

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2022

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor A Williams – Chairperson

H T Bennett	F D Bletsoe	P Davies	S J Griffiths
M L Hughes	M Jones	RL Penhale-Thomas	T Thomas
G Walter	AJ Williams		

Apologies for Absence

RM Granville

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Jessica Mclellan	Scrutiny Officer
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Heidi Bennett, Paul Davies and Graham Walter gave their apologies that they would need to leave the meeting early.

Officers

Laura Kinsey – Head of Children’s Social Care
Andrew Thomas - Group Manager, Sports and Physical Activity

Invitees

Councillor Rhys Goode - Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future

Councillor Jon-Paul Blundell gave his apologies that he would need to leave the meeting early.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Heidi Bennett declared a personal interest in agenda item 3 as she is employed by organisation which delivers prevention and wellbeing support in connection with Bridgend County Borough Council.

20. DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services introduced the report by commending the Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing on her leadership

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and for keeping the workforce engaged and informed throughout the challenges they had faced and expressing her thanks to their Officers who had been innovative and proactive.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing presented the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2021 to the Committee, for scrutiny prior to consideration by Council on 20 September 2023.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing and Members discussed the following:

- The key aspects of the service being shown in the report regarding balance between agency staff and council staff, overall cost, churn of staff in the breakdown across different parts of the service and the number of open vacancies.
- Initiatives underway, including working with Bridgend College, bringing in people from different sectors, growing their own social workers, international recruitment, looking at how to convert agency workers into permanent workforce and applications for market supplement policy in children's social care.
- Clarification that the pressures were external and an all-Wales issue.
- The process for and how the critical incident referred to in the report had been triggered by the situation they had found themselves in within the Information, Advice and Assistance Service previously.
- The increase in the number of people contacting the service and concern over the number of assessments undertaken and the significant increase in demand being seen.
- Discharges from hospital and high levels of staff absence in-house, whether Care and Repair were being used to their full potential, the new discharge hub at the hospital having recently been introduced with Care and Repair sitting alongside with their social workers and Discharge Liaison Service and minor adaptations.
- Examples of how best practice from other local authorities was incorporated following the Care Inspectorate Wales Quality Assurance Inspection, to further reduce the need for statutory interventions, including reviews in the area of prevention, Local Area Coordinators, conversations with colleagues in Carmarthenshire about contracts, electric vehicles and overcoming barriers, conversations with authorities who had implemented the Signs of Safety Model, investment in earmarked reserves and working with an Improvement Partner from the Institute of Public Care.
- Operating models being considered going forward, multi-agency support model needed, implementing trauma informed models of practice (given the complexity of children requiring residential provision), looking at how it could be reflected within the Signs of Safety Plan, and integrated working with Health and the Third Sector.
- Conclusions and recommendations of the Improving Outcomes for Children Board to date.
- The high levels of staff absence in Adult Social Care in-house services attributed to Musculoskeletal or Non work-related stress.

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- The significant reduction in the percentage of assessments completed within the statutory timescale of 42 days in the Children's Performance dashboard, the particular pressures impacting on performance of the service and the focus on improving both the quantitative and qualitative performance.
- Reducing the number of hours of care provided and mitigating the need for support referred to in the Adult Performance Dashboard
- Context around the number of inquiries completed within the 7-day timescale and those more than 7 days, with many being completed within 8 or 9 days and a large proportion of safeguarding referrals including care providers, Health colleagues and the Police.
- How accuracy and correct information was being ensured through quality assurance under the Recovery, Reset, Renewal and Social Care Recovery Plan, with information being entered through optimal use of the system and with Inspectors undertaking their own quality assurance.
- Reasons for and what was being done about the high percentage of care experienced children who had experienced three or more placements and / or one or more changes of school, including:
 - Establishment of the Care Experienced Children's Team;
 - Huge pressures on residential and fostering placements;
 - Reunification workers in place;
 - Stabilising placements and supporting foster families where there were challenges;
 - Therapeutic service being developed;
 - Foster care provision;
 - Support worker role available out of hours.
- The initial assessment that had been made on the future key priorities for 2022-23, including:
 - Securing a stable workforce;
 - Daily monitoring;
 - Priorities to be built on and included in future reports;
 - Infrastructure around performance and quality assurance;
 - New planning groups;
 - Sixth Goals program.
- Growing their Own Scheme being a key to long term success, and the international recruitment of staff.
- The work of the Corporate Parenting and Participations Officer; ensuring the mechanism for reaching out to all their care experienced children and giving them the opportunity to engage and be involved.
- The survey work undertaken with secondary school pupils to set wellbeing baselines for the Council's review of play sufficiency and whether it could be rolled out to primary schools.
- The next steps on the different quality standards and reflecting what was in the Corporate Plan and then the Directorate Business Plan, for future monitoring by the Committee.

