



**To:**  
**Councillor Clive Lloyd, Cabinet Member for  
Adult Social Care and Community Health  
Services**

**Councillor Elliott King, Cabinet Member for  
Children Services**

**Councillor Alyson Pugh and Councillor  
Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Members for  
Supporting Communities**

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*Date  
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03 March 2021

**BY EMAIL**

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Joint Social Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Community Health Services, Cabinet Member for Children Services and Cabinet Members for Supporting Communities following the meeting of the Panel on 15 February 2021. It covers Draft Budget and Update on Covid-19.

Dear Cllrs Lloyd, King, Pugh and Gibbard,

The Panel met on 15 February to discuss the draft budget proposals in relation to Social Services including Poverty and Prevention, and to receive an update on the current situation regarding the management of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

We would like to thank Cabinet Members and Dave Howes for attending to present the items and answer the Panel's questions at this extremely busy and difficult time. We really do appreciate your engagement and input. We are writing to you to reflect on the discussion and share any views of the Panel.

Firstly, we would again like to ask you, on behalf of the Panel, to take a message back to the staff, expressing our wholehearted thanks and appreciation to all members of staff, who continue to do an amazing job in very difficult circumstances.

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU**

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The main issues discussed are summarised below:

### **Draft Budget Proposals**

Cabinet Members and Director gave a brief introduction to the proposals, highlighting the main issues and answering questions.

We were pleased to hear that there was a real cash increase of £4 million to this year's Social Services budget and that there are a host of transformation plans for the coming year.

We also heard that it was extremely difficult to plan for the coming year and that a number of assumptions had to be made. For example, the care system is being propped up by millions of pounds at the moment and you do not know how long this will last. You told us that you have planned for the same level of care home admissions for the coming year and there are no plans for the Council to give additional funding to care homes.

We acknowledged there are a number of uncertainties such as Welsh Government no longer protecting Social Care; and the outcomes of the Senedd elections, and queried to what extent the Council is relying on further central funding to deal with these uncertainties. We heard that from discussions with WG there is a reasonable expectation that additional funding will be allocated to local authorities due to the pandemic, and you expect tapered relief over the coming year.

We were informed that Cabinet Members and senior officers have heard moving individual stories from staff about the pandemic. We suggested that these be presented to Full Council and asked if you can take this back.

We were reminded that the Council has an in-house counselling service which is available to all staff and you remarked that this needs to be promoted more.

We heard that the relationship with the Third Sector has been amazing during the pandemic.

We received confirmation that working with partners during the pandemic has been essential and a step forward for the Council. We heard that this year and going into next year, the Council and Health Board have pooled funding more effectively, and some has been built into planning assumptions for this year. For example, Council and Health Board will see a benefit from the shared Head of Service role; and lots of regional funding which supports integration, and was due to come to an end, has been extended for the coming year.

We mentioned the need for the scrutiny panels to consider including more items on Poverty and Prevention in their work plans, as it is now part of Social Services.

We requested sight of the job description for the integrated Head of Service Post. Dave Howes agreed to share this with the Panel.

The Panel agreed the following views and recommendations on the budget proposals in relation to Social Services it would like to make to Cabinet:

- The Panel feels it is vitally important we ensure there is sufficient money allocated in the budget to provide additional health and wellbeing support to staff following the pandemic. The Panel is keen to see a joint venture with the Health Board in terms of support for staff.
- Very pleased to see the budget situation for Social Services this year, with an increase in the overall budget and very little in terms of cuts. However, the Panel is aware that there is a great deal that needs to be achieved with this money.
- The Panel is concerned that it only sees the net budget. It would be useful to see details of the income streams as well as expenditure. Officers have agreed to work with Cabinet Members to provide this information.
- The Panel would like to support the budget process in any way it can and therefore intends to revisit the budget again later in the year to closely monitor progress.

The Convener of the Service Improvement and Finance Panel attended Cabinet on 20 February to feed in the collective views of the scrutiny performance panels and has written a letter to the Cabinet Member on these issues.

### **Update on Management of Covid-19**

We heard from Dave Howes that Heads of Service recently presented an overall update on the situation at Full Council.

We were informed that in the last two weeks you have begun to see some stabilisation across Health and Social Care Services, that this appears to be linked to the continued decrease in rates of infection and that it has taken some time to have an impact on our Services.

We heard that Domiciliary Care has been operating at 50% of workforce. However, this is down to 20% absent, so there is a big increase in resource available, and all Health and Care services are seeing this increase in staff presently.

We heard that there is still fragility around care homes but currently we are seeing only a small number of homes unstable. We were pleased to hear that the picture is improving, especially in the last two weeks.

We were informed that the Escalation Tool to monitor stress has been at the highest level (red) since October, but in the last two weeks it has moved into amber. We heard that this is a real milestone but does not mean Social Services will become less busy, as instead of managing emergency work it will move to more planned work.

With regard to vaccinations, we heard that the majority of older people in care homes, care home staff and front line care staff have been vaccinated, and that mechanisms are in place to pick up new staff and new care home residents.

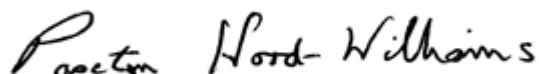
We expressed our concern about people with learning disabilities accessing the vaccine and were informed that it is not a straightforward position. We heard that the expectation is that a number of individuals will have met the criteria for one of the top four priority groups. For those that did not, the expectation is the majority will meet the criteria for group six. Dave Howes acknowledged that this has prompted him to get regional clarification that all of these individuals are being picked up.

We expressed concern about disturbing reports that people with learning disabilities are often the subject of 'do not resuscitate' orders. We were informed the Social Services together with the Health Board looked at the arrangements in our region in May 2020 and that at the time, there weren't any of these arrangements in place. We heard that subsequently the Safeguarding Board revisited this, and at that point there were none in place. Dave Howes confirmed he would clarify this again with the Safeguarding Board to ensure nothing has been overlooked.

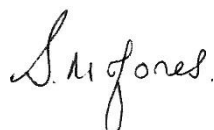
### **Your Response**

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your views and comments on any of the issues raised but, in this instance, a formal response is not required.

Yours sincerely



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