

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

27 January 2022

Breakout Room – Strength Based Working

Councillors

Councillor Mark Hughes – Lead Councillor for the Breakout Room

Councillors: Sally Beardsworth, Richard Solesbury-Timms and Danielle Stone

Officers

Stuart Lackenby – Executive Director Adults, Communities & Wellbeing

Maisie McInnes – Democratic Services Officer

The Breakout Room confirmed that Councillor Mark Hughes would be the lead Councillor for this Group and would report back the recommendations of the Breakout Room to the main Task and Finish Group.

The Executive Director Adults, Communities & Wellbeing gave the Breakout Room background information on the budget and challenges faced by the Adults, Communities and Wellbeing area and delivered informative presentation on Strength Based Working.

Key points:

- For 2022/23 the total budget for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing is £115.7m. Biggest area within the Council and largest workforce.
- The Strength Based Working approach started in 2019 and is based around three conversations
- The first conversation is the initial meet, where we listen to the person and hear their story and problems, and make sure we really understand what they want and need. Signpost people to local volunteers and other support groups.
- Secondly, deliver a period of short intervention, cocooning them through crisis by connecting them with friends/family and services in the community.
- Thirdly, if further support is needed, we will think creatively about their support and keep people at home for as long as possible.
- Emphasised that the care home context has changed, recommended for people with complex needs and not a quick solution.
- There were opportunities identified for savings as summarised in the presentation with projected £7.5m Medium Term Financial Plan Savings for 2021-2024.

Area	Summary of Opportunity	West	Current
OP Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting more people in a more independent setting and better matching support to need using a strength based approach focusing on independence. <i>Target reduced areas of spend: OP Residential, Nursing and Home Care</i> 	£1.1m	£2.1m
Older People Reablement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the capacity and volume of service users who can benefit from Reablement services, increasing effectiveness in the process to ensure maximum independence. <i>Target reduced areas of spend: OP Home Care</i> 	£2.6m	£0.2m
WAA Decision Making & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better matching support to needs using a strength based approach focusing on independence and by reducing the need for formal support over time <i>Target reduced areas of spend: WAA Home Care, WAA Direct Payments, WAA Supported Living</i> 	£3.6m	£1.7m
WAA Moving on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting more young adults in a more independent setting outside of Residential care by identifying and supporting people to move settings <i>Target reduced areas of spend: WAA Residential Care</i> 	0.2m	£0.2m
Pathways & Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing the daily activities of staff to enable an improved new ways of working meaning backlogs can be cleared and the required demand serviced without hiring more people. <i>Target reduced areas of spend: Cost avoidance on Staff spend</i> 		

- The areas were identified and summarised and aligned against current savings in green with the expected target under West.
- Areas are on target with OP Decision Making having achieved over the target already.
- Savings achieved already amount to £5.9m so already near to target of £7.5m by 2024.
- Target of £7.5m is achievable, but savings will be stretched to meet new target of £9.1m
- Reablement service for older persons experiencing crisis/deterioration of health is a free service for 6 weeks and includes occupational therapy.
- Strength based working approach promotes independent living and drives supported living over residential care so that individuals have access to allowance and can live a better life

The Breakout room made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Members felt that £152k is a justified spend to bring LA workforce out of poverty and demonstrate support for staff and give recognition for their hard work. The pay rise would help to increase morale.
- Members agreed that pay rise was needed and felt more could be done to improve morale to retain staff.
- The Breakout room suggested that this is fed back to committee that Cabinet use funds to deliver pay rise from this year's budget.
- There were chronic staff shortages in the sector. The UK Homecare published a report this week and findings show that a minimum wage of £11.15ph is needed for

care to be an attractive job. At present £26ph is paid to care provider services but staff receive in the main a much lower amount in line with legal minimum wages.

- Consideration to be given to similarly remunerating external care staff
- Members expressed concerns with outsourcing as companies were profiting from vulnerable people
- Homecare currently had 76 external providers; largest provider has a 6% share. For the future we need to look at how we can support local providers. Can have up to 5 providers in the same street, so need to streamline providers as this will reduce budget and travel costs.
- Members felt that the Council needed to be the largest care provider in order to have a better grip on governance and ensure quality assurance and better delivery of training.
- There was a service gap in finding providers to deliver support in rural areas such as in South Northants
- Current overspend is a result of hospital discharges, need to come up with a model for adult social care that is sustainable.
- Members were worried about how the social care sector would be able to recruit reliable workforce and asked about overseas workers
- It was heard that there were not many overseas workers.
- Job roles were not suitable for those looking for immediate start as DBS checks which could take 3-5 weeks and training required to start the job.
- Need to change way job is promoted and marketed to natural born carers and those looking for long-term career progression.
- Members commended the savings in the budget and felt that as the largest area in the Council, investments should be made from the outset to maximise long-term savings.
- Preventative care would continue to be explored and how the public grant could be used more effectively and how efficiency savings could be made.