

COMMUNITY FOCUSED & EFFICIENT COUNCIL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Focused & Efficient Council Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 9th September, 2010 at 6.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford, Shropshire

PRESENT: Councillors C.P.R. Mollett (Chairman), D.R. Chaplin, A.D. McClements and W.L. Tomlinson

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. M. Viney and Mr. R. Williams (Co-opted Members)

OFFICERS: Sarah Bass (Organisational Capacity Projects Team Leader) and Stephanie Jones (Scrutiny Officer)

CFEC-1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors L. Lomax and A.A. Meredith

CFEC-2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None.

CFEC-3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

No nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Committee had been received and Councillor W.L. Tomlinson proposed that, should the Chairman not be present at a meeting, a Chairman for that meeting be elected.

RESOLVED – that no Vice-Chairman be appointed for the Community Focused & Efficient Council Scrutiny Committee.

CFEC-4 REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMEN'S FORUM

The Chairman reported that the Chairmen's Forum, held on 16th August, 2010, had identified three topics for in-depth reviews including budget formulation, which would be the responsibility of this Scrutiny Committee. In addition, each of the other Scrutiny Committees would scrutinise the relevant aspect of the budget proposals for 2011/12 and report their comments to this Committee as part of the formal consultation process. In addition to this work, each Scrutiny Committee would agree its own work programme within the resources available.

In accordance with the Constitution, each Scrutiny Committee would have a minimum of two formal meetings per year. In recognition of the fact that the Active Lifestyles: Leisure and Culture, Children & Young People, and Community Focused Efficient Council Scrutiny Committees had statutory roles and additional work, the Scrutiny Chairmen had allocated them three additional meetings. The additional work of this Committee included the remit of the previous Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group as the main mechanism by which Cabinet would consult scrutiny on the budget proposals and by which the financial and service performance of the Council would be monitored.

The remaining meetings had been allocated on the basis of two to Scrutiny Committees that had no in-depth Review and one meeting to the Committees with an in-depth Scrutiny Review.

Members identified other issues for this Scrutiny Committee as being communication, partnerships, and the Community Strategy. Roy Williams stressed the need for the other Scrutiny Committee meetings to be synchronised with this Committee in order to allow for an effective input to the budget.

CFEC-5 BACKGROUND PAPERS ON SERVICE REVIEWS

The report of the Lead Corporate Director: Environment & Rural Area/Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity informed the Committee of the programme of service reviews that was currently being undertaken across all service delivery units within the Council. The reviews would look at how services were managed and operated in order to identify ways in which they could be delivered to the community more efficiently and effectively within the resources available. The reviews needed to produce operational (non-staff) savings of 20%, which would be fed into the budget process.

A Service Review Steering Group had been set up to oversee the programme, to monitor the progress of each Head of Service including information on changes in activity and savings, a timetable for which was included in the report, and to ensure a consistent approach across the Council.

Members requested that a report on the Service Review proposals be brought to the Committee at an appropriate time to enable them to make a response before any final decisions were taken and the Organisational Capacity Projects Team Leader agreed to pass this on to the Lead Corporate Director.

RESOLVED – that Members noted the briefing and took account of the service reviews when planning the Committee's work programme.

CFEC-6 2010/11 WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager provided the Committee with information to enable them to plan its Work Programme. Annex A of the report set out the suggestions for items made by the Scrutiny Assembly Workshop and Annex B set out the outstanding items from the Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group and other scrutiny groups under the previous arrangements. As noted in Minute No. CFEC-4, this Scrutiny Committee would be undertaking an in-depth review of the budget formulation in terms of suggestions on savings that could be made.

Councillor W.L. Tomlinson referred to the Quarterly Financial Monitoring reports considered by the Cabinet and requested that the Head of Finance be requested to attend the October meeting of the Committee and to provide Members with the latest monitoring information to make them aware of the base budget figures prior to scrutinising the budget proposals for 2011/12. He further commented that not only should the Committee scrutinise decisions that had already been made but should also have the opportunity to participate in policy formulation.

The Committee agreed that the following action should be taken with regard to the Work Programme suggestions.

Scrutiny Assembly Workshop

Priority	Suggestion	Decision
A	Involvement in development of the budget	Within remit of Committee or to be undertaken as part of an In-depth Review.
A	Scrutiny of budget	Within remit of Committee
A	Expenditure on taxi services in Children & Young People	Not to be added to Work Programme but could be considered as part of an In-depth Review.
A	Public Relations – raising profile of Council and working with partner organisations including Parish & Town Councils	To be added to Work Programme but with a narrower focus on engaging the public during the budget process.
B	Scrutiny of back office efficiencies	Not to be added to the Work Programme but could be considered as part of the In-Depth Review .
C	Service provision by public bodies with an ethnic minority perspective	Not to be added to the Work Programme. Cabinet Member (Cllr S.M. Kelly) and Chairman of the Scrutiny Assembly to respond separately.
C	Expenditure by Council on consultants	Not to be added to Work Programme – Council now required to publish all expenditure over £500.

