

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor KL Rowlands – Chairperson

JPD Blundell	J Gebbie	M Jones	RL Penhale-Thomas
RMI Shaw	T Thomas	A Williams	AJ Williams

Apologies for Absence

DG Howells and JC Spanswick

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Jackie Davies	Head of Adult Social Care
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Gill Lewis	Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

Invitees:

Councillor Stuart Baldwin	Cabinet Member Communities
Councillor Nicole Burnett	Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help Leader
Councillor Huw David	Leader
Councillor Charles Smith	Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration
Councillor Hywel Williams	Deputy Leader

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

32. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 9 June 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record.

33. BUDGET MONITORING 2021-22 - QUARTER 1 REVENUE FORECAST

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change updated Members on the Council's revenue financial position for quarter one as at 30 June 2021 whilst noting time had moved on since this had been reported to Cabinet in July and she would pick up some of the key themes.

She reminded Members that Council at its meeting on 24 February 2021 approved a net revenue budget of £298.956m for 2021-22 and this was the first progress report against

that budget. Table 1 provided a summary of the information and set out the projected position which was showing a projected £1m overspend although she reminded Members that the Outturn report gave a very different picture at the time mainly because there was significant amounts of Covid money and additional grant monies and noted that Members would see financial pressures coming through on many of the budgets. This was clear moving into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter with particular pressures in Adult Social Care across the whole of Wales. She wanted Members to understand that those pressures were still there, and it was important that Members looked at the significant underlying pressures in some of the services and don't just take from the outturn report there appears to be a very good financial position.

She took Members through Table 1, noting that a £1m Covid recovery fund had been established which has been used carefully on phased car parking offer, phased rental income increases for BCBC rental properties, waiver of sports fees, summer play etc. none of which were claimable against the hardship fund as local decisions weren't claimable.

Table 2 gave a flavour of Covid claims, noting that there was still a pressure on council tax and the council tax reduction scheme and financial hardship is expected as furlough unfolds. A 1% council tax drop was £1m and there was no support indicated yet from Welsh Government (WG). It was noted at 4.1.13 that pay and prices remained volatile and it was not clear on all the pay awards although there was some indication that some of the teachers pay would be funded centrally. Inflation continued to run at quite a high level and it was something that hadn't been planned for so there was a need to ensure there was enough money in the prices budget.

Table 3 set out the prior year savings which had mainly been achieved although there was a shortfall still of £310k which was unlikely to be met and this needed to be considered.

Table 4 and Appendix 2 showed the year's performance which had been a remarkable achievement in many respects in difficult circumstances with all the savings likely to be achieved apart from the relocation of the recycling centre which was delayed.

There was a continued need for savings over the life of the MTFS for 2022-2023 to 2025-2026 and it was noted from the projections that another £22m was likely to be needed depending on the level of settlement WG.

Paragraph 4.3 of the report onwards provided a lot more detail on each of the Directorates.

The Chair thanked the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change for her presentation following which Members of the Committee asked the following:

A Member noted the Covid recovery fund and asked if this recovery of monies, e.g., the £35k put into car parking fees, had that been successful.

The Head of Operations - Community Services explained that in order to encourage footfall, as part of the bounce back recovery from Covid, the offer had been made with both the three hours free in the Rhiw car park in Bridgend and the free from 12 to 3 o'clock in John Street in Porthcawl. What was incredibly difficult to do was actually baseline the footfall against a norm noting that during the pandemic initially footfall was decimated and although it was returning, still wasn't back to normal levels so it was very difficult to measure.

The Member asked for a little more detail on the split in relation to the £1m Covid recovery fund.

The Chief Executive confirmed that his understanding was it was about £100k - £120k in relation to sports fees and about £18k to £20k in respect of the car parking offer, although a full breakdown could be provided to the committee if they wished.

