

**EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 6 JANUARY 2011**

**Present:** Councillors Meadows (Chairman); Wrighton (Deputy Chairman), Allen, Davey, Janio, Older, Barnett and A Norman

**Also Present:** Councillor K Norman

**Co-opted Members:** Steve Lawless, LINK

**PART ONE**

**47. SCRUTINY OF BUDGET STRATEGIES**

**Housing Revenue Account**

47.1 Nick Hibberd, Head of Service, Housing & Social Inclusion , presented the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) element of the Budget Strategy papers and responded to councillors' questions.

Mr Hibberd explained that the council was still waiting for the final confirmation of the HRA subsidy determination from central Government. The budget strategy being discussed today reflected the current housing subsidy system; a new system of self-financing was due to come into force from April 2012 which would mean that the council could keep all of its housing revenue.

The service was planning to make savings by reducing management unit costs. Investment proposals are focused upon the Turning the Tide initiative, and maximising revenue resources in order to invest in decent homes, renewable energy and house building.

47.2 In response to a query about the £130,000 employee pension savings in the Property and Investment section on page 33 of the report, Mr Hibberd said that this was a saving in the pension liability cost estimation made at the time of the TUPE transfer of staff to Mears. He confirmed that all of the staff had been transferred on full Local Government pension arrangements.

47.3 In response to a question about the current situation with the Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV), Mr Hibberd confirmed that Cabinet had approved a report in November 2010 giving officers permission to work with the LDV to seek funding, and this was proceeding. In addition, officers were continuing discussions with the CLG regarding consent..

47.4 Members asked why the leaseholder charges mentioned on page 32 appeared to be £100,000 higher than the actual charges.

Mr Hibberd clarified the strategy include an estimated reduction in the income budget for leaseholder service charges, due to the budget being set a greater level than the actual charges

- 47.5 Members asked for more information about the Turning the Tide initiatives, which was a programme to improve the lives of residents in the city to tackle issues such as unemployment and anti-social behaviour.

Mr Hibberd said that the pilot interventions had been successful and were due to be introduced on a citywide basis where appropriate. There had been some local initiatives including Rate Your Estate.

- 47.6 In response to a query about possible impacts on frontline staff due to any budget reduction, Mr Hibberd said that he was not anticipating any significant impact on staff. In future, the service may work with staff to try and deliver services in a different way, but it would not significantly affect the numbers of staff.

On page 44 of the report, there was more information about the staffing implications of the Customer Access Review. The review was intended to streamline customer access arrangements to housing management services, co-locating some back office functions and reducing Housing Officer time spent on administration. Mr Hibberd explained that the review work was due to be completed in October 2011, at which point there would be more concrete information about staffing proposals.

- 47.7 Members asked whether it was possible to borrow now against the potentially increased 2012-13 Housing Revenue Account money, in light of the proposals in the Localism Bill to allow authorities to keep all of their housing revenue. Mr Hibberd said that as the Localism Bill was not statute yet, it would not be possible to do this.

- 47.8 Members asked whether any planning and budgeting had been made for the impact of cold weather and contingency plans.

Mr Hibberd said that the budgets had seasonal profiles to reflect trends in service demand. This was particularly important for Repairs, who always had a spike in demand in winter months. Housing Management had business continuity plans, which had worked well to date, particularly in the recent snow spells. Extra grit bins had been installed in larger estates as well as the gritting service provided by the highways service.

### **Housing Strategy Budget**

- 47.9 Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Development, and Narinder Sundar, Commissioning Manager, Supporting People presented the Housing Strategy element of the Budget Strategy papers and responded to councillors' questions.

Key elements to the budget strategy included renegotiating provider contracts for temporary accommodation, and joint commissioning of some supported housing. Housing Strategy did provide some hostel accommodation but was much more often a commissioner of services.

47.10 Members asked for clarification of the homelessness grant amount referred to on page 24 of the report. Mr Reid said that the council had retained the same level of homelessness grant as last year with indications that this may rise in the future.

47.11 Members said that they were concerned that the drive to re-commission and streamline services referred to on page 23 would have a negative impact on smaller third sector providers.

Mr Reid said that this should not be the case; it was important to retain a mixed economy of providers for the Supporting People programme. It was necessary to look at the economies of scale and also to help support small providers.