Outstanding Items from the Forward Plan of the Value For Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group and other scrutiny groups

Topic	Decision
Keeping Elected Members informed	A short report on current progress and means of improving this to be submitted to the Committee to establish whether any further action needed to be taken
Implementation of Locality Working Arrangements	Not to be added to Work Programme
Monitoring of Equalities Impact Assessment	Not to be added to Work Programme. Could be looked at as part of the In-depth Review.
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly, 5 & and 8 monthly	Within remit of Scrutiny Committee
Youth & Community VFM Self-Assessment Action Plan Update	Refer to Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
VFM Service Reviews	Within remit of Scrutiny Committee
Review of spend on	Relevant Cabinet Member and Head of Service to

safeguarding and progress against savings targets	be invited to make a report to the Scrutiny Committee
Review of Capital Programme	Work Programme item
2011/12 budget consultation/ evidence gathering/conclusion and recommendations	Work Programme item
SEN Overspend	If a significant variation is established by Financial Monitoring report to October meeting, then further action will be considered. If not, refer to Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
Employee Suggestion Scheme	All significant savings to be reported to Committee
Reduction in use of B&B and associated subsidy costs	Await Financial Monitoring report to October meeting. If spending on track then no further action required
Update on Economic Development savings/One Telford	Update report requested.

Referral from Scrutiny Leadership Board

School Funding Formula	Referred to Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.
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Topics Raised at the meeting

Single Status	Update report requested from lead Corporate Director
Partnerships	Impact of budget reductions of partner organisations upon the Council's budget and need to engage partners as part of budget process. To be added to Work Programme but scope to be limited to available resources
Budget Consultation Process	Review of methods of consultation

ECFC-7 DATES AND TIMES OF NEXT MEETINGS

It was agreed that the next three meetings of the Scrutiny Committee be held on the following dates at 6.00 p.m.:

- Wednesday, 6th October, 2010
- Wednesday, 3rd November, 2010
- Wednesday, 1st December, 2010

The dates of the meetings in 2011 would be arranged later.

The meeting ended at 7.57 p.m.

Chairman:

Date:

**Notes of the Community Focused Efficient Council Scrutiny Meeting held on
Wednesday, 6th October 2010 at 6.00 pm in the
Scrutiny Meeting Room, Civic Offices, Telford**

Present: Councillors Clive Mollett, Louise Lomax, Angels McClements, Bill Tomlinson and Co-optee Roy Williams.

Also in attendance: Mike Atherton, Head of Community Protection; Ken Clarke, Head of Finance; Jim Collins, Head of Learning & Achievement; David Sidaway, Head of Property & Design; James Dunn, Estates Team Leader; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

Apologies: Councillors David Chaplin, Adrian Meredith and Co-optee Maurice Viney

<u>Minute/Action</u>	<u>Action to be taken by</u>
1. Minutes of the last meeting will be approved at the next formal meeting of the Committee, and draft copies will be circulated.	<u>SJ</u>
2. <u>Service and Financial Planning Report – 2010/11 update and medium term outlook</u> Members considered the report that was presented to Cabinet on 10 th August. The report showed that Revenue spending was projected to be within budget at year end, and it was confirmed that this is still the case, even with the mid-year grant cuts. It was however noted that cumulative service overspends had been offset against the unallocated balance in the contingency, and that this is not a sustainable position. The key service pressures in the report were noted, particularly the overspend in Looked After Children and Adult Social Care, and the shortfalls in income from rent of property, the ice rink and planning fees. The Committee requested a report on Adult Social Care costs at the next meeting. It was noted that of the combined contingencies of £2.725, under a quarter is left for the remainder of the year. The Committee asked how the position compared to this time last year. KC will provide figures. (Circulated 12 th October) The in-year revenue grant cuts were noted (£3.06m revenue, £0.99m capital), and Appendix 1 and 1a gave details of the amounts and the steps taken to address them. The revenue shortfall was £407k, but the restructure had been accelerated to bring projected savings forward to this year, and savings will rise as the programme continues. £3.5m of the combined service balances had been reserved for restructure costs, so that staff savings are recognised straightaway. In addition, £1.3m of the balances had been reserved for additional in-year pressures. Unspent money from balances will be carried forward. Treasury performance had continued to outperform budget, now by around £850k, mainly due to slippage in the capital programme which had deferred the need to borrow. Income collection was marginally below target, more due to late collection rather than non-payment. The target is set on the profile of receipts for the previous year and this may be adjusted	<u>KC</u>

for 2011/12.

The report outlined the medium-term outlook and the major policy reforms that will impact on the Council. The coalition government's aim is to reduce spending to pay off the deficit as quickly as possible whilst avoiding a double-dip recession. The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October will give an indication of the scale of cuts to the public sector. Health and overseas aid have been protected, and education to some extent. Local Authority cuts will be between 25-40% - the latest indications are of a 33% cut. It will not be known what the cuts mean in real terms and phasing until December when the Council receives the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The model used for distributing money to Local Authorities has changed and it was not known if this would favour Telford & Wrekin or not. Each 1% cut to the Council's grants on General Fund would equate to a reduction of around £1m.