The Leader clarified that in respect of the summer play activity, the Council had planned more investment to provide a comprehensive range of summer play activities for children and young people but then WG had quadrupled the amount of funding they normally awarded. This was an example of how the budget was uncertain, noting that the Council continued to make the case to the WG for funds for those additional pressures.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change suggested that that a breakdown of the Covid recovery fund could be circulated to members.

The Member enquired what was actually being asked for in respect of claiming for the loss of income. She noted that many of the £2.127m was on hold or pending and asked if this was actually putting a financial pressure on the council with staff trying to collate the information that WG were asking for.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change acknowledged that the Covid claims had been incredibly pressurised and involved a huge amount of extra work not just for Finance but for the Directorates as well, although the Council had a very good relationship with WG Officials in terms of being clear what could be claimed and as a result had been incredibly successful in getting costs claimed back. Effectively it was like running almost two financial systems e.g. Covid costs, Covid loss of income and loss of council tax and the rest in separate areas.

The £2m that was on hold was really a time delay, as the Council had now received some, although she didn't have the exact figure to hand but was hopeful that most of that would be received. The main areas of loss of income had been Halo and leisure and the car parking already mentioned. There had been an ability to claim car parking last year, but this was no longer available.

A Member noted that the report on page 19 talked about the net budget for social services and an under spend of over £600k however page 20 then talked about staffing vacancies and delays implementing a restructure and asked for further clarification in relation to the narrative.

The Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing acknowledged that the situation in domiciliary care and care and support at home was a difficult one to explain and understand. There were significant levels of vacancies in the in-house service with a restructure being consulted on at the moment. There was a big push, in terms of recruitment into those vacancies in-house, and some actions in terms of being more flexible around the contracts offered in-house. There were also some systemic issues, that needed to be addressed. At the same time a significant increase in need for care and support at home, had been seen, with independent sector providers providing more care and support at home than ever before. This was still not enough to meet the need and demand for domiciliary care services despite the significant amounts of money that were being invested into care and support at home.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help confirmed that she spent her weeks looking at the figures and the balance was completely off within social care and until the workforce issue could be sorted out through recruitment, it was very difficult to reinstate that balance. There was a need to respond to demands and needs and pay in order to make sure that residents were looked after so reinforcing and prioritising the workforce had to happen.

The Member understood the pressures in home care but asked if this was a significant pressure on recruitment elsewhere in the Council, thinking of a council-wide approach market supplements would be offered and asked if the Council was in a position to offer market supplements to home care staff.

The Corporate Director - Social Services acknowledged that the Council didn't currently have a market supplement policy although she understood that one was well into development and that would be brought forward later in the year for consideration by members. She noted that the next meeting of SOSOC2 on 23 September would consider, in some detail, the action plans around care and support at home. This was a challenge, not just across Bridgend but the whole of Wales. As Director this was the highest priority, alongside some of the workforce issues in children's services. What was seen in the budget, and this was a budget report, was that the budget spend didn't align with where the spend should. The budget position reflected some of the challenges in the overall service position and one of the indicators of success moving forward, would be if the budget spend aligned better.

A Member asked once the staff need had been recruited to, would there be an overspend?

The Corporate Director - Social Services highlighted that the Council had set the budget to meet and to pay for the workforce that had been evaluated was needed, although she would seek to, within the relevant permissions, over recruit in this area. To be in a position where the budget was balanced probably meant a successful recruitment drive although potentially a little bit of overspend would be seen. What would then look to be done, in terms of service and financial terms, was reduce that spend on care homes for older people particularly, as it had been seen that the number of people who had their needs met through a care home placement, reduce over the years. One of the risks that Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) highlighted, in their annual report, was that due to the challenges in domiciliary care they may see people going into care homes sooner rather than later, but this had not been seen and so the Service would look to rebalance that budget into more care and support at home, which was what the majority of people wanted.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help emphasised the point made that an overspend in those services would mean a saving in the higher care intervention in terms of packages of care and would like to see a lot more investment in the early intervention services. There was a need to ensure the correct budgeting for prevention as when money was invested in prevention costs could be offset further along the line.