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- The important and critical checks needing to take place for taking people from enquiry to foster care which took around six months, and ways to improve the effectiveness of those timescales.
- Changes made regarding the first year of practise for the newly qualified joining the local authority, with practice educators linking and regular opportunities for newly qualified students to come together with their peer groups, making sure they received the right support, supervision and induction from day one in the service.
- The total of £12.8m budget pressures identified in the 2023-24 Budget Process, where those budgetary pressures sat in the Directorate and the impact on service delivery as the shortfall would be a significant budgetary pressure on the Directorate.
- Concerns regarding the alignment of the finances needed to deliver statutory services with the availability of finance, the three key contributing factors being, the increase in need and demand, a massive workforce challenge and the unit cost of provision significantly increasing.

The Chairperson advised that there were no further questions for the Invitees, thanked the Invitees for their attendance and advised that they may leave the meeting.

RESOLVED: Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendations:

1. That the Report should include data and graphics to demonstrate the impact of staffing pressures on the Directorate.
2. That the Report make reference to the Corporate Risk Register when referring to the Critical Incident instigated in 2022.
3. That the Report should reflect not only the increase in demand on Social Care but also the complexity and nature of referrals being made (particularly in Children's Social Care).
4. That the Committee write a letter, in support of the Deputy Leader, to the Welsh Minister for Social Services regarding budgetary pressures.

and the Committee requested:

5. A written response regarding the Adult, Children and Wellbeing Quality Standards detailing the up to date/current position on each of the 'Next Steps' outlined in the Report.
6. A copy of the letter sent by the Deputy Leader to the Deputy Welsh Government Minister for Social Services regarding workforce concerns.
7. Information regarding the Discharge Hub at the Princess of Wales Hospital and information on how Care and Repair support the Service.
8. Information on the innovative ways in which the Council is recruiting staff.

Confirmation of whether Social Services plan to engage primary school children in survey work to set wellbeing baselines for the Council's review of play sufficiency, as they had done with the secondary school children.

21. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny presented the Committee with the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A for discussion and consideration, requested any specific information the Committee identified to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wished to attend, requested the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3.

She also advised that the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet was attached as Appendix B to track responses to the Committee's Recommendations made at previous meetings.

Members requested that the report upon Progress on the Performance of Disabled Facilities Grants, including the support arrangements provided by Neath Port Talbot report, be scheduled as soon as possible.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny referred to the item already listed on the FWP in Appendix A and advised that a written response on a position statement at the end of the year would be provided from Officers shortly and the report would then follow.

Members requested a report upon the housing crisis, particularly looking at a partnership approach and inviting Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), Private Landlords and the Authority's Housing Officers.

Members requested that Scrutiny Officers look at the scheduling of the following reports on the FWP having regard to the availability of the key invitees:

- Delivery of the Cost of Living Payment Scheme;
- Workforce Recruitment and Retention;
- RSL Invitees for the Homelessness, Housing and Empty Properties.

There were no further items identified for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3 and this could be revisited at the next meeting.

There were no requests to include specific information in reports for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: The Committee considered and approved its Forward Work Programme in Appendix A subject to the above additions and requests and noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings, in Appendix B.

22. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 12:27