The following responses were made to questions raised during the presentation:

- Budget modelling has been done on a 33% reduction in line with the latest indications from the government and our knowledge about other authorities assumptions.
- Budget modelling takes account of the Council's statutory duties, although there are no statutory minimum levels of service laid out, so there can still be efficiencies even in statutory areas. This does not mean that the Council is intending to reduce all services to minimum levels.
- Savings targets of 20% had been set for both staff and non-staff costs. The Service Reviews are exploring new and more efficient ways of delivering services, and radical options are being considered. The targets are lower than the projected 33% cut because the RSG only accounts for a proportion of the Council's total funding, and other income sources will hopefully not be affected. The Appendices to the report shows what is being cut now to deal with the in-year grant losses.
- Interest and principal repayments from prudential borrowing for capital projects is built into revenue budget projections. The impact of changes resulting from delayed capital projects is also reflected.
- The Council is aware that there will be on-going pressure on its budget from the tightening up of Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding by the PCT
- The government is looking at floors and ceilings for the distribution of local authority funding. A major review of local government finance is scheduled for 2011.
- Once the £3.5m reserved for redundancies has been used up, any further redundancy costs will need to be budgeted for in next year's budget/offset as a first call against savings generated from further restructurings.
- The TWS contract is being reviewed for any flexibility to save money within the terms of the contract

The Council has a statutory duty for looked after children, but the service review is trying to look for alternative ways to deliver the service, although care of children is paramount.

AGREED

- **To note the report**
- **A report on Adult Social Care costs to be brought to the next meeting**

SJ

2. a)

Position on SEN cost

Members considered the briefing note on SEN provision and costs.

It was noted that most SEN spend is on out of borough placements and statements, both of which are very difficult to forecast and control. Work had been focused on earlier intervention and more effective preventative support for the young person to reduce the need to place them out of borough, and more effective work with partners to reduce the number and financial implications of statements.

A recent Ofsted report identified 1 in 5 young people nationally as SEN, and a suggestion had been made that some students were given the label unnecessarily. In Telford & Wrekin, 20.1% of children at primary school have an identified need, and 20.8% at secondary school. Parents had become more proactive in their children's education and there had been an upward trend in the number of parents requesting assessments, and the number of parental requests being upheld at tribunal. It was thought this trend would continue. There was an annual review process and under new regulations parents could insist on change at every review. All of this had led to growing expenditure and budget pressure.

Schools receive SEN money in March based on the latest available information about the number of statemented children at the school. Any new statements and changes to existing statements during the year are the statutory responsibility of the local authority, and funded from central contingency budgets. It is very difficult to predict the number of statements and the level of support required.

In the last academic year there was an average of 30 statement assessments per month. In July there had been 37, with 2 turned down, leading to an extra 35 in the system in one month alone. Until 3 years ago, the budget was split between 3 cost areas; SEN, children's social care and the PCT. The PCT no longer provide funding, children's social care budgets have been squeezed, so costs come out of the SEN budget. The budget had been built up and there was £75k unused, but this could be wiped out or overspent by one parent winning a tribunal.

Consideration had been given to providing specialist services within the borough such as at Jigsaw. Under the Heads of Service review, it had been proposed that SEN is moved into the Integrated Care and Support delivery unit to bring high cost care together as a potential saving.

The following responses were made to questions raised during the presentation:

- The members raised concerns that the increased number of

requests for assessments and statements could indicate that children are not receiving the right level of support at school. The officer responded that there had also been % increases in children on the autistic spectrum and children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). 23.9% had been diagnosed as having BESD compared to less than 20% five years ago. Two specialist centres are being planned as part of the Sport & Learning Communities programme, and the Service Review is also looking at special school provision. On-line training around national strategies is available to up-skill teachers, but the Lamb review had made it more likely that parents would go for a statement.

- There were 13 young people placed at independent schools outside the borough. Jigsaw had been set up to reduce the necessity of placing out of borough. It provides 18 day and 12 residential places. It was intended to accommodate high-end demanding young people with the most complex needs. The provider went bankrupt in the first year so that the young people placed there had to be moved out of borough, and it had been difficult bringing them back because parents were reluctant to uproot children who had settled elsewhere. In the meantime the Jigsaw places had been filled, although not necessarily with young people from the client group for which it was intended. The balance can be redressed as we go forward, and this will ensure the Council is not funding a level of provision in excess of the young person's needs.

AGREED

- **To note the report**
- **That the In-depth budget scrutiny review would pick up issues relating to SEN out of borough placements in more detail.**

2. b)

Position on B&B costs

Members considered the briefing note on B&B provision and costs.

It was noted that eliminating B&B accommodation for young people and reducing homelessness generally is a national as well as a local priority. There was pressure from the lack of affordable housing in the borough. The national indicator for B&B usage (numbers on the last day of the month) was not thought to give an accurate picture so a new measure had been introduced to reflect the overall position better, which is reported weekly and correlated to the monitoring of the housing benefits subsidy. The number of YP in B&B had continued to fall (the average for September 2010 was 4.56 YP per night) but the confident aim was to eradicate the use of B&B for YP except in absolute emergencies by the year end. The subsidy had been reduced by £220k from 2008/09-2009/10 with a further reduction of £34k projected for 2010/11.

