

Councillor Susan Jones  
Convener, Adult Services Scrutiny Panel

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*Our Ref:* MC/JW  
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*Date:* 16 July 2021

**BY EMAIL**

Dear Councillor Jones

Thank you for your letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021. As requested, please see below responses to the points you have raised.

**1. Information on co-budget savings**

The savings target is £2,946,000 for Adult Services.

The majority are on track to be delivered and we've removed from the budgets, e.g. efficiency savings due to changes in working practices, increase in client contribution and income recovery. To ensure these stay on track and to ensure the savings targets which span more than one year this is aligned to our Transformation work so new ways of working are implemented to achieve the savings in the long term.

Work this year includes savings in efficiencies through; the Supported Living retender; continuation of Right Sizing of Domiciliary Care work to reduce expenditure and any under delivery; establishing a collaborative approach with health for funding for complex high cost placements and packages of care; co-produce future model for Day Services; Investment in Hospital to Home, and through Direct Payment reviews.

One budget saving is on 'amber' relating to a 1% reduction in staffing budget (£350,000) and this is being monitored and tracked quarterly. This was based on an underspend in 2020/21 through vacancy management and maximising the use of grant funding, although we know there is an increased demand on staffing levels.

## **2. Information and links on complaints process**

The Social Services Complaints Policy has been established in accordance with the Social Services Complaints Procedures (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

It is hoped that all concerns can be resolved by Social Services without the need for further action. Stage 1 of the complaints process is informal / local resolution. If the complainant refuses the offer of a discussion, the complaint may proceed to the formal investigation stage.

Stage 2 of the complaints process is a formal investigation. This is completed by someone independent of the council who is commissioned to undertake the investigation and produce a report. The Director of Social Services produces the complainant with a written response to the report which includes whether the complaint is upheld and any action which will be taken.

If we do not succeed in resolving a complaint, the complainant may refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Actions and service improvements resulting from complaints are implemented with the service. The Adult Services Quality Assurance and Improvement meeting ensures that all learning is shared and service improvements are implemented following complaints, reviews and hearings.

The annual report of complaints to Social Services is report to the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel. The latest report went the April 2021 meeting: [Agenda for Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance on Monday, 12 April 2021, 10.00 am - City and County of Swansea](#)

## **3. Further information on the Advocacy Service**

Advocacy services can help individuals in situations where they may not feel able to deal with everything on their own. An advocate is independent and non-judgemental.

An advocate can:

- Help find relevant information
- Ensure the individual understands their rights
- Speak on behalf and represents the views of the individual
- Liaise with professional services on behalf of the individual
- Go with the individual to meetings and other formal appointments

Usually advocates are used to help with a specific issue like obtaining a service, dealing with abuse or making a complaint rather than for ongoing support.

Details of the Advocacy Services are on [www.swansea.gov.uk/advocacy](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/advocacy)

There are different advocacy services based on an individuals' requirements, these include;

Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA) Service ([www.mhmwales.org.uk](http://www.mhmwales.org.uk)) is available to those entering into or already engaged with Social Services, and is accessible when a person can only overcome the barrier(s) to participating fully in the assessment, care and support planning, review and safeguarding processes with assistance from an appropriate individual, but there is no appropriate individual available. This is available via self-referral and agency referral.

The contract is managed via our Commissioning Team, including the performance monitoring. The performance information includes number of clients per month e.g. Older People, Carers and nature of requests including assessments, care and support plans, safeguarding and accommodation issue etc, along with age demographics, trends of issues raised and evidence of distance travelled by the clients.

#### **4. Update on work around transparency and what you intend to publish to be shared with the Panel once completed.**

Swansea Council's Social Services charging policy applies the Charging Regulations and statutory Code of Practice as set by the Welsh Government within which framework the Local Authority is required to operate. Each year the Council completes a review of the policy to inform the list of charges to apply in the following year and to apply any changes proposed by Welsh Government or based on feedback.

The annual review of charges is overseen by Swansea Council's Social Services Finance and Charging group, chaired by the Director of Social Services. Annual changes to charges are agreed by Cabinet and contained within the List of Charges which is annexed to the Charging Policy. We will be incorporating coproduction approaches within this annual review process during the next year.

