

ITEM 5

Cabinet Member Statement to Council: Adult Social Care

Cllr Alison Martin, Cabinet Member for Integrated Adult Care and Health

I am making this statement on Adult Social Care to Full Council in order to set out to members and the public the difficulties the care system faces, both nationally and here in Derby. The situation inherited by the Labour administration reveals the depth of the crisis social care now faces and the challenges there are to meeting statutory obligations. The recent survey report from Directors of Adult Social Services speaks of a potential slide into unsustainability for adult social care, and now is the time to be open with the public if we are to maintain even basic care support and to remain a society that deems that important.

It needs to be recognized at the outset that the Council's adult social care staff do a sterling job, often in the face of adversity. All of us in this Chamber are indebted to the work they do, because they are helping and caring for our residents, and perhaps our family or friends. At any point now, or in the future, they could be caring for you or me.

But will they be able to continue to do so? Right now, there is a tsunami of pressures in adult social care, some longstanding, but many more recent. Yes – we have an ageing population and increasing numbers of people with complex needs are living longer: fortunately. But, as our social fabric has unwoven over the last 13 years, and the NHS has become ever more fragile, more and more need has fallen into the hands of social care. More younger adults need services, we are seeing a rise in the number of people with mental health issues, more domestic abuse of the vulnerable, and more demands from prisons and rough sleepers. And – of course – we are seeing more need from people on those long waiting lists for NHS treatment, and then more support needed for people who are consequently discharged from hospital earlier and thus need more re-ablement care.

So, more people need care, and their care needs are ever more complex.

Can the social care budget keep pace with that increased demand? The short answer is: no. In the last few years, the budget has been propped up by one-off government grants and by the social care precept, which people in Derby are paying in their Council Tax. However, those one-off government grants are ending, and the precept alone cannot supply what is needed. The cost of increasing demand is being swollen by high inflation. So, whilst the Adult Social Care budget increased by 4.3% in 22/23, inflation for most of last year was running at around 9%. This year's budget increase is likely to be eclipsed by the spiralling costs of the cost of living crisis, so impactful in care services.

I know that our responsibility is to deliver for the people of Derby the best service we can with the budget we do have. And that's what we will do. But that will and determination cannot overcome the strains in the care market, as recruitment and retention of staff remain very difficult. Some care companies are taking the view that there just isn't the money in the system to make their business viable. The pay for care workers is the national living wage, which was increased to just £10.42 per hour in April – many are not actually receiving that. Given all the demands of caring,

is it surprising that so many leave the job when some supermarkets are paying £11.40 an hour for new starters?

Derby City Council alone cannot simply implement an increase in funding to enable better pay for frontline care workers – for all that they need it – because the funding is not there to do so. The lack of paid carers means that even more demand is being placed on unpaid carers, who still deliver most of the care in our society. So many families and partners undertake heroic care roles and/or do what they can – and why wouldn't they? But when the burden is too high, that also takes its toll on care systems, as carers themselves develop care needs. The care role of the family and unpaid carers is a debate we need to have in society.

We must, therefore, return our focus to a national strategy and funding plan for adult social care. Johnson's 'Get Care Fixed' proved as ineffectual as Truss's disastrous measures to end the stagnant economy. Social care is not particularly sexy – its problems can't be solved by a flurry of policy announcements and photo ops. It needs a plan – and that plan must be allied to realistic funding structures.

So, in response to the struggling state of social care provision both here in Derby and in most other local authorities, I will be writing to the Minister of State for Social Care, Helen Whately, and the Shadow Minister for Social Care, Liz Kendall, to invite them to Derby look at the many issues in the social care system. I will be asking them to come to see first-hand what the problems are on the ground, and to appreciate how they don't exist in isolation, but are situated amidst a whole series of other demands that councils and the NHS must meet.

Thank you.