

Public Document Pack



PEOPLE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 16 JANUARY 2025

Present: Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chair), Jane Somper (Vice-Chair), Laura Beddow (leaves at 13.55), Bridget Bolwell (leaves at 14.03), Sally Holland, Carole Jones, Chris Kippax (leaves at 14.14), Robin Legg and Carl Woode

Present remotely: Cllr Claudia Webb

Apologies: None

Also present: Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Derek Beer, Cllr Simon Clifford, Cllr Jack Jeanes, Cllr Steve Robinson, Cllr Clare Sutton and Cllr Gill Taylor

Also present remotely: Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Ryan Hope, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke and Cllr David Tooke

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

George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Amanda Davis (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Alice Deacon (Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Andrew Billany (Corporate Director for Housing), Julia Ingram (Corporate Director for Adult Social Care Operations), Jonathan Price (Executive Director of People - Adults and Housing), Mark Tyson (Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning & Improvement), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), Heather Lappin (Head of Strategic Finance), Lee House (Service Manager for Finance), Carolann James (Interim Corporate Director - Care and Protection), Gary Messenger (Head of Housing), Sian White (Service Manager, Finance) and Joshua Kennedy (Democratic Services Officer)

36. **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

37. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

Declarations of interest were raised during the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy report and are detailed under Minute 42.

38. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 October 2024 and 14 November 2024 were confirmed and signed.

39. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

40. **Councillor Questions**

There were no questions from councillors.

41. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

42. **Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Strategy Report**

The Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial introduced the budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) report. They gave a presentation which summarised the budget and the increase in the base budget for each service, as well as the high-risk service pressures, and the numbers of children in care and how it influences spend. The presentation is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

The committee discussed the overall budget position and the budgets for Children's Services, Adults and Housing, and Public Health. Non-committee members were also given the opportunity to ask questions. During the discussion, the following key points were raised:

- There was an average uplift for fees and charges of 2.5%. Clarification was needed how these were put into directorates and that the committee needed more detail on fees and charges in future years. Officers responded that the list of fees and charges would be available in the Full Council report and that fees and charges were either set by government or by the council based on the market.
- The council not being able to meet savings and transformation targets this year and that they must be met next year to ensure the council's budget was not affected and transformational savings were achieved.
- One of the principal pressures was high-cost placements. It was important the council was able to provide bespoke packages for each child and being able to provide all options for children in care so the council does not have to commission high-cost packages. Members asked how the local market was being developed to reduce high-cost pressures.

- The 50% reduction in funding for the Dorset Education Board was a concern given the educational achievement levels in the county. The Corporate Director for Education responded to this concern giving assurance and the reason the saving.
- Consideration should be given to the Birth to Settled Adulthood programme having a combined budget between Children's Services, Adults and Health. This could be explored further through the committee's work programme.
- How the council was promoting that people can purchase their own home care through the council and whether an investment was needed in marketing for this, and could it help with the local market. Officers responded that more work was needed to promote the service, however if the number of clients increased quickly, it could put pressures elsewhere.
- Shared Lives should be added to the committee's work programme to review the development of the service and its transfer to Care Dorset.
- What were the confidence levels in being able to eliminate the use of B&B's for temporary accommodation. The Corporate Director for Housing explained that it was an achievable target and that a plan to eliminate B&B accommodation use was being developed through a delivery paper which would be considered by the People & Health Overview Committee.
- What was the financial impact of separating joint funding for Public Health. The Executive Director for Corporate Development responded that public health disaggregation was not a financial risk for the council and that ringfenced funding was provided by government through the Public Health Grant.

At the relevant points during the discussion Cllr L Beddow declared that she worked for a registered social landlord and Cllr C Jones declared that she was involved with setting up a family hub. Both councillors continued to take part in the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr J Somper, seconded by Cllr C Jones and agreed by the Committee that the meeting extend beyond 3 hours. Following this, at 12.23pm the committee adjourned for a 20-minute break.

Following the discussion, the chairman summarised the points raised and outlined the areas to be considered by Cabinet.

In relation to Appendix 1d – Adults and Housing – the following matters were raised for consideration by Cabinet:

- When the 2024/25 budget was agreed by full council in February 2024 a decision was taken that 40% of the additional income from the council tax on second homes in Dorset is allocated to the Housing budget annually. The Committee requested evidence to demonstrate how this was being achieved.
- The committee asked Cabinet to review the description for the saving 'review funding source prevention contract'. There was an option to reduce the contracts from their current level or to use the Better Care Fund. The description of this saving should be updated to include the option of using the Better Care Fund.

- The committee raised the importance of demonstrating the impact of early intervention against critical need. This should be continued to be developed through Adult Social Care transformation.
- The committee raised a concern about the risk caused by the employers National Insurance rise.
- The committee raised the importance of support services being able to provide an enabling role to front-facing services to deliver their work and targets.