A Member referred to 4.2.2 in relation to the Halo contract and asked how the Council was going to continue to maintain subsidising them.

The Corporate Director - Social Services explained, in terms of the partnerships with Halo and the cultural trust partner, that the Council had worked very closely with them throughout the pandemic to manage what had been a very challenging situation for leisure and cultural trust providers. The Service had worked closely with

the Finance team and WG in order to maximise the claims in terms of covered hardship and closely with Halo around their restart and recovery plans, as restrictions were lifted, to look at how they had been able to maintain membership bases and their plans for increasing those membership bases going forward. In governance terms, there was the advisory board, which was well attended by Cabinet members, in order to shape and inform the future direction of services. What the Council would be looking for Halo to do, would be both a return to pre-Covid levels of activity and performance and to build on some of the learning through the pandemic, including where they could be innovative and creative, and continue to make digital offers alongside physical offers and to widen the access into leisure and leisure services across the county borough, as this was key to the health and well-being of the population. Finally, to look then what the impact of that was on the contract and in respect of the subsidies and the investment that they got from the Council

The Member felt it was going to be exceptionally problematic and something that needed to keep a big eye on. She was also concerned that Halo had reduced their ICT provision, prior to the pandemic. She appreciated more was being done online but her concern was vulnerable people being able to access their claims and felt problems were being stored up for the future.

A Member noted that the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change had briefed Members that the Council was £1m overspent on the 1st Quarter, there was an above average demand going into the 2nd Quarter, which would be a significant budget pressure. Budget Management was being described as volatile and unpredictable, which was entirely understandable and WG continued to provide some grant funding, especially to support adult services. With that in mind, what was hoped to be achieved going into the second quarter, having learned what the first quarter is telling us.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change was not anticipating a huge change in terms of quarter two, with volatility remaining. The settlement from WG was likely to be late again, which was a major factor in the MTFs, and furlough was likely to unfold in September, which would give a feel for the pressure on council tax reduction. If that became excessive there might be some thought in WG about whether there was any support. There also might be a firmer indication on the way inflation was going and the way pay awards were likely to go. It was difficult to predict what might happen in quarters three and four if the country was returned to lockdown as that would have a huge financial impact on the budget again. Some savings were needed by the end of quarter two, so in October, she would hope to be able to highlight some areas where reductions could be made, as there were pressures in many of the services including education, communities and particularly in housing, with rising levels of homelessness. There also needed to be decisions on where money could be taken from the budgets, which was increasingly difficult, as nobody wanted to reduce services. If savings weren't made and there were increasing new pressures, then there could be real difficulty because of the lack of ability to find monies from elsewhere. Reserves were healthy and the general reserve was at expected levels, nothing excessive. There was quite a significant amount of money in earmarked reserves, but the key was earmarked.

In essence the Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change didn't think the Council could just hope that WG would come forward with a good settlement. There was a need to plan savings and if the worst was planned for some savings proposals could be moved forward a year if necessary, as there were no doubts that future settlements would be tough.

The Member acknowledged that the key here was WG support and asked what sort of discussions were ongoing in relation to the Council's situation because he felt sure the situation was replicated elsewhere across Wales.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change acknowledged that some councils were in a slightly worse position, some in a slightly better position but there was a huge consistency about the things that they were finding difficult to fund and their pressures had been very similar in terms of the claims on the hardship fund and the loss of income. The S151 Officers met fortnightly, now monthly with WG and the WLGA, so there was a huge amount of interaction, although that didn't mean that those officials had any insight into what the WG budget could look like ultimately. There were significant pressures from health across Wales and from other areas e.g., economic regeneration, etc., so local government was just one voice at that table, although hopefully a strong voice.

