

Portfolio Observations

1. Adult Care & Health

- Councillors raised concerns on workforce and the welfare and support of carers.
- Herts at Home created to take over provider failure. It has a Care Quality Commission (CQC) good rating. A company will work with Herts at Home and take over any other provider failure. Satisfied they would have ability to intervene if another care provider failure.
- Discharge assessment question around infrastructure to ensure projects run quicker. Adult Care Services (ACS) Connect is a partnership to ensure all working together/aware of any delays etc.
- Voluntary sector. ACS proposing to set up joint commissioning with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to provide finance to voluntary organisations to service social prescribing and recognised there are potential savings.
- Housing – 19-month building programme HCC building but not staffing them. Will buy a proportion of their beds (75) to guarantee price of bed and this will generate income. There is a programme to close five homes as the need is for nursing rather than residential.
- Demographic pressure due to more children with complex needs surviving into adulthood.
- Equipment services – more efficient ways to deliver/clean equipment etc. has resulted in savings.
- Transport – all ACS vehicles are diesel and it is still cost prohibitive to change them to electric.

2. Children, Young People & Families

- It was acknowledged that last year was a preparation year for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transformation and this coming year is when the actions and results will emerge.
- The Executive Member and officers comprehensively answered concerns about parental issues about navigating online SEND services. This has significantly improved and with further development to continue into the autumn.
- Members queried that with a national shortage of carers Adult and Children Services would be competing for the same individuals. Officers confidently explained that there is minimal overlap between the two and only a selected number of individuals choose to work with children.
- The two main challenge areas for the next year are the placement strategy and SEND delivery.

3. Community Protection & Waste Management

- There is strong partnership working between Trading Standards and the Fire Service regarding the reporting of trading and fire issues when out on visits, which allows each group to have more eyes on the ground.

4. Education, Libraries & Localism

- It is important that the results of the ongoing home to school transport review are released as soon as it is available so further scrutiny of this can take place
- It was also noted that there needs to be better communications between the County Council and schools, and schools and parents, particularly around new bandings for high level needs funding

5. Growth, Infrastructure, Planning & the Economy

- Working collaboratively with the Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and other partners to deliver the growth agenda was discussed.
- Delivering a good growth narrative such as sustainable infrastructure and transport, affordable housing and local employment opportunities was raised.
- It was recognised that districts and boroughs to be on board for the delivery of the growth agenda, as they are the LPAs.
- According to surveys, real-time transport information has been recognised as a high priority in Hertfordshire. The service is also working on moving towards app usage for customers to deliver the real-time information and are investigating better data usage.
- A review is being undertaken regarding recruitment and retention, exploring salary scales, additional benefits and career development opportunities.

6. Highways & Environment

- **Value for money:** the Directorate confirmed that in the provision of highways, membership with ADEPT¹ ensures cost efficiencies in current and future service provisions
Environmental net gain: methods are being implemented to achieve this e.g. funding for the Tree Strategy, investigation towards carbon footprint and the impact different service dressing have on this; and Sustainable Herts through writing to partners to investigate how they are complying environmentally and reduce the environmental impact, looking into material usage and recycling

¹ ADEPT is a sector voluntary organisation of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport. They represent directors from county, unitary and combined authorities, respond to consultancies and queries and help to maximise sustainable growth solutions

and Asset Management correction e.g. prolonging the lifecycle of roads.

LED lighting: there was recognition of how well the scheme is doing e.g. Carbon emission reduced by 60% (12,000 tonnes).

Revenue expenditure: there was concern regarding whether the level of revenue expenditure was enough for proposed infrastructure development schemes capital programmes such as LED lighting will support revenue expenditure.

Confidence in the Growth Agenda: despite an additional £38 million injected into highways, increased congestion and other pressures caused by the Growth Agenda were still a grave concern.

7. Public Health & Prevention

- Regarding the ring-fence and efficiency savings, members heard that Public Health Prevention (PHP) is continuing to meet its objectives as well as achieving budget cuts. This has been achieved by switching treatments, restructuring services and identifying overlaps with other departments to ensure needs were met. While the situation around funding remains uncertain, it emphasises the need for a greater focus on prevention. At future IPs greater clarification should be provided around Public Health's medium and long-term budget when the ring-fenced budget is withdrawn. There is a need to focus discussion on future funding to deliver initiatives with the NHS, including the clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and districts and boroughs.
- Members would like to see clearer information on Public Health outcomes and how effectiveness is measured. As well as being able to understand how the county is performing, members are keen to understand the financials and savings to the NHS as a result of prevention work including comparisons of how the County Council is spending money vs the NHS.
- The Health and Wellbeing Board has to be more vocal about the need for continuing and new investment into prevention and other services. Departments and external organisations need to understand responsibilities in county-wide partnerships so that multi-agency services are delivered effectively for residents.

8. Resources & Performance

- **Contract Management:** it was acknowledged that there is a degree of risk involved with contractor market volatility, especially in light of Carillion. The authority has split its current Serco contract into 10 lots as sub-contractors have proven most cost-effective. This includes some aspects that have been brought in-house such as financial transactions, as this has proven to be more cost effective. Members were happy with the tailored approach.

- **Capital Budget:** there was a query on the source of our capital programme funding. For instance, the majority of the grant funding for Brookfield Riverside scheme is through HIF (Herts Infrastructure Fund) funding. The bid is currently with the government and a response is expected in March. The majority of funding for the Energy Generation Project is coming from borrowing. Members were content as the project should produce an immediate revenue return.
- **Transformation:** To ensure projects are delivered on time and to budget, Resources will have greater corporate overview. To ensure the council becomes more efficient and reduce costs, Resources have established a PMO (Project Management Office). This will hold the strategic management board (SMB) to account and councillors were content with this proposal.