

**Audit Committee**

**2 February 2018**

**Finance Scrutiny Panel**

**Purpose of Report:** Progress report

The Finance Scrutiny Panel has met on three occasions since the last Audit Committee.

The Panel has met the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care (ASC) who reported that overspends were reducing but there were significant additional pressures including the impending Inspection of Adult Social Care in late January 2018. The Panel were of the opinion that all services should be inspection ready at any given time, and whilst the Portfolio Holder agreed with this in principle, there was insufficient resource to tackle the pressures arising from the CSSIW Children's Report, imminent inspection of ASC and 'business as usual'. He was of the opinion that there were not enough people to carry out the work given the pressures and complexities within the service including a continuing rise in service users. Members expressed their continued frustration with the lack of forward planning and KPIs.

Members of the Panel underwent Impact Assessment Training and at a recent meeting considered a number of Impact Assessments. However these were predominantly for relatively minor savings. No IAs were available for ASC or Children's Services. An additional Member Seminar was to be arranged for all Members to consider budget proposals for these areas.

Cabinet Policy decisions have also been considered with regard to the emerging budget. CIPFA have undertaken an exercise to review the budget process and it is believed that the process is robust. However a formal report is expected shortly.

Budget monitoring reports at the end of October and November 2017 have been considered. It had been hoped that the effects of implementation of the budget recovery plan would be evidenced but this is likely to be reflected in the report as at the end of December 2017

The Children's Services Improvement Plan will be costed by the end of January 2018 giving clarity around the budget position. The Panel are seeking assurance that additional investment will deliver improved outcomes. Members have been advised on more than one occasion that the Authority is not sustainable in its current format and needs radical transformation. The expectations of residents as well as Members and officers must be managed. Technical accounting adjustments have been employed to improve the budget position but the Panel have concerns that this obscures the need to transform.

At the last meeting the Panel were advised of the current pressures facing the Council. The budget is currently dominated by Adults and Children's Social Care emphasising the need for fundamental, structural change.

Following the joint Audit/ASC report into last year's overspend, more detailed work has been undertaken on specific areas. The first report into Learning Disabilities has been finalised and the second, on Mental Health, is underway.

**Report contact: Lisa Richards, Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services**

**Contact details: [lisa.richards@powys.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.richards@powys.gov.uk), 01597 826371**

**Background papers: Notes of meetings held on 10 November and 8 December 2017 and 10 January 2018**

**Group Membership: County Councillors J G Morris (Lead Member), M Dorrance, J Gibson-Watt, D R Jones, P Roberts, D A Thomas, E Vaughan, A Williams, G Williams and Mr J Brautigam**