The Leader confirmed that representations at a political level, mirrored those that had been made by S151 officers, across Wales and currently, due to the acute pressures on health and social care, because of the way they are so closely related, he, along with the WLGA leader were meeting with the health minister on a weekly basis to talk about the unprecedented pressures on social care and making the case for that long-term investment in the system. The Minister was listening to that, and certainly recognised the crucial role that social care played itself and also in terms of sustaining the NHS as well and he would continue to raise the need for investment in in local services.

A Member asked what kind of discussions were being on reduced council tax income and asked if this could be raised as a priority.

The Leader confirmed that had been raised and the Council had received some additional support from WG, but there was still a recognition that that pressure had not gone away. WG were committed to reviewing the way that local finances were raised although this was a long-term aspiration of WG, in terms of council tax reform.

The Member asked if there was now any indication of what the Council was going to receive in terms of this assistance.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change confirmed no, was the honest answer with council tax collections still currently running at about 1% down. The collection rate was set at half a percent down on normal so she was hopeful that things may have improved by the second quarter. The Council had also been able to process some of the summons that were suspended because during the Covid year, although as time went on the ability to collect debt became less. There was still hope the last year's collection would increase through that mechanism, as well as some upturn in this years and September and October would be critical.

A Member referred to COM19 and asked if there was further information as the narrative seemed vague and he was trying to figure out how the figure had gone from amber to red.

The Head of Operations - Community Services reassured Members that the department was staying on budget. In terms of the permitting scheme for roadworks this was outstanding, as other areas within the highways department had been concentrated on to make sure the budget stayed on track. Essentially this would be a scheme that gave better control over external roadworks when statutory undertakers e.g., gas companies, etc., came along to do works on the highways. It

was hoped this would generate some money, but the main purpose was to give the Council better control and to actually limit the amount of time that statutory undertakers spent undertaking works on the roadway. Although this was already in existence in England it didn't exist in Wales yet and it required a change in WG legislation to actually allow it to happen. Whilst this would continue to be pursued it would take some time to deliver, although it felt like the Council was getting there.

A Member referred to page 30, in relation to the pay award, as the employers offer was 1.75% and asked for an update on the position and how the Council would mitigate the award.

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change stated that she did not think that anything had been absolutely signed sealed and delivered on teacher's and other pay, but the Council had budgeted between 1.75% and 2% in the MTFS, so if it was below 2% this would be within budget. There was some indication that WG would make a contribution to the teachers' pay award, which would be extremely welcome, and the suggestion currently was that the Council would fund the 1% and WG would contribute the 0.75%, but that had not yet been formally confirmed and that was only for a part year because the teachers' pay crossed the financial year. She was fairly comfortable however, that the Council had budgeted for the pay awards aspect.

A Member referred to COM1 and explained that whilst it stated that the £300k was likely to be achieved in 2021-22, she was aware of asset transfers that hadn't progressed, so wondered how this target would be achieved.

The Head of Operations - Community Services stated that firstly the £300k was the MTFS savings target and not the exact amount saved through CAT transfers. He provided Members with a brief overview of some of the CAT transfer successes, which were on an ongoing basis, whilst some were on the cusp, and would provide Members with a full breakdown of those which had transferred and those that it was hoped would be achieved, for members to view. He confirmed that an extra person had been recruited in the property department, to help with the lease process and a person had just been appointed to assist with the CAT process in addition to the CAT Officer. There was more to do to make sure the Service continued to achieve the £300k on a recurring basis and there was a need to ensure CAT transfer process was kept going. Savings didn't end at the end of the year, and future savings would need to be identified and depending on how many successful CAT transfers, these could then be tallied up to see if there were further savings that that could be offered, if the number exceeded the £300k.

Having considered the above report, the Committee requested the following:

1. A breakdown of the Covid recovery fund to be circulated to members.
2. A full list and breakdown of CAT transfers including those that it was hoped would be achieved be circulated to Members.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the projected revenue position for 2021-22.