Some existing and planned reduction measures were outlined:

- Continued improved early intervention
- The introduction of the YP joint assessment pathway
- The development of short-stay supported accommodation units at Dodmore Grange, linked to the assessment

pathway. 2 units of supported accommodation were already in use, a further 4 units would come on-stream in Oct & 3 more units will be available from Nov 10. This could produce part-year savings in lost housing benefit subsidy of £40k-£50k and full year savings in excess of £100k.

- Discussions with B&B providers with a view to inviting tenders during October for provision of supported lodgings type accommodation
- Extension of the general and substance misuse bond scheme

It should be recognised that B&B can provide YP with supportive accommodation and can be a better solution than flats or houses where they may be isolated, vulnerable and lack support.

The following responses were made to questions raised during the presentation:

- Dodmore Grange has a 4 and 3 unit configuration. A support contract is in place to provide support through the Supported People Programme. There is a concierge service from 7am-10pm. The units help YP to live independently but in a supported environment until they can move on, with a risk assessment.
- If Dodmore cannot meet demand, work is being done with landlords to develop house shares, or supported lodgings, to accommodate YP until they can move into permanent housing. Robust risk assessments will be done to ensure vulnerable people do not pose a risk to themselves or others when finding suitable accommodation. The housing supply gap is a challenge.
- The members recommended that the care and risk elements of Dodmore are monitored. These arrangements form part of the support packages for vulnerable people and will be provided as requested by Members.
- Members expressed concern about the prospect of vulnerable young people being accommodated out of borough. MA confirmed that no YP are now sent out of the borough, and commented that generally homeless young people are very vulnerable and that in some circumstances B&B can provide a good back-stop rather than accommodating them in inappropriate or inadequate housing.

AGREED

The members agreed they were very happy with the progress that had been made on this issue.

3.

Capital Receipts

The members received a verbal report on capital receipts and a map illustrating the disposal strategy was tabled. The difference between the budget of March 2010 projected value of capital receipts and the revised valuation was a potential reduction of £1m.. A comprehensive re-evaluation exercise had been carried out for all planned disposals. The reduction will have a minimal impact on borrowing requirements.

The following responses were made to questions raised during the presentation:

- The assessment included all sites and looked at existing values, projected values over the period of disposals, legal issues, site and environmental issues and the phasing of sites for disposal. Some new sites and smaller properties had been brought into the disposal programme.
- Although some properties had fallen in value, others had potentially increased from a planning perspective, and new properties had been brought in which accounted for the minimal reduction in the overall projected budget figure for capital receipts.
- In response to the question as to whether the disposal of larger sites for housing developments should be delayed until the appetite for housing recovers, the Head of Property & Design replied that the Council is working with the HCA on this. The Regional Spatial Strategy and standards of development may be relaxed leaving a bigger margin to allow for the softening in the market and to delay disposal until market recovery.
- Congestion on housing developments should be alleviated by the removal of obligations specifying a minimum number of houses with it possibly being based on the profile of the neighbourhood.
- It had been recognised that there needed to be a change in the way properties are managed and to ensure that service delivery drives property solutions and not the other way around.
- Various sources of information such as the land registry, Savilles, other comparable evidence had been used to assess the value of sites to ensure the projections are realistic. The assessment had been prudent and had been given rigorous challenge.

AGREED

The good result of the reassessment exercise was noted.

4. Report on Keeping Elected Members Informed

There were no further questions arising from the report circulated, but 2 members expressed disappointment that events of a significant nature had happened in their wards and that they had not been made aware of them.

5. Forward Plan

- AS noted above, the members requested a report on Adult Social Care costs for the next meeting.
- BT requested information about whether a minimum level is set for the delivery of statutory services. (This was responded to in an e-mail of 12th October)

**Notes of the Community Focused Efficient Council Scrutiny Meeting held on
Wednesday, 3rd November 2010 at 6.00 pm in the
Scrutiny Meeting Room, Civic Offices, Telford**

Present: Councillors Clive Mollett (Chairman), David Chaplin, Angela McClements, Bill Tomlinson and Co-optees Maurice Viney, Roy Williams.

Also in attendance: Cllr. Stephen Burrell; Laura Johnston, Head of Safeguarding; Tracy Smart, Senior Finance Manager; Paul Taylor, Social Care Specialist; Emma Cope, Principal Accountant; Fliss Mercer, Policy and Value for Money Manager; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

Apologies: Councillors Louise Lomax, Adrian Meredith.

