

**Minutes Extract - Performance, Budget Monitoring and MTFS Item
Fulfilled Adult Lives Scrutiny Panel
17 January 2023**

Becky Wilkinson, Director of Adult Services, introduced the report and advised the panel that it was the first time a collective performance and finance report has been presented. The presentation will include the service priorities and how they link to the Council plan. The Director of Adult Services commented that feedback from the panel on the budget plans would be welcome.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that James Barlow, Finance Business Partner, would present budget section of the presentation and James Amphlett, Head of Data and Analytics, would present the performance section of the presentation.

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner, advised the panel of the annual budget setting consultation process and that the Council has a legal requirement to set a balanced budget each year, which includes corporate resources, for example, rates, fees and charges, and council tax grants, matches the expenditure for payments such as care packages, building costs and salaries.

The Finance Business Partner advised the panel that the latest budget update report was presented to Cabinet on 16 October 2022. The involvement of scrutiny is an important part of the annual budget setting process. The Finance Business Partner commented that every year changes are made annually to the format to improve the way the information is presented, and panel feedback would be welcome.

The Finance Business Partner commented that the Council has a strong track record of setting a balanced budget and the feedback from the panel will be included in the report to Scrutiny Board in February 2023 and a further report presented to Council in March 2023. The Finance Business Partner invited James Amphlett, Head of Data and Analytics, to present the performance data for Quarter 2.

The Head of Data and Analytics advised the panel that there are overall 56 KPIs in the Our City: Our Plan performance framework and at the quarter 2 period, 33 KPIs have shown improvement, 17 KPIs are yet to be updated and 6 KPIs have seen a decrease in performance, compared to the previous quarter. The missing information about KPIs will be updated following publication of the relevant national data sets.

The Head of Data and Analytics commented on the decrease in the KPI percentage of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment and the changes in overall performance of the service area against four of the indicators in the Adult Social Care performance framework. The data is based on the national statutory returns published on 20 October 2022.

The Head of Data and Analytics invited the Finance Business Manager to present the details about the forecast budget position.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the summary forecast budget position statement was presented to Cabinet in November 2022 and gave details about the

overall use of the budget. Adult Services was at this stage forecast to have an underspend of £1.182m. The Finance Business Manager gave details of areas which contributed to the forecast underspend estimate, for example, in adult safeguarding, the delay in the introduction of the new Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards legislation.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the 2023 -2024 Draft Budget and MTFS 2023- 2024 to 2025-2026 Overview which details how the Council is planning to set a balanced budget. The Finance Business Partner commented on work being done to reduce the forecast budget deficit of £7m for 2023-2024 rising to £31.6m by 2025-2026.

The Council has had details of the provisional budget settlement figure announced in December 2023 and details of the final settlement are expected later this month. The aim will be present to Council proposals to set a balanced budget for 2023-2024 and deliver a sustainable medium term financial strategy.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the budget saving target of £2 million for 2023-2024 which relates to the budget area covered by the panel.

The Finance Business Partner advised the panel that there were no savings targets in the MTFS in areas under the remit of the panel.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the earmarked reserves related to the Adult Services and advised the panel that the reserve will be used in 2023 -2024 with approved commitments.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the strategic risks relevant to the remit of the panel and highlighted the increasing demand for social care as people being more poorly following their discharge from hospital. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that the service is working with health colleagues to manage the demand, highlighting the increase demand for wraparound care for people leaving hospital.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the impact of rising inflation and cost of living on the care provider market, who are the main providers of adult social care in Wolverhampton, as reflected in increasing costs for providing care services.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the national health picture and the focus on hospital discharge highlighting the work being done with colleagues in health to support the process.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the issue of workforce retention and the work being done to encourage people to stay in adult social care. The short-term nature of employment contracts has made it difficult to recruit and retain care staff.

The panel were invited to comment on the presentation.

The panel commented that a report cover sheet setting out the recommendations should have been included in the presentation. The Director of Adult Services noted the comment.

The panel discussed the range of challenges facing the adult social care, highlighting the decline in the number of care providers, low pay and increasing charges for services and the impact this is having on residents' ability to pay for their care.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that pay has been an issue for providers. The Director of Adult Services commented that the service has undertaken a fair cost of care exercise which has asked for responses from all our care providers to get details of their actual cost of care. There is acceptance of the gap between the fees paid by the Council and their costs.

The Director of Adult Services commented that there is growth built into the budget which is expected to go some way to meeting that gap and reassured the panel that there has not been an overall reduction in care providers currently, but there is evidence that some care providers are struggling financially. There is an expectation that the planned care fee review will address the concerns raised.

The panel welcomed the creation of the in house supported employment team and queried how the service was being promoted. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel of progress being made to create the team and that currently there no public promotional campaign is planned. The Director of Adult Services agreed to update the panel on progress when the team has been established.

The panel suggested a more detailed response to the panel concerns be included in the report about care fee review scheduled for meeting on 8 February 2023. The Director of Adult Services agreed to the request.