In relation to Appendix 1g – Children’s Services – the following matters were raised for consideration by Cabinet:

- The committee asked that Cabinet was provided with clarification around the proposed saving of £34k relating to youth services (page 75 of the report).
- The committee recognised that the High needs block overspend was an issue for many councils across the Country but requested further information about the financial risks and implications for Dorset Council of a continued overspend. The committee asked for continued focus and oversight over the High Needs Block and to continue strengthening work with partners to address the issues causing overspend.
- The committee asked that Cabinet recognise the impact of the £7m saving caused by early help and prevention in Children’s Services, and to give consideration to how further savings could be made and see the benefits of early help and prevention continue.
- The committee recognised the challenging nature and volatility of funding provided to the council by the government.

43. **Scrutiny Request**

Cllr Legg introduced the scrutiny request regarding a reduction in NHS funding for Weldmar Hospicecare. He outlined the background to the request and an update he received from Weldmar Hospicecare since submitting the request.

The update included that Weldmar has proposed a redesign of existing services to support patients with a more blended staff approach. A grant had been agreed with NHS Dorset for 2025/26 which would enable provision of existing services and a new specialist at home service. A joint letter from Weldmar and the NHS would be sent to Dorset Council with an update.

Given the update, senior officers of Adult Social Care needed to do further work to understand the changes that were happening.

The Committee agreed that the request should be explored outside of the meeting, following discussions with officers, and that a decision to agree the scrutiny request would be made by the chairman.

44. **Committee's Work Programme and Cabinet's Forward Plan**

The committee noted its work programme and the executive forward plans.

45. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.35 pm

Chairman

.....

This page is intentionally left blank

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

16 January 2025

Page 7



Dorset Council

Charges per month, over 12 months (average Band D property) for Dorset Council's share of the council tax

** Daily Life **		
* Bin Collections and Waste Services	14.00	
* Roads, Bridges and Streetlighting	5.47	
* Libraries, Archives and Customer Services	3.24	
* Schools, Education and Special Needs	152.12	
* Public and School Transport	6.83	
* Community and Public Protection	1.86	
* Environment and Wellbeing	2.61	
** Looking after adults **		
* Adult Care	47.21	
* Joint Working and Staff Costs	6.23	
* Support Adult Care	2.23	
* Health Improvement	15.54	
* Housing	1.41	
** Looking after children **		
* Children in Care	24.21	
* Delivering Children's Services Through Partnerships	4.87	
** Local Government Running Costs **		
* Elections, Governances and Legal Services	3.32	
* Support Functions, such as HR and Finance	3.76	
* IT Services and Digital Services	5.00	
* Property Maintenance	1.44	
* Central Costs for Emergency Measures	4.61	
* Capital Financing	7.82	
** Economic Growth **		
* Economic Development and Regeneration	8.46	
* Planning	1.43	
* Broadband	0.88	
** Income **		
* Specific Grant Funding	-7.80	
* Public Health Grant	-15.00	
* Schools Funding	-146.00	
* Parking	-3.50	
Total to Pay (per month)		£14,253.42

Minute Item 42

Quick recap: Budget setting process and information in November MTFP paper

Starting point: 2024/25 budget
Add: recurrent spend pressures from 2024/25
Add: new spend pressures for 2025/26
Less: initial savings

Adjust for: planning assumptions: Council Tax,
Business Rates, grants etc

= ***initial budget gap***

Less: further savings and income

= ***balanced budget***

Summary budget overview

1. Adults and Housing services budget rebased with £15m (10%) increase
2. Extra £3m into children's services
3. Extra £8m into Place
4. Extra £1m into Corporate

*note these changes are before applying share of OFC

5. General Contingency budget of £5m
6. Provider National Insurance contingency budget £4.5m
7. Start to rebuild reserves

8. Our Future Council savings requirement £10m
9. £44m of service efficiencies, income and grants

10. Council tax increase of just under 3%
11. Adult social care precept of just under 2%

	Adjusted base budget 24/25	Draft base budget 25/26	Increase in base after adjustments	%
Adults & Housing	£152,781,940	£168,290,384	£15,508,444	10%
Childrens	£84,854,865	£87,786,743	£2,931,878	3% *
Corporate	£46,178,589	£47,227,433	£1,048,844	2%
Place	£103,877,520	£111,871,723	£7,994,203	8%
Central Finance	(£11,002,666)	£696,022	£11,698,688	N/A
Total	£376,690,248	£415,872,305	£39,182,057	10%

Council Tax, Business Rates and Central Grants Funding	(£376,690,248)	(£415,872,305)	(£39,182,057)	10%
--	----------------	----------------	---------------	------------