<u>Minute/Action</u>	<u>Action to be taken by</u>
1.	The minutes of the last meeting noted without change.
2.	<p><u>Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of Safeguarding on national and local issues impacting on the financial position of the Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting service area and the actions being undertaken to mitigate their impact.</p> <p>The following points from the report were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the picture in T&W is in line with national trends. Benchmarking information was tabled• Actions to address the findings of the Thorpe & Regan review are being put in place, although capacity issues had initially delayed implementation.• The additional investment in the service should start to have an impact on costs from the last quarter of the financial year, as placement numbers and the unit cost of placements reduce. A huge amount of work had been put into the placement strategy.• The use of agency staff had been unavoidable to meet statutory requirements, but strategies put in place to recruit and retain staff had shown some success. <p>The following responses were given to questions raised during the presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The aim is to reduce reliance on agency workers and reduce costs. NQs had been recruited where possible, but had to be balanced with experienced staff to get the right skills mix. Good agency staff are encouraged to apply for jobs, but they positively choose agency work for the flexibility and higher pay rates. T&W offers a market weighting to attract people into the hard-to-recruit areas and is working regionally to establish cost and quality controls with other authorities. Staff are offered as much support and flexibility as possible, although this can be difficult in such a tough and demanding area – but the turnover of social workers has improved and is more stable than 2 years ago. A recent recruitment campaign for 5 social workers had attracted 6 employable applicants, so all had been recruited. The average additional cost for an agency worker was not available at the meeting but figures would be provided.• The Council would not be able to fulfil its statutory duty

without using agency staff, and existing staff would leave if they weren't used.

- It had not been possible to avoid using external residential care. Some children and young people need specialist, individual care which had not been available in the borough and could not be provided by foster carers. Some needed to be placed out of borough for safety reasons. All out of borough placements are monitored constantly so the child/yp can be brought back into the borough as soon as appropriate.
- Recruitment of foster carers had been very successful, including attracting carers from the private sector. Payments to foster carers had been improved and although not as high as private agencies, the council provided a good level of support which had assisted recruitment and retention. The recruitment process had been speeded up following a LEAN review, and the number of enquiries meant that an external agency was being used to expedite assessments as there was no internal capacity for this. The aim was to increase internal foster care placements by 14 extra per year.
- The costs relating to non-CiC Costs had risen following the Southwark Judgement whereby young homeless people of 16-17 were deemed "in need" and the authority had a statutory duty to accommodate them.
- There was no statistical information available about the cost to the authority of safeguarding children from families who had recently moved into the borough, but it was not thought to be a huge number
- Trend information was used to analyse the underlying factors leading to the reduction in unit costs. The better focused FC recruitment campaign and streamlining of the application process had meant new FCs were coming on line and in time would lead to more significant savings on unit costs.
- The retention rate of FCs in T&W was better than the national average. FCs usually drop out in a planned way at the end of a placement so there is little undue disruption to the child/yp. If FCs need a gap in caring, the service works with them to accommodate this.
- Costs of CiC are monitored by senior management on a weekly basis. The Head of Safeguarding approves all children coming into care and all external placements. Constant efforts are made to reduce overspend.

Cllr. Burrell made the point that the Council has a statutory duty to provide for children in care, and that the authority had made a huge investment in safeguarding and corporate parenting. The numbers coming into care had increased significantly nationally, but in T&W the increase had been more contained. The number placed with our own FCs had increased and the unit cost had reduced. Cllr. Burrell commended the work of officers and said that the situation would be considerably worse without their good management.

Member's comments:

- That the team had done a "cracking job"
- That the Council should allocate more funding to the SCP budget in the first instance and there would be no objection if this happened
- That consideration should be given nationally to pay scales

for social workers as they had not kept pace with other professionals in the last few years

AGREED

To note the report

3. Adult Social Care

Members considered the report of the Head of Adult Social Care on Adult Social Care Revenue Budget/Forecast Outturn 2010/2011. The committee was asked to note that this was the first time in years that the service had been in a position of overspend.

The following points were highlighted from the report:

- The service enables the council to meet its statutory requirements under community care legislation, and funds care for various categories of people as described in the report.
- A key pressure on costs had been the tightening up of CHC funding, as well as demographic trends, higher customer expectations and the withdrawal of ILF funding.
- Costs in previous years had been met by increased budgets and additional investment in the service, but the projections for 2010/11 did not fully anticipate the number of people coming out of the NHS system. There are high level discussions with the PCT.
- The future is set to worsen and there was uncertainty about national funding and policy. The coalition had announced an extra £1bn annual funding for adult care, but the impact of this had to be assessed (if this is “new” money or from the health budget). A White Paper on adult care is expected in the autumn. The major review of adult and children’s care is looking at ways of driving out VFM from existing contracts (although are hitting a ceiling) and cost saving strategies such as rehabilitation and re-enablement.

The following responses were given to questions raised during the presentation:

- That some of the proposals in the health White Paper are welcome and may put the authority in a stronger position to influence the health and social care agenda.
- The transition to GP commissioning could potentially create a temporary vacuum but in Telford GP consortia are working though what is required and are in discussion with the PCT to ensure a smooth transition.
- Unlike CHC funding which is not means tested, adult social care is means tested so the authority tends to pay the majority of costs. People with over £23.5k in savings pay the whole cost of care until the level of savings is reduced to below this amount. The authority is then responsible for paying contributions based on an assessment of income. Under the Charging for Residential Accommodation Guide (CRAG) regulations, the authority fixes a charge and those unable to pay are assessed on their ability to pay a proportion of the costs. The formula is very complex.
- Some PCTs provide lower levels of CHC than T&W and the availability of other local provision such as community hospitals needs to be taken into account. Benchmarking

data has only been available for 2 years, but it was thought that the shift from NHS to Local authority funding has gone too far too quickly.