34. **REVIEW OF BUDGET RESEARCH & EVALUATION PANEL**

The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change outlined the report on the review of Budget Research & Evaluation Panel to Members. In particular, she highlighted the importance of Member attendance to make sure that there

was a collective agreement going forward upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

There were no questions by Members.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee having considered the report, endorsed the review of the role of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP).

35. **SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

The Director of Social Services & Wellbeing presented the key themes of the Annual Report and advised that the last year had been very much about creativity, a lot of innovation but also a lot of sheer hard work, from people right across the whole system. Safeguarding had always been central, even in a public health-led pandemic, citizens and communities had been badly impacted and lost many people, and the recovery and renewal piece for social services, as part of that response, was going to be really important. Staff really needed the time and space to recover at their own pace, or faced the risk of burnout and attrition, which was being seen at the moment because the pace hadn't slowed, and if anything, had accelerated moving into the final two quarters of the year. Services had adapted to new working practices, which were highlighted in the report. Stabilisation and renewal were critical over the next six months and she reinforced the point that the workforce was critical to this success, with more dependence on all parts of the workforce than ever before.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing for presenting her report and thanked the Corporate Director and her team for their all their efforts during a very challenging year.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help thanked the Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing and her team for putting the report together and noted that despite the awful year, there were so many good examples. She appealed to Members scrutinising the report to focus on the human aspects in terms of the financials and figures.

A Member highlighted the issue of staffing generally and asked what the local authority was doing to ensure it could get staff.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing acknowledged that there was a national piece of work around workforce, working closely with WG and with Social Care Wales. This was firstly to promote the sector, secondly to look at the really difficult issues, such as the implementation of the WG manifesto priority around a real living wage for care workers and thirdly around professional standards, working very closely with Social Care Wales, around the registration of not just professional social work staff, but of care workers. It was really important that Bridgend were key players on the national stage and informing and co-producing policy where necessary. Bridgend was keen to promote Bridgend to be as successful as possibly can in retaining and recruiting the Bridgend workforce. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing then went through the different action plans in terms of recruitment, for both the social care workforce and then the social work workforce.

The Member asked what would happen if people didn't come forward, which was her concern. Were people applying already and showing an interest to what was already being shared and any job adverts.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing acknowledged that this was difficult because of competing in very overcrowded space in terms of both the social care worker and the social work workforce whilst starting from a place where lots of people weren't coming forward wanting to do these jobs. She noted that quite significant numbers of people applied for healthcare support worker jobs but weren't coming forward in the same numbers, to work for the local authority in care jobs or to work in the independent sector, so there was a need to understand and do everything within the action plans to make Bridgend as attractive as possible. There were challenges in the short term and the Authority was looking at how it brought in workforce via agency, which could cause difficulties, but what was most important was meeting statutory duties in both social work and social care workforce. That needed to be done in the best way that wasn't disruptive and supported the workforce and the retention piece being the absolute most important and not something which causes more difficulties for the existing workforce. She advised of the need to look at how people's needs can be supported in different ways for example Bridgend was really successful with assistive technology and the need to continue to promote that and look at how need and demand for services are managed in a way which is most effective and cost effective. This really was a challenge and absolutely needed a whole council approach and sets of aligned actions about what could be done locally, regionally and nationally.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help explained that there were a number of issues she wanted to extend on including the lack of national pay scale for social workers, which was extremely damaging for the local authority because of not only competition from immediate ordering authorities, but with authorities around the UK, for experienced staff. She reassured members that long conversations were being had within the care workforce and social care. There was a need to empathise with the workforce because people should not fall through the hoop. The Council needed to meet its statutory needs and at the moment the workforce was working tirelessly to ensure that.

The Chair asked Members if there were any further questions regarding the evidence provided in the report, as she was conscious that Members comments were sought that could help strengthen the report.

