

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

2 SEPTEMBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL AND REGULATORY
SERVICES**

SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORTING FRAMEWORK

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the work of the Joint Research and Evaluation Panel held on the Social Services Annual Reporting Framework in June 2014.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The key improvement objectives identified in the Corporate Plan 2013–2017 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The Corporate Improvement Objectives were adopted by Council on 19 February 2014 and formally set out the improvement objectives that the Council will seek to implement between 2013 and 2017. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting in November 2009, the Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director – Wellbeing on the Social Services Annual Reporting Framework. This outlined the arrangements put in place by the Chief Inspector of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate, Wales (CSSIW) for the inspection, evaluation and review of local authority social services.
- 3.2 The report explained that this framework would involve formal engagement with Scrutiny on an annual basis, through the following three stages:
- As an essential element of the “challenge” groups judging the accuracy of the initial judgements on our effectiveness
 - Agreeing a statement of findings over the year that should be considered by the Director
 - Providing comments on the final draft report prior to reporting to Cabinet and publication.

3.3 The Committee agreed that this work should be undertaken through a Research and Evaluation Panel established jointly with the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which subsequently also agreed to this approach.

3.4 This year, the following eight Members were appointed to the Joint Panel from the two Committees:

N Clarke	C Westwood
P A Davies	D B F White
P N John	Kevin Pascoe (Co-opted Member Representative)
CE Rees	William Bond (Special School Parent Governor Representative)

3.5 The suggested Terms of Reference for the Panel's investigation were:

- To consider and examine the content of the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2013 – 14 prior to submission to CSSIW;
- To formulate comments, questions and lines of enquiry upon the draft reports;
- To engage with the Director of Social Services and representative Officers regarding the comments and questions.

3.6 It was considered that the above approach would result in the following positive outcome:

- Demonstrate self critically how effective social services activities are rather than just describing their activities to CSSIW and other stakeholders.

4. Current Situation

4.1 The Panel met on two separate occasions; the first was on 6 June 2014 at which Members considered the report and formulated questions and lines of enquiry together with Scrutiny Officers. The second meeting was held on 9 June 2014 where the Panel further explored the Director of Social Services Annual Report and offered comments and recommendations upon it.

4.2 This approach allowed the Panel to examine the draft report in a systematic way to identify issues to raise and discuss at their next two meetings with officers from both Directorates.

4.3 Some of the Panel's main points are summarised below:

- Overall, Members were positive about the content and format of the report and recognised it as an improvement on previous years' reports;
- The report contains a lot of description of processes but very little about outcomes and Members queried whether this was the nature of what is required/specified by CSSIW or whether it should be rebalanced;

- Members did recognise the need for the report to be comprehensive, but did comment that it was long and therefore not an easy read. There was some discussion around the possibility of producing a shorter/simplified version which could be more widely distributed and read. Linked to that, Members were not clear about the extent to which the format of the report is prescribed by CSSIW, and therefore the flexibility that the Council does or does not have to vary the format.

4.4 The interaction with officers during the meeting was reported as being positive by Members, as was the feedback received from them. Officers were very receptive to the Panel's comments and reported the process as being extremely useful.

4.5 The Panel were advised that their comments and views, would be taken on board, and the report would be revised to reflect these and incorporate appropriate changes proposed. The finalised report was then submitted to Council at its meeting on 16 July 2014 for approval.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 The work of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing in the County Borough of Bridgend.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 None.

8. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the work of the Joint Research and Evaluation Panel and identify any proposed ways the process may be improved for the next year.

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