

**ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2016

**PRESENT** - Councillor S Richmond (in the Chair); Councillors Culley, Kane, Lyonette, Mills, M Nicholson, T Richmond, and Storr (8)

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Knowles, D Jones and Lister (3)

**ABSENT** –

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Curry and Newall. (2)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Suzanne Joyner, Director of Children and Adult Services, Paul Wildmith, Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources and Kevin Kelly, Assistant Director Adult Social Care.

**AH38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**ER39. MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/17 TO 2019/20** – The Scrutiny Committee met to discuss those proposals contained in phase 2 of the next round of spending reductions as contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20, which were specifically under its remit.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources gave a brief presentation on the details within phase 2 of the Medium Term Financial plan 2016/17 to 2019/20, which was currently out to consultation.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the following proposals in relation to the core Offer and the Impact Assessment Forms :-

**Adult Social Care Budget Rationale** – The Director of Children and Adult Services gave an overview of the services provided within Adult Social care, together with the rationale and vision behind the proposed future budget over the next four years.

Information was provided on how it was intended to achieve the proposed savings across the service by reviewing how the whole care and support system could work, not only to prevent the need for formal support, but by maximising an individual's potential by improving their independency and what they could do for themselves through access to a range of health care information and technology. It was reported that the reduction in the reliance on residential care settings was paramount to a future care model and that this could be realised through a stronger emphasis on prevention and well-being and care in an individual's own home.

Members questioned what assurances could be given to ensure that demand could be managed and the vision achieved within the proposed reduced budget

reductions over the next four years and reference was made to the development of a number of measures which would give that assurance such as a robust preventative approach to ensure that people living in Darlington were supported to stay healthy, well and safe from harm through accessible universal and targeted prevention and early help support; to more targeted re-ablement support at an early stage to reduce an individual's reliance on long-term services, through specialist services and by safeguarding people who were vulnerable and at risk.

Following a question in relation to the Council's decision to levy a precept of two per cent on Council Tax to help fund the on-going pressures within adult social care and how this additional money was to be utilised and it was reported that, alongside the demographics of an ageing population and maximising independence, there were pressures within the social care sector, such as the impact of the National Living Wage, which needed to be funded.

Discussion ensued on whether a shared partnership approach could be developed with other authorities to deliver services, however, it was reported that, within Darlington, there was not a large proportion of services contracted out.

**AH1. Adult Social Care Staffing** – Detailed information on the services which the Council was legally required to provide, together with how those services were currently provided and resourced, were contained in the core offer. It was reported that the core offer would enable adult social care to continue to meet its statutory requirements, however, there was a proposal to make a small reduction in the number of staff, particularly in those areas where there was not a statutory need and that services would be re-shaped to ensure maximisation and to manage future demands.

Particular reference was made to the impact the proposal to cease the service which helped people with learning disabilities move into employment might have on that group of individuals and it was reported that an assessment of that service had demonstrated that it was not proving beneficial and that there were alternative providers in existence which were better placed to provide those services.

Following a question about the employment and cost of agency staff across the service, it was reported that, within Adult Social Care this was not a high spend, however, there were occasions when agency staff were used to plug gaps in vacancies and to cover sickness absence. It was reported that permanent staff were key to the service in terms of consistency of approach and experience. Reference was also made to the need to retain a stable workforce as a resource and that a recruitment and retention policy was being developed across children and adult services.

In relation to the proposal to cease funding to three local voluntary sector organisations totally £21,000 it was suggested that this would be better discussed as part of the supporting people aspect of the budget proposals at the next meeting.

**AH2 – Adult Social Care Other Commitments** – Reference was made to the proposal to reduce the level of service to those individuals who were identified as a ‘priority need’ to focus specifically on the statutory obligations of the Council in relation to those individuals, which were mainly housing related.

It was suggested that this proposal be looked at as part of the supporting people proposals.

**AH7 and C11 – Adult Workforce Development Statutory Training** – Reference was made to the requirement on the Council to comply with the eight National Standards for Employers in relation to the training and development of social workers within the Authority and to the proposed revisions to that service to reduce costs, which included the ceasing of discretionary training and the coaching and mentoring programme and the commissioning of more external training.

Members questioned the impact of reducing the training and development package currently in place and it was confirmed that training was important to ensure that staff were adequately trained and aware of legislative changes, however, alternative learning packages were being looked at to mitigate against any risks such as E-learning, mentoring/coaching and working with other partners where possible.

**AH8 – Performance and Project Management** – Reference was made to the proposal to retain, in the core offer, the performance/project management team within Children and Adult Services together with the role of that team in ensuring that Council services were effectively performance managed, were delivering to the required level and were achieving the outcomes as set out in One Darlington : Perfectly Placed. The team also provided rigour and challenge to the Council’s change programme to deliver the savings contained within the MTFP.

Discussion ensued on the importance of the performance management framework and its use by Scrutiny Committees to inform its work programmes.

**C1 – Adult Social Care Review of Management Arrangements** – Reference was made to the impact assessment in relation to the review of management arrangements within Adult Services. It was reported that once the change in the operating model across the service had embedded, there would be a shift in culture and practice and significant changes made to the service delivery which would provide an opportunity to look at a revised staffing structure across the service. It was anticipated that by 2019/20, there would be a net budget reduction of £248,202.

The importance of phasing the reductions over a number of years was highlighted to enable the changes in service delivery to embed.

**C2 – Review of Statutory Minimum Service Costs** – Reference was made to the impact assessment in relation to the review of statutory minimum services costs which it was expected would see a net budget reduction by 2020/21 of £1,134,448.

The reasons for the phased approach to the savings was outlined and aimed to ensure that the transition to an alternative offer of support, which would see a shift from a reliance on the traditional methods of care and support provision to the promoting independence, was managed in a sensitive manner. The changes to the ways of working were included within the Impact Assessment.

**RESOLVED** – That the information provided at this stage be noted.