A Member acknowledged that he liked the format of the report and offered his admiration to the whole of the department for the work that had been done in what could only be described as challenging times. However, he acknowledged that the county was not a level playing field and there were areas of significant deprivation within the county and asked how the socio-economic duty would affect the work now and in the future.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing explained that in terms of the application of the socio-economic duty, as with many diseases, Covid had been a disease of inequality with some of the most deprived communities most severely impacted. From a social care perspective when looking at the services there was a need to make sure the duty was properly understood and applied because it may mean different solutions in some parts of the county borough than others. In some parts of the county borough this could mean focussing on the right set of interventions and not just supporting people in terms of connecting them, but actually doing that active community development work where there were gaps in what was naturally occurring within communities. Whilst in other parts of the county borough the Council didn't necessarily need to take such a strong role, e.g., the Porthcawl Covid-19 Strategy Group, where the community itself came forward. The Council was part of a group addressing vaccine inequalities in outcomes and any

postcode inequalities looking at the evidence-based interventions to make sure these were being addressed in the right way.

A Member referred to page 91 of the report and noted the number of contacts received was down from 6810 to 4742 and asked if this was Covid related or if the Council was moving in the right direction and generally the number of contacts was coming down.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing explained in terms of the number of contacts, that it was a very unusual year to look at any trends because there were times of the year when some of the normal referrers were operating very differently, e.g., schools, primary care, health visiting, etc. More of a normalisation was starting to be seen, as services came back on board as would be expected and there was some need and demand which didn't come through early enough which was now causing some pressure on services, but last year it really did fluctuate depending on the period of the lockdown whether referrals were coming in or not.

The Member noted that the number of children on the child protection register had increased from 165 to 201 and asked if there had been an increase due to Covid.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing explained that in terms of the child protection register and the number of registrations, she was quite comfortable with the level. The Council was in one of the higher quartiles of numbers of children on the child protection register in Wales and had confidence in that in terms of the protection that was afforded to children on the child protection register. It was quite right and proper that the register remained quite high at the moment, given the challenges that children and families had faced and given the fact that there may have been some delays in children and families coming forward and in terms of the ability then to statutorily intervene with families, whereas all steps below the child protection register were voluntary.

The Member referred to page 93 of the report and asked for further clarification regarding the 296 total number of reports of children who go missing during the year, and the 99 total number of children who go missing during the year.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing explained there was a process which came into effect, whenever a child or young person was missing for a period of time, working closely with South Wales Police, particularly around how to code these. Some children and young people went missing quite frequently and some would present quite significant risks to themselves, with those sorts of situations managed in a multi-agency way to look at how to support and what the risk management plan was around that child or young person. She did not think, currently, there were any children or young people missing currently.

The Member referred to page 99 and noted that in respect of Maple Tree House that the number of children placed during the year had dropped from 22 to 9, with children placed in supported living remaining the same. She asked if the figures were down because of Covid or another reason and what was the reason for moving the existing service to a purpose-built provision.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing explained that the relocation of maple tree house would include additional capacity. Within the provision, there was both emergency provision and short-term assessment provision, both of which were critical and both of which was better managed separately. A far better building was needed for that, as well as a better location which would also enable co-location with other aspects of placement services. This would enable the fostering team to

really get to know the children and young people as they went through the detailed and thorough assessment that they had in the assessment unit. There were some exciting plans around this although she noted there had been a little bit of delay in the implementation, although this was a priority for going forward.

Following on from this the Member noted that a press report had highlighted that following an inspection of maple tree house, there were issues and there needed to be improvement. She was disappointed that these press reports did not then report on any of the improvements and asked for clarification about attendance not just at maple tree house, but all adult and childcare premises, especially when Members were not currently able to visit.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing acknowledged the reporting the Council received. She gave assurance to Members around visits into premises and confirmed that the two responsible individuals for in-house care homes were the Head of Adult of Social Care for the adult care home provision and the Head of Children's Social Care for the children's provision. Both had continued throughout the pandemic to undertake their responsible individual duties, which included a strong focus on quality assurance, linking in with the facilities. However, at times during the pandemic, this had to be virtual and was very well evidenced, but as the risks reduced, then those quality assurance visits had been increasingly face to face, noting that herself and the Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help had recently visited themselves as well. She explained that she would work with Members in terms of the reintroduction of rota visits, as it was a really important part of what they did in terms of fulfilling corporate parenting and other safeguarding responsibilities.