- The PCT makes the initial assessment to determine if needs are health related (NHS funded) or social (local authority funded). Clients can appeal to the PCT and then the SHA. Most people affected are vulnerable, and the Council can help make families aware of their rights and advocacy services.
- If at all possible the council wants to avoid cutting non-statutory services. Nationally more needs to be invested in prevention and other support initiatives such as Age Concern so that fewer people take recourse to the community care system. There may have been a tendency to “over-assess” needs so that too much support is provided too soon, instead of providing re-ablement services. There were some positive signs in the CSR – T&W has received had received £220k for re-enablement, and as a Council we need to make sure the £1bn allocated nationally accrues to local people.
- Children and adult services work very closely together and liaise on budgets so that transition is not an issue for most children. More could be done to plan re-enablement from an earlier age. The most difficult group is age 16-17 with mental health issues; at 18 the person becomes eligible for community care support and the authority then has a statutory duty of care.
- Under the 1993 NHS Community Care Act, the local authority sets a fair access to care threshold (FACT) for entry to community care services. T&W has set the threshold at “substantial” (from low/moderate/substantial/critical). If a person’s needs are assessed above the threshold (substantial or critical) the authority has a legal duty to meet the needs. If needs are assessed below the threshold (low/moderate), there is no legal duty to meet the needs but the authority recognises that it should provide services and that intervention at this stage can prevent deterioration and higher costs later on.
- In line with national trends, the authority commissions services and is not a provider. As part of the major review of social services, the option of in-house services was being examined, but not thought likely at this point.
- Opportunities for joint commissioning/procurement with other organisations and authorities were being explored for high cost services. Efficiency gains had been made from the joint assessment team with Shropshire, joint mental health teams with Shropshire and Staffordshire and joint re-enablement team with the PCT.

AGREED:

- **To note the report**
- **That equivalent data for the number of supported clients for the previous 3 years, including the number in residential care would be provided.**

4. Budget Engagement and Communication

Members considered the report of the Policy and Value for Money Manager and the Head of Communications on the

budget engagement and communication process with local people.

The following points were highlighted from the report:

- That because of the financial climate, budget consultation had started earlier than usual in January 2010
- Consultation is an on-going dialogue, not an one-off exercise
- The aim is to understand what services are most important to local people and what are less important to help determine spending priorities
- As many people as possible are engaged in the most cost effective way
- The report outlined the engagement programme for Phases 1 & 2 designed to reach a broad mix of people representative of the whole community. Methods included large surveys, consultation with community/user groups, interactive Spend & Save exercises with an on-line version being launched in November.

The following responses were given to questions raised during the presentation:

- The Citizen's Survey covers 10,000 households selected randomly from across the borough, which equates to a tenth of all households. The response rate is good at around a third. MV commented that he had been resident of T&W for over 30 years but never received a random survey from the Council. FM said this was possible, even with longstanding residents simply because the survey is random, but that all parts of the borough were surveyed equally.
- The response rates from each area are analysed to ensure the process is equitable. Members can make a difference to the response rate by promoting the survey to ward residents.
- Suggestions from the £££s for Projects scheme have also been used as a means of ascertaining local priorities.
- It was found that groups did not always prioritise the services they need e.g. senior citizens had prioritised affordable housing for younger people.
- The Community Panel (Phase 2 detailed survey) currently includes about 1,350 people. The aim is to increase this to 2,000 and to ensure the Panel is kept refreshed and representative.
- All comments received by members of the public are read personally by the Policy and Value for Money Manager so that all points are taken into consideration.
- Partners are consulted as a group via the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and individual Heads of Service pick up budget issues with counterparts in other organisations.
- An overview of the results of public consultation can be presented to the CFEC scrutiny committee

Member's suggestions:

- That the Spend & Save exercise should include asking groups to identify services they use that they would be prepared to have cut
- That more help should be made available to support the £££s for projects bids so that expectations and costings are realistic.

AGREED

- To note the report, and the good work being done
- That the results of the consultation would be presented at a meeting in January

5. Forward Plan

The forward plan was noted without change.

6. Time and date of next meeting

Wednesday, 1st December at 6.00pm in the Scrutiny Meeting Room

**Notes of the Community Focused Efficient Council Scrutiny Meeting held on
Wednesday, 1st December 2010 at 6.00 pm in the
Scrutiny Meeting Room, Civic Offices, Telford**

Present: Councillors Clive Mollett (Chairman), David Chaplin, Angela McClements, Bill Tomlinson and Co-optee Maurice Viney.

Also in attendance: Meredith Evans, Corporate Director Environment & Rural Area / Housing Regeneration & Prosperity; Debbie Germany, Organisational Improvement Manager; Emma Gower, Project Officer, Organisational Improvement; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

Apologies: Councillor Adrian Meredith, co-optee Maurice Viney.

