they were able to be reported.

Councillor Howard said that his concern was making sure that officers were still confident on the assumptions and estimations which had been made on the 2024/25 budget when it was approved.

Councillor Wilson felt that the responses given by the Executive Director of Resources showed that there was an understanding that the budget was based on estimations and little had changed. Cabinet would be aware of the issue already and he did not feel that it was necessary to make a recommendation.

Councillor Buckley suggested that the recommendation should be changed to 2023/24, he agreed with the comments made by other Panel Members.

Councillor Price believed that officers and the Cabinet were aware of the risks already.

Councillor Hunt was concerned that the outcomes of the 2023/24 budget could be seen. An increase in the adult social care budget had been agreed at 5%.

Elizabeth Griffiths clarified that the increase was on a contract by contract basis, it was not a blanket 5% uplift.

Annual Scrutiny Report - Drafting Ideas

It was agreed that information on this agenda item could be sent out to the Panel after the meeting.

Work Programme

The Chair suggested that any items or suggestions for inclusion in the work programme could be sent to him after the meeting.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 10.40 pm

Chair.....

Date.....