She advised that in terms of Maple Tree House itself, the Council was not formally in any escalated sort of state of intervention from the CIW and would continue to report through into the corporate parenting committee. CIW had continued to inspect, from a regulatory point of view, throughout the last year into regulated services and undertook a full quality assurance check at the start of April with the report to be published in the Autumn.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help reassured Members that visits were taking place with the same level of scrutiny being given. With regards to Maple Tree House a report had been received by the corporate parenting committee, regarding the CIW inspection, with an update on the improvements that had been made and how that the Council was not in any special measures. She was disappointed with the reporting and asked that Members share the correction information.

A Member referred to the safeguarding policy on page 42 and noted that on page 57, paragraph 2, it stated that 'as a statutory officer, I need to review, consolidate and strengthen safeguarding resources', and asked how the Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing proposed to do that.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing explained that because this was a corporate / whole council safeguarding policy there was a need to make sure all the right information was being received from across the council, with all directorates needing to understand their interface with safeguarding and safeguarding responsibilities. In order to do that the right governance arrangements were needed. One of the things she was looking to do was to establish a corporate safeguarding board that sat beneath CMB and CCMB, reporting to them the right information around safeguarding and with an officer to support that.

The Member acknowledged this but felt the responsibility of safeguarding should not be confined just to Officers. Members also had a role to play, not only with visits to care homes, but in terms of reviewing corporate policy during the scrutiny process and suggested that this was something that could be considered when considering the activities of the safeguarding board.

The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing agreed that this was helpful and one of the things within the new safeguarding policy was that there would be an annual safeguarding report to members on the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding. This would draw out in a lot more detail than she was able to do in the headlines in the annual report, the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding, and would be one of the key duties of the new officers. The other thing being considered jointly, between officers in both Social Services & Wellbeing and Education and Early Help, was to ensure that there was some further member training on safeguarding during the next term for members. This should be context specific to the role of Members, rather more general e-learning.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early help re-emphasised the importance of elected Members to attend all safeguarding training that was available especially those that sat as LEA governors, as the training wasn't mandatory at present.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the content of the Director of Social Services' draft Annual Report for 2020/21.

36. **SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

The Senior Democratic Officer – Scrutiny presented the draft Scrutiny Annual Report and explained that purpose of the report was to present the committee with the draft scrutiny annual report which covered a two-year period for 2019-20 and 2020-21. Scrutiny was required to submit the annual report to Council with a review of how the function had operated for the previous period. The draft Scrutiny Annual Report was attached as Appendix A and it provided detail on the challenges and outcomes for scrutiny committees and panels for the period, as well as identifying some areas of focus for improvement to ensure scrutiny continued to develop and achieve positive outcomes for the residents of Bridgend. The Committee was asked to consider whether the draft report collated and prepared by the Scrutiny Team reflected the work done by the scrutiny function for the last two years, before going forward, subject to any amendments, to Council.

The Chairs of COSC, SOSC1, SOSC2 and SOSC3, thanked the Senior Democratic Officer – Scrutiny and Scrutiny Officer for their report and hard work, whilst acknowledging the impact caused by a vacancy within the team.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee endorsed the Scrutiny Annual Report attached as Appendix A, subject to a spelling amendment, for submission to Council for consideration.

37. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

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

There were no further items identified for consideration on the Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal calendar of meetings using the agreed form, and this could be revisited at the next meeting.

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee considered and approved its Forward Work Programme in Appendix A; noted the Forward Work Programmes for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees following consideration in their respective July Committee Meetings in Appendix B, C & D and noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at the previous meetings in Appendix E.

38. **URGENT ITEMS**

None