<u>Minute/Action</u>	<u>Action to be taken by</u>
1. The minutes of the last meeting noted without change.	
2. <u>Single Status</u> Members received a verbal report from the Corporate Director for Environment & Rural Area / Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity and the Organisational Improvement Manager. Single Status dated from 2007 and stemmed from equal pay legislation aimed at addressing gender bias in pay for like-for-like jobs, especially low paid jobs where women had traditionally been paid less than men. All local authorities had to undergo a systematic re-evaluation of all jobs to bring pay into alignment; it was not about how much people should be paid, only that pay was equal for equal value work. Where higher pay awards were made, claims for back pay could be back-dated to 2007. Since 2007 a lot of work had been done in Telford & Wrekin on job evaluation and pay modelling, but the process had been extremely complicated. The implementation of Single Status in other authorities had thrown up legal challenges so that case law was constantly changing. Telford & Wrekin had therefore reviewed and re-modelled its approach at each stage to make sure it was as robust as possible against legal challenge and this amongst other things had made the process more protracted. Meredith Evans had become lead Director and Debbie Germany as Project Manager for Single Status in July 2010 because they were leading on the Council's restructure programme and it made sense to align the two processes. A new methodology and implementation timetable had been put in place, and delivery was being overseen by a new Steering Group made up of senior staff in legal, HR and finance. "Job families" had been established to categorise jobs with recognised similarities and equal value into manageable groups. This had made the process easier and more flexible to manage, although it was still very complex with many timing dependencies. It had added about 8 months to the timetable, but other authorities were now adopting the approach. Work with schools had become more complicated as schools moved towards independence which changed the employment	

status of staff. There was on-going negotiation with the unions.

Questions and Answers

Q. How do you ensure that job roles are fairly and consistently evaluated?

A. Each member of staff completes a detailed Job Evaluation (JE) questionnaire which is designed to pull out the value of the job - it requires them to give examples of how their skills are used - and is signed-off by their line manager. Questionnaires are thoroughly analysed and checked for consistency by the JE panel, and the Job Family framework enables jobs of a similar value to be more fairly evaluated. The process is sophisticated, and is as thorough and fair as possible. There are checks and balances in the system, and there will be an appeal process.
A sample questionnaire would be circulated.

ME/DG

Q. What is the timetable for implementation?

A. The implementation date is May 2012. The steps leading up to this are pay modelling, equality impact assessments, legal and financial affordability checks, then to Cabinet for approval, then to the union for agreement locally and nationally, then back to Cabinet for final approval.

Q. Have there been any challenges yet in Telford & Wrekin?

A. What we want is collective agreement with the union. The current union position is neutral and open-minded, and although there are some reservations about the Job family approach.

Q. How are the unions involved and how do you communicate with them?

A. There is a fortnightly meeting to raise issues, give updates and sound out ideas on either side. There is quite a constant dialogue, although the unions are more involved at key stages.

Q. How are staff supported in completing the JE forms? People who are more adept at filling in the forms could be advantaged.

A. The JE team offers training, and line managers can also support staff in addition to signing off the forms. The Job Family approach and the JE process include core consistency checks to ensure that people are treated equally. Forms are double-checked to reduce the risk of discrepancies.

Q. How does Single Status affect back-pay for leavers?

Current case law indicates that there have been no successful claims beyond 6 months of the employee leave date.

Q. Does Single Status include teachers?

A. It does not cover teachers but it does cover other school staff including teaching assistants, catering, cleaning etc.

Q. Does back-pay remain fixed, or is interest paid on the pay owing?

A. There is no formula for back-pay. The legislation applies from April 2007. Other authorities have dealt with this in different ways e.g. a negotiated compensation payment. In Telford & Wrekin, a reserve of 4% has been set aside each year for the last 3 years to cover Single Status costs, but until the pay modelling is done we will not know if this is enough. The final

amount will depend on a number of factors.

Q. Are we liaising with neighbouring authorities to try to ensure implementation dates are aligned and market rates are consistent?

A. Because there is no national framework for Single Status, each authority has done it differently and within different timescales. We do look at authorities who have recently gone through implementation to learn from them e.g. Derbyshire completed in January, Sandwell in April. Shropshire implemented phase 1 for the lower grades 1-2 years ago. Walsall is on track to implement soon, so we are talking to them. BT recommended contacting Shropshire to find out how the lower grade implementation had been done and gone.

Q. Why has it taken so long to implement?

A. ME had only been involved with Single Status since July 2010, so could not account for specifics before then, but the major changes the organisation is facing and the economic climate had all had an impact on timescales, as well as the changing case law referred to earlier. But rigorous project management had now been put in place to make sure milestones are achieved in future.

Q. How can we be assured that the May 2012 implementation date will be met?

A. We are as confident as possible that they can be met where they are within Council control. There are unknowns such as negotiation with the unions and how long they take for the national negotiation and it is difficult to know how long to allow for this.

Q. Are there any external controls on timescales?

A. No, but we don't want the Single Status project lasting longer than necessary.

3. Service Reviews

Members received a verbal report from the Corporate Director for Environment & Rural Area / Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity and Organisational Improvement Manager.