The panel welcomed the increase in the performance indicator nationally ranking from 120th to 14th in terms of the *percentage of adults in receipt of long-term services who are in control of their own lives*. The panel suggested if there was method for sharing the good practice which led to the improvement with other councils nationally. The Director of Adult Services agreed to investigate and report back to the panel about how the learning could be shared with colleagues across the West Midlands.

The panel queried the reasons for the reduction in the percentage of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment and if this was reflective of the national trend.

The panel also queried the reasons for the smaller improvement in the performance figures on the percentage of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services.

The Head of Data and Analytics commented on the impact of Covid 19 on employment levels nationally when making an assessment when comparing figures pre and post the pandemic. The Head of Data and Analytics agreed to investigate further and report the findings to the panel.

The panel welcomed the improved performance of the service against the performance indicator – *percentage of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation* but queried this

improvement against the reported concerns about the delayed discharges into care and ambulances being delayed at hospital.

The Director of Adult Services commented on recent discussions with health colleagues to look specifically at the issue of hospital discharges and gave examples of the work of adult social care in preventing admissions in the first place. There is a national focus on reducing delays and there is special national funding to support this work and the Council is monitored daily on its performance. The Director of Adult Services acknowledged the importance of work to support hospitals but added that there is also a need to focus on home care provision and the community offer and how this can support national and local efforts to reduce hospital discharge delays.

The panel queried the reference in the budget section of the presentation to uncertainty about inflationary pressures in view of a recent Government announcement that grants to local authorities would be increased to cover inflation increases, that will help to ease budget pressures on the Council.

The Finance Business Partner confirmed that the Council has had a significant increase in funding in terms of the provisional Government grant settlement award for adults and children's services.

There is work ongoing to consider the budget implications of the award and a detailed report will be presented to Cabinet to in February 2023. The Finance Business Partner commented that it was important to wait for the final settlement figures to be presented and to see if any conditions are attached.

The panel discussed the presentation of some of the performance data as percentages and suggested that baseline figures should be included to give context to the changes reported in Quarter 2.

The panel queried when considering the performance of the Council to outline what it is being measured against and to comment on what success looks like. The Head of Data and Analytics explained how data is collected and analysed and used to assess how the Council has improved against KPIs compared to the previous quarter as shown in the presentation.

The Head of Data and Analytics added that in terms of assessing performance comparisons will also be made with local and regional statistical neighbours and the Council will also be judging itself against the national averages.

The Director of Adult Services commented on improving performance of the service in terms of direction of travel and added that when comparing performance this also includes referring to CIPFA Nearest Neighbour Comparator data for the West Midlands.

The data provides a good benchmark to compare performance over time as they include areas with a similar deprivation score and population size to Wolverhampton. The Director of Adult Services agreed to provide regional reports from West Midlands ADASS to show different levels of comparative performance data to a future meeting of the panel.

The panel queried if there were sufficient funds in the adult services budget to cope with the level of hospital discharges in the immediate term. The Director of Adult Services commented that while there had been a small increase in case numbers being discharged that some of this increase had been met through joint funding work with health colleagues but suspected that the numbers needing social care packages will increase over time.

The panel discussed the impact on the quality of care because of unfilled social care vacancies, particularly among private care workers and highlighted the pressures on the sector. The panel commented about the need for caution when considering using budget underspends caused by unfilled vacancies.

The panel discussed the challenges when residents call 999 and getting a timely response due the level of pressure on the service during the winter period.

The Director of Adult Service commented on performance of the service during the winter period and reassured the panel that flow of people from hospital has been managed. The Director added that 93 per cent of care packages over the Christmas period was sourced within 48 hours and 80 per cent of care packages were arranged in 24 hours, and overall was pleased with the performance of the service. The Director cautioned that there are numbers of very ill people in hospital to be discharged over the next few weeks.

The panel discussed the issue of staffing levels in different care settings and agreed that it would be helpful to have more detailed statistics to better understand the pressures affecting the service and resources available to care providers to meet the level of demand.

The Director of Adult Services commented that currently there are 4042 people getting adult social care support from the Council and about 3000 of people of this total are in long term care settings.

The Director of Adult Service commented that the service has access to different sources of information about staffing levels. The information is collated through a capacity tracker which is used to identifying available capacity in care homes and includes details about staffing levels. The Director of Adult Services agreed that it would be helpful for the panel to understand the social care market in Wolverhampton and the range of support available to prevent the failure of care providers. The panel agreed that the information could be included in the report of care fees to be presented to the next scheduled meeting.

The panel queried the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on care home providers and carers. The Director of Adult Services commented that there has been an increase in enquiries from care providers asking for the level of care fees to be reassessed. The service is aware of impact of the crisis on carers especially unpaid carers who may be experiencing additional financial hardship during this period. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel about the financial welfare support available to carers and suggested that a report could be presented to a future meeting.

The panel agreed with this proposal.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on draft budget 2023-2024 to be noted and included in the report to Scrutiny Board.
2. The Director of Adult Services to include information requested by the panel as part of the presentation on Care and Support Provider Review 2023- 2024 and Market Sustainability report.
3. The Director of Adult Services to present a report on the financial wellbeing support available to carers to a future meeting of the panel.

