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PEOPLE AND HEALTH OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present: Cllrs Mike Parkes (Chairman), Pauline Batstone (Vice-Chairman), Tony Alford, Pete Barrow, Jean Dunseith, Beryl Ezzard, Stella Jones, Rebecca Knox, and Cathy Lugg

Apologies: Cllr Ryan Holloway

Also present: Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Jane Somper and Cllr Peter Wharf

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Vivienne Broadhurst (Executive Director - People Adults), Jonathan Price (Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning), Sarah Sewell (Strategic Commissioning Lead), Claire Shiels (Corporate Director - Commissioning, Quality & Partnerships), Steve Veevers (Corporate Director Operations, Adult Care), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

14. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Holloway.

15. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Alford declared an interest in item 7 – Adult Social Care Market Sustainability Plan. He said that there was no specific or pecuniary interest that applied at this current time, however he expected one to arise in the reasonably near future.

16. Minutes

Proposed by Cllr Batstone, seconded by Cllr Lugg.

Decision: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2022 be confirmed and signed.

17. Public Participation

The committee received a question from the member of the public. The question and response are attached to these minutes.

18. Councillor Questions

There were no questions from members.

19. **Independent Review of Children's Services Social Care**

The Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships introduced the item. The report shared key findings of detailed work on a national level. Some of the potential reforms could need significant funding from the government. Some elements of the review would be well placed for Dorset as there were changes that the council has already considered doing or have already started. However, there were some significant challenges within the report.

The committee discussed the report, and the following questions and comments were made:

- The council is ahead of the curve on some of the potential reforms.
- Independent Review Officers were a crucial part of the process to work with young people and social workers.
- There are already advocates for children in Dorset.
- There needed to be more partnership working between children's social care and education services.
- There were differences between councils in the region which could cause challenges for Regional Care Co-operatives.
- The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills, and Early Help shared concerns with his counterparts about a regional format. They felt that local models were the best way forward.
- In response to a question about recruiting enough staff, members were advised that children's services were not having as much difficulty recruiting compared to other places. Staff saw the model was attractive and a good place to work.
- Councillors should be encouraged to support staff in a reasonable way.
- It was important that Dorset Council was an employer of choice and that recognition was important.
- A member did not agree with the creation of national pay scales. The Portfolio holder advised there were mechanisms to change local pay scales.

The committee would be kept updated with the potential reforms when the government has responded to the review and created an implementation plan.

The committee noted the report.

20. **Adult Social Care Market Sustainability Plan**

The Corporate Director for Commissioning introduced the Market Sustainability Plan and outlined the timeline to submit the final version of the plan. This plan was the market reform element of the wider adult social care reforms. Dorset Council has received £1.2 million to work towards market sustainability and further money was expected up to the year 2024-25. A presentation was given during this item, and it was included in Appendix 1 of

this item on the agenda. Members were given the opportunity to raise questions at various points throughout the presentation.

Through questions and discussion, the following key points were raised:

- There was a specified agenda to deliver through the reforms.
- There was an opportunity for self-funders to have the council organise care on their behalf, however this was a choice, and they could find care from a different provider.
- Financial advice was not the council's role; however, it could provide information and signpost.
- Due to Dorset having a higher proportion of elderly people, the Leader of the Council would be writing to the Prime Minister and engaging with the relevant new ministers about funding for the adult social care reforms.
- There needed to be an increase in engagement from care providers.
- The Local Plan was key to ensuring that there was enough affordable housing for people working in the care industry. Affordable housing needed to be built near residential homes.
- 22% of beds in residential homes were unoccupied due to a lack of staff.
- RSL's could take some pressures off the service and the council was now working more in partnership with RSL's.

The committee agreed that:

- a) The Market Sustainability Plan be recommended to Cabinet for approval, subject to any comments and amendments.
- b) There was an intention to return to the People & Health Overview Committee with the finalised plan as part of the second stage submission process.

21. Committee's Forward Plan and Cabinet's Forward Plan

The Committee considered its forward plan and that of the Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills, and Early Help offered to update the committee on family hubs, the virtual school, and the Children's Social Care Review at the meeting on 31 January 2023.

The Adult Social Care Market Sustainability Plan would return to the committee in January 2023.

There was an additional meeting on 19 December 2022 to review the Adult Commissioning Strategies for Care Dorset.

22. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

23. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.14 pm

Chairman

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Question to People & Health Overview Committee on 8 September 2022

1. Question from Mike Newland and response from Cllr Peter Wharf, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health

I note the conclusion in Appendix 1 of your paper on the Fair Cost of Care that it is currently not affordable to move to paying the full Fair Cost of Care for residential care. I also note the 'new position' and proposed level of FCoC identified in your slide titled 'The Results in Numbers', i.e. 22/23 for dementia care £743 and the equivalent FCoC £868.

Council contracted Blocked Booked Bed fees at all of Buxton House's beds (64) and about half the beds at Fairlawns and Maiden Castle are in excess of £1200 (openly available information) and are contracted to escalate further. Also the fee is paid if beds are unoccupied. These fee levels have been paid for two decades and the contracts last for up to another 2 decades without review. One would normally expect very large long term low risk inflexible contracts like these placed with a single provider to be set at a lower rate. The contracts are a very significant fraction of Council spend on residential care. The full fee rate is also passed onto residents becoming self-funders and occupying block booked beds at the relevant care homes.

My questions are:

1. Are these contracted blocked booked beds fees fair and affordable for Dorset Council/ratepayers and likewise fair to other providers?

The last few years have been extremely challenging for adult social care provision, and measures to support hospital discharge have driven up the costs of beds across the market. The Council has initiated work on understanding the 'Fair Cost of Care' early, to help to stabilise the market and to position the Council's purchasing ahead of the 2025 deadline for all councils to implement the findings of their FCoC exercises. It should be noted that the 'Fair Cost' is not an absolute limit on potential prices for care, and where there are additional services incorporated above and beyond a 'standard' offer, this may be reflected in the prices charged.

Since we concluded the 2021/22 exercise, commissioners have met with key providers such as Care South who manage the beds referenced, to discuss the findings. The history of the Care South block contracts was set out in an answer to a question raised at Full Council on 14 December 2021. The contracts arose following the transfer by the Council of 18 of its own residential homes to a charitable trust now known as Care South. A number of these homes were then replaced by Care South in return for long-term block contracts with the Council that formed an income stream upon which they could raise the funds needed to invest in the building programme.

Notwithstanding this, commissioners have reviewed the Care South contracts and started discussions to address the cost differentials. Discussions are ongoing but the Council's position is that we are working to align fees with the findings of the FCoC exercise which were developed with providers and follow the Government's reform agenda.

2. If not fair and affordable, what are you doing about them?

Commissioners have started the process to re-negotiate the contract with Care South. The Fair Cost of Care work is an important tool now available to commissioners to support these negotiations with Care South and other providers.