As part of the One Council vision, the council got rid of the old portfolios has restructured to merge and streamline management, cutting 50% off management costs. Service Reviews are also underway across all service areas to identify priorities and look at how services can be reshaped to make efficiencies. National cuts are now a big driver. There are 3 types of Service Review:

1. The NKA efficiency reviews - transport, environmental services. The recommendations have either been implemented or are being worked through and will come out as part of the budget proposals.
2. The 3 major reviews on the reconfiguration of ASC/CYP services which are due to conclude at the end of December
3. All other service reviews. This work will initially feed into the budget proposals for 2011/12 which will identify any service impacts, and will not be reported separately. Many are at the

early idea stage and more complicated proposals will come through later next year.

Questions and Answers

Q. Has there been an evaluation of whether the savings projected from the NKA reviews have actually been made, and how is this done?

A. Some savings have been captured and are in place, others will come through the budget proposals and there will be year-on-year savings. A wind-up report went to Cabinet to show savings to date; there have been savings from the retendering of taxi services, reduced costs of the travel centre in the bus station, and savings from a review of maintenance schedules will come through the budget proposals – but a running total just related to NKA suggestions is not being kept. In the current climate, the Council would do things differently from using consultants in this way.

Q. What risk analysis and impact assessment is done on the proposed service changes?

A. The projected outcomes and implications of proposals are analysed and identified in a risk register. Steering Groups have been set up for key areas of work: New Ways of Working, Single Status and Service Reviews. These are action-focused groups which include officers doing the work.

Members LL and AMc expressed concern about risks.

Q. If the budget is the driver, how is saving money balanced with maintaining services?

A. Services will need to be prioritised carefully. The high cost/low impact areas where efficiencies can be made have been identified, but these won't deliver the level of savings that are expected to be required. We need to maximise savings in areas that are least damaging to the community and we are working with partners on this. Some services have already been cut back following the withdrawal of grant funding in the summer.

Q. Will the services that are funded be effective?

A. Yes, the starting point is identifying exactly what services need to be delivered and the funding needed to provide them at the agreed level will be identified.

Q. When will the budget proposals be available to scrutiny?

A. There was uncertainty about the exact date, but it was noted that the proposals are going to Cabinet on 11th January. BT commented that in the past, papers with figures had not been available until the day of the Cabinet meeting.

THE COMMITTEE REQUESTED

That the investment and savings figures in the budget proposals should have an explanatory narrative around them.

4. Employee Suggestion Scheme

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director for Environment & Rural Area / Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity which was also presented by the Project Officer, Organisational Improvement.

The report highlighted:

- There had been 146 suggestions from 1st April-30th Sept, about 100 in the first month then around 10 per month.
- 15 suggestions had been implemented (on target at 10%). 1 had made £2k p.a. cashable savings, the others resulted in non-cashable savings or other organisational benefit.
- 41% were declined, mostly because they were already planned or were not financially viable.
- There had been issues with the automated system so a manual system was being used.
- Employee engagement sessions done as part of the service reviews had brought in significantly more suggestions and these will be taken into account in the service reviews

Questions and Answers

Q. Will the scheme be continued with current performance?

A. Yes, the scheme is intended to continue. A full review of the scheme will take place in April.

Q. What are the rewards?

A. There are rewards for suggestions that make cashable savings - £25 for individuals, up to £100 for groups and a mug for any suggestion implemented.

Q. Should the rewards be set higher as an incentive e.g. a % of the savings made?

A. The employee engagement sessions were a more successful way of getting suggestions and staff were not rewarded at all for these. (A note was e-mailed to members on 2nd December about this and forwarded to co-optees.)

Q. Is everyone aware of the rewards?

A. There are details on the intranet.

Q. Do people making suggestions receive feedback to update them on what is happening with their suggestion?

A. All people making suggestions receive feedback by e-mail. There is a 28 day response guideline to notify people whether their suggestion has been accepted or rejected, although complex suggestions can take longer to evaluate but the suggestor will receive this feedback.

Q. Has the scheme made a net loss?

A. It is difficult to audit because some ideas feed into others, and there are suggestions that don't make a cashable saving but do improve the way the organisation works.

AGREED

- **That the report and details of rewards would be circulated to all members.**
- **That the results of the review would be reported back to the CFEC committee after April 2011.**

EG

5.

Partner Funding

The report of the Head of Finance circulated for information was considered. Members requested a response from the Head of

Finance as to whether there is a perception that there will be a significant change to partner funding next year.

SJ/KC

6. Forward Plan and next meeting

Members noted the Forward Plan. All scrutiny members will be invited to the CFEC meeting on 12th January when the budget proposals will be presented.

Because the budget consultation timetable is so tight, members were asked to read the proposals as soon as they are available, and to put forward their questions in advance so that answers can be provided at the scrutiny committee meetings in January. Members will be provided with a hard copy of the proposals as soon as they are available. BT commented that in the past some appendices to the proposals had not been available before the Cabinet meetings and that they should be made available as soon as possible.