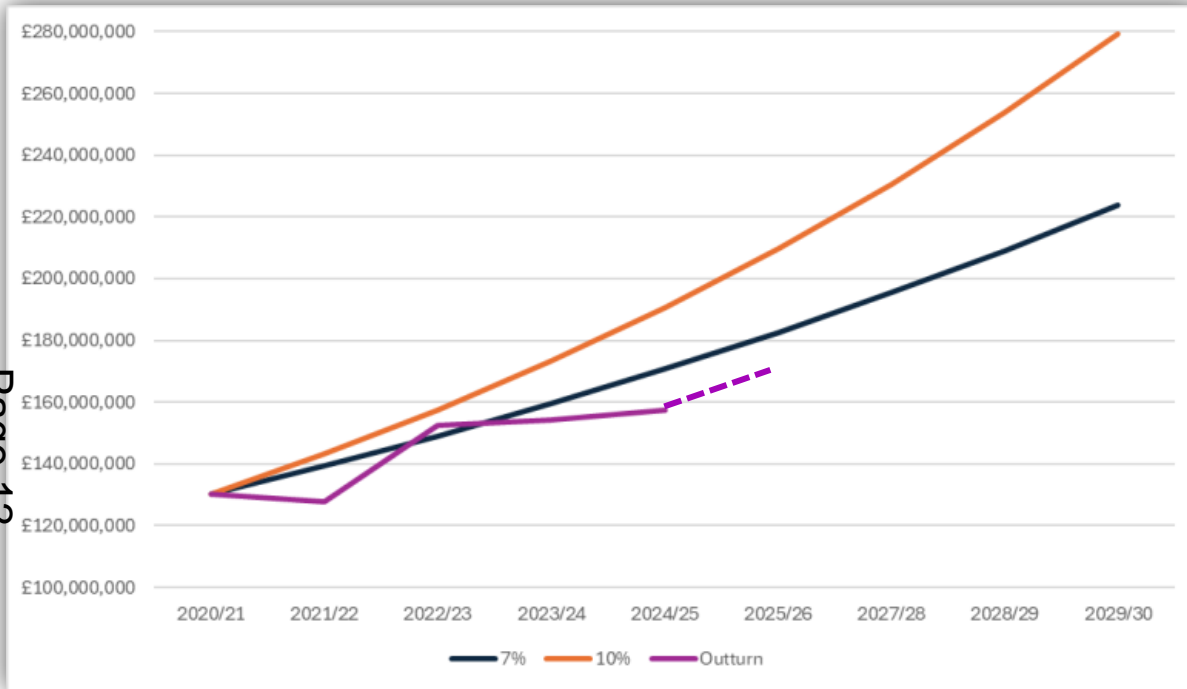
			£0	0%
--	--	--	-----------	-----------

Update on the high risk service pressures we are facing.....

1. Adult social care

2. Children in care

Budget history & remodelling for 2025/26



- Modelling work commissioned in 2020 – demand, costs, trends
- Refreshed post-pandemic, leading to a range of scenarios – 7-10%
- 10 year directorate transformation plan created in 2021/22. Budget outturns have tracked below the lower bound of the scenarios
- 2022/23 Council investment; subsequent years predominantly grant-funded increases

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Budget increase	19.16%	-0.58%	1.58%
Value of budget increase	23,403,000	-842,000	2,281,000
ICB Discharge Fund	0	2,834,000	-664,000
Additional Health investment through Discharge Fund and S256 funding	5,240,000	6,000,000	3,150,000
Grants	4,501,613	5,820,591	4,133,120

Budget history & remodelling for 25/26

- Our transformation to date has been successful. We've delivered almost £30m of efficiencies since 2021, whilst improving outcomes and delivering vital services to the people of Dorset.