Ms Sundar said that they were very keen to protect small specialist providers; it was important to provide a range of services for all client groups. They had been working with their Supporting People providers throughout 2010, reviewing their processes through a number of mechanisms including stakeholder groups. The new Supporting People strategy would be in place from April 2011.

47.12 Members raised queries about potential work duplication with the forthcoming Health White Paper, in which local areas would be given resources to improve housing and improve poor health.

Mr Reid assured the committee that Housing Strategy would work with colleagues in Adult Social Care and in Health in order to avoid duplication and coordinate the best use of money. However it should be noted that the Supporting People programme was a specialist one with a focus on housing and homelessness in vulnerable people.

### **Adult Social Care budget scrutiny**

47.13 Councillor Ken Norman, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, and Karin Divall, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, presented the Adult Social Care element of the Budget Strategy papers and responded to members' questions.

There had been increased pressures due to demographic growth and increased expectations of customers. Key strands to the budget strategy included the further roll out of personalisation, Value for Money initiatives and workforce efficiencies.

47.14 Members commented that that ringfencing around Learning Disabilities funding was disappearing; would services be affected?

Ms Divall confirmed that it was the intention that efficiencies would be made in Learning Disabilities through integration of the service within Adult Social Care and with personalisation. Efficiencies would be made around reablement, the use of technology etc. There were no plans to reduce services or funding.

- 47.15 Members asked whether it was the case that everybody would be moved onto Personal Budgets or whether there was any scope for discretion. How were savings being made through personalisation?

Councillor Norman assured the committee that personal budgets were available for those who wanted them but that people would never be forced into using them, as not everybody would want to use them. It had been shown from experience that people using personal budgets were able to get lower prices for services than the local authority so savings were being made.

- 47.16 Members asked about the implications of some grants ending. Ms Divall said that some of the grants had been scheduled to end and provision had been made in those cases. In particular, in the case of the dementia grant, this had been used to run a time-limited project for carers from the BME community. The PCT had now committed to finding the funding for the project so the work would be sustained.

- 47.17 Members commented that personalisation seemed like a very positive story, with benefits for the customer, for the provider and for the local authority, leading to genuine choice for users. Councillor Norman said that it was about rearranging services in a more proportionate manner. The savings made by doing so would eliminate the need for cuts.

- 47.18 Members asked whether Councillor Norman thought that Intelligent Commissioning would help to make significant future savings; Councillor Norman said that he was unable to say at this stage what the outcome would be but he hoped that this would be the case. It might be better to direct this question toward the Director of Finance.

- 47.19 Members asked for more information about the Section 75 reviews.

Jane Simmons, Head of Commissioning and Partnerships, explained that there were three Section 75s in place in Brighton and Hove concerning joint working with a variety of health partners. The arrangements were working very well, but there had been some lack of clarification around contract requirements, roles and responsibilities and it was an opportune time to review and clarify working arrangements for everyone.

- 47.20 Members said that they welcomed the intention to continue building social capital as this had huge benefits for the city. However long-term gain was only possible with short term investment now; was this being planned?

Ms Simmons said that the council needed to complete a 'Prevention and Wellbeing' strategy which would show how the council could provide universal services. There was thinking around introducing community hubs to deliver some services. The Supporting People team also had some resources to help support social capital. The challenge was to bring the funding streams together in a coherent and meaningful way. Nevertheless it was recognised that developing social capital was a major challenge.

- 47.21 Members asked about the impact on the workforce with the planned rearrangement of services.

Ms Divall explained that it was about changing the way in which people worked. She gave the example of Access Point, which provided a proportionate and timely response to their callers and had dealt with the backlog of clients waiting for Occupational Therapy assessments. It was able to deal with 90% of cases at the point of contact, freeing up social workers to carry out the more involved and complex work. There was a similar situation in the case of reablement, where some concentrated work with the client at the outset freed up social worker time later on to focus on more demanding cases.

- 47.22 Some members queried how it was the case that there could be no additional service pressures with the removal of some significant grant funding. Councillor Norman assured them that this was the case and that personalisation and new ways of working such as Access Point had freed up considerable resources for other areas. He said that he believed that the service could continue to be provided within budget.

- 47.23 The committee thanked all of the officers for their work and thanked Councillor Norman for attending the scrutiny committee. Councillor Norman expressed his thanks for the officers' work too.

- 47.24 RESOLVED** – That the Committee have noted and commented on the proposed budget strategies and that the minutes are sent to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for their information.