We are currently reflecting on the Financial Assessment processes for Social Services service user contributions towards the costs of Social Care and will be reviewing the methods by which the information needed to make those decisions is gathered and the type of supporting evidence that is requested. We aim to make the process as clear and simple as possible and aim to publish Financial Assessment Guidance. The Financial Assessment Guidance will be coproduced with service users and representative forums including the Direct Payment Forum in the coming months and will bring this to scrutiny later this year.

**5. Confirmation of what can be provide to the Panel this year in relation to 'Outcomes Budgeting'.**

During the financial year 21/22 we will be refining our approach to forecasting and outcome based budgeting during 21/22. Due to Covid 19, 2020/21 was an unusual year in terms of budget outturn, income and additional grants and as such the budget forecasts for 21/22 are a hybrid of supporting recovery and maintaining a business as usual position.

We are developing budget plans that demonstrate the delivery of our service priorities and outcomes achieved.

The budgeting approach will demonstrate how the spending is making a difference and how it is contributing to the Adult Service priorities;

- Better Prevention and Better Early Help
- Keeping People Safe
- Enabling and Promoting Independence
- Integrated Services
- Financial efficacy

Current budgeting and accounting arrangements are indeed complex enough, especially as we move from a position pre-pandemic to post pandemic. Planning assumptions will have changed as has demand for services.

We focus on the regulatory requirements which are predominantly input, cost focussed, budget builds within resources available. This is influenced by the levels of block grant from Welsh Government, with only a relatively small proportion met by council tax.

This sets overall parameters and then members in Councils make a series of often undefined and certainly not fully quantified value judgments based on available advice around allocation of the input cost budgets by service based on relative importance.

To move to outcome based budgeting has a huge amount of complexity involved. A planned step change from actual to aspiration is potentially very large, especially if done in one go and takes measurement and valuation to a whole new level and not only requires those judgements and values to be described but almost certainly requires extra inputs including a bigger accountancy and economics workforce to do the extra work. Decisions on such extra back office inputs would depend on the value ascribed to the value of outcomes of the work done by those extra inputs to better inform and optimise the outcome based aspiration.

Throughout 21/22 we will be taken an approach based on the CIPFA Financial Management Code which is designed to support good practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability.

The Code is based on a series of principles supported by specific standards and statements of practice which are considered necessary to provide the strong foundation to:

- Financially manage the short, medium and long term finances
- Manage financial resilience to meet foreseen demands on services
- Financially manage unexpected shocks in their financial circumstances

Financial management challenges faced by many local authorities are unprecedented and show no signs of easing. This is significant because it means that different styles of financial management are necessary.

Financial sustainability will not be achieved by continuing with the behaviours of the past since these will not meet the demands of the present and the possibly even more challenging future.

To remain financially sustainable authorities need to develop their financial management capabilities, this is the work we will undertake in 21/22.

The strength of financial management can be assessed by a hierarchy of three 'financial management styles':

- Delivering accountability
  - Supporting performance
  - Enabling transformation
- These different styles are used to describe the different standards of financial management which may be found in local authorities.
  - They represent a hierarchy in which success in enabling of transformation is only achieved by a financial management style which supports performance and which in turn delivers accountability.
  - Once these basic foundations have been soundly established, in response to increasing risk authorities need to move up through a hierarchy of financial management styles.
  - This is especially as risks have increased for many local authorities; on the one hand reduced expenditure leaves less margin for error while on the other hand in seeking to generate new income local authorities take on unfamiliar risks.
  - This hierarchy of financial management styles loosely maps onto the now deeply embedded recognition of the necessity for economy, efficiency and effectiveness to achieve value for money.
  - In delivering accountability the finance team ensures that their authorities spend less and so achieve economy.
  - In supporting performance the finance team works with the authority to spend well by maximising the output from goods or services and so achieves efficiency.
  - Finally, in enabling transformation the finance team supports the effective use of public money.



These are the principles we will be working towards this financial year, however as outlined above this is a complex and needs careful planning and consideration.

We will incorporate relevant expenditure in addition to reporting on outputs and outcomes, in our performance reports. We will having a specific focus on the outcomes of Local Area Coordination and an analysis of the cost benefit during the next nine months and will bring this to scrutiny.

Yours sincerely



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