Commissioning Programme
SRO: Mark Tyson

Ops Model redesign
SRO: Julia Ingram

Housing & Accommodation
SRO: Andrew Billany

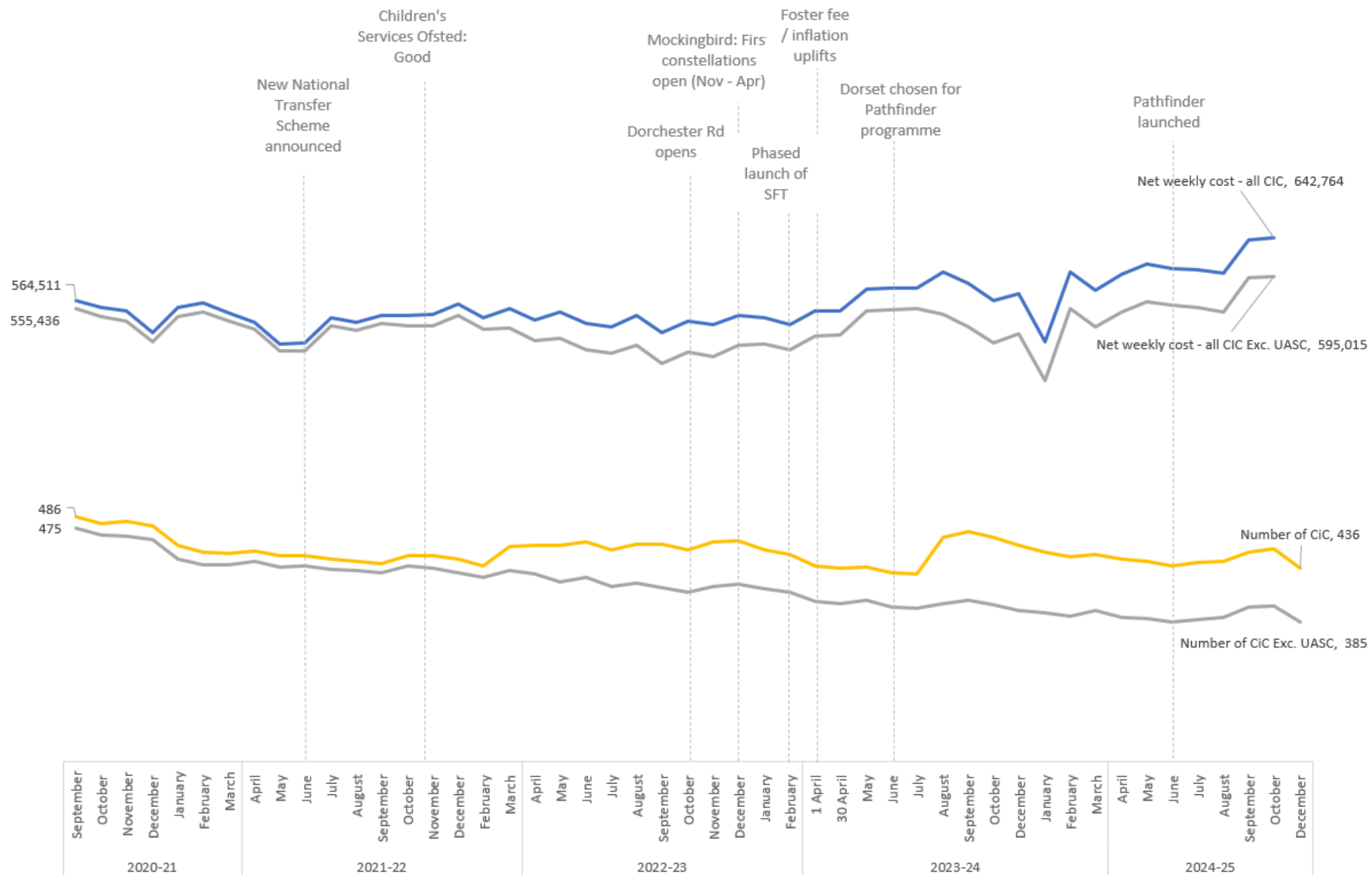
Page 13
• Our work to date has been co-designed with you and with our service users and people of Dorset, and this is a principle we want to continue going forward.

- Housing is a key priority for the Council, and we have been basing our plans on work across the teams to design programmes and structures which deliver. Investing in tenancy sustainment and prevention of homelessness, finding the right temporary accommodation, making best use of the Housing Register, maintaining good standards across Dorset's rented homes – engagement is all part of how we design the right strategies for Dorset's housing.

Three ways to influence Children in Care spend

- Change the overall number of Children in Care
- Change the placement mix i.e increase the number of children in care with Dorset Foster families
- Influence unit price i.e. better commissioning

Children in care chart



The Children in Care placement mix

	Sept 2020	Sept 2021	Sept 2022	Sept 2023	March 2024	June 2024	Sept 2024	% Change (Sept 2020 to Sept 2024)	Oct 2024	Dec 2024	% Change (Sept 2020 to Dec 2024)
Fostering Dorset Council	211	191	175	181	188	188	182	-14%	189	197	-7%
Fostering External	114	113	106	89	88	91	91	-20%	83	84	-26%
Residential External	60	60	54	49	46	44	46	-23%	45	44	-27%
Residential Dorset Council	5	6	4	5	5	5	6	20%	6	5	0%
High Cost Supported External	16	8	9	8	15	12	14	-13%	16	15	-6%
Low Cost Supported External	13	5	2	6	4	5	9	-31%	8	7	-46%
Supported Lodgings	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	N/A	1	0	N/A
Other	4	5	2	6	0	0	2	-50%	2	4	0%
Adoption	18	19	14	16	13	7	12	-33%	12	6	-67%
Parent/Child/Family	34	25	52	43	34	30	35	3%	38	35	3%
TOTAL	475	432	418	405	393	382	399	-16%	400	397	-16%