

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled Morris Jones Jones (Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, Bryan Owen, Nicola Roberts
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture & Youth), Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Services), Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement)
- Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) & Statutory Director of Social Services
- Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation (for item 3)
- Programme, Business Planning & Performance Manager (GM) (for item 3)
- Head of Adults' Services (for item 3)
- Head of Learning
- Head of Housing Services (for item 3)
- Head of Highways, Waste & Property Services
- Head of Children and Families' Services
- Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
- Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Richard Griffiths, Trefor Lloyd Hughes, Richard O. Jones, Dylan Rees, Alun Roberts, J. Arwel Roberts, Llinos Medi Huws (Portfolio Member for Social Services)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Head of Democratic Services, Erin Bilsborrow, Denu Talent Project Worker
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The Chair welcomed all Members and Officers to the meeting and he extended a particular welcome to Councillor Bryan Owen to his first meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee; to Mr Arwyn Williams as the new Head of Learning, and to Mrs Carys Edwards in her new role as Head of Profession (Human Resources and Transformation).

The Chair referred to the success of Mr Gruffydd Wyn Roberts of Amlwch in reaching the final of the TV talent show – Britain's Got Talent, and he congratulated Mr Roberts on his achievement. The Chair also thanked the town and community of Amlwch and in particular Mr Arwel Hughes for arranging a special outdoor screening of the final. The focus on Amlwch and the positive publicity surrounding the event and Mr Roberts' success had been excellent for the area.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 23 April and 15 May, 2018 were presented and were confirmed as correct.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE - CORPORATE SCORECARD QUARTER 4 2017/18

The report of the Head of Profession (Human Resources and Transformation) outlining the position of the Council against its operational objectives for the final quarter of 2017/18 financial year was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report provided an overview of the Council's performance in its business as usual activities whilst also setting out specific pointers towards other transformational developments which were completed during this time period.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate Services said that despite it being another challenging year for the public sector, it was encouraging to be able to report that the majority of indicators performed well against their targets, and that this achievement should be recognised when the Council's Annual Performance Report will be drafted in the autumn. The final quarter's outcomes have not produced any surprises with certain areas of performance in Children and Families' Services and the Learning Service proving challenging. Notwithstanding, the former is undergoing a transformational change and will continue to prioritise the areas where performance has fallen short of target – improvement has been seen in 4 of these 5 underperforming indicators especially during the latter half of the financial year following a restructuring exercise and a review of policies and processes. The Learning Service will continue with the implementation of the mitigation measures reported at the end of Quarter 3 and summarised in paragraph 2.2.5 which should continue to improve performance in the forthcoming year.

The Portfolio Member reported that in terms of People Management, the performance of the Council's sickness rates at the end of 2017/18 narrowly missed the corporate target of 9.75 days sick per FTE at 9.96 days sick per FTE. Although the performance with regard to sickness absence in Quarters 1, 2 and 3 was ahead of target, the higher than normal sickness rates during Quarter 4 impacted on 6 of the 9 Council Services which effectively skewed the end of year performance result and meant that the corporate target was not met. This outcome is replicated nationally.

There have been improvements in Customer Service most notably in relation to the use of Digital Services, with an increasing number of the public now using the App Môn technology and the Council's website to communicate with the Authority and to report issues. The Council's social media presence and followers have also increased and it is envisaged that the flow of information distributed and received via social media channels will continue to grow with time. The percentage of FOI requests responded to within timescale performed at 78% at the end of 2017/18 compared to 77% at the end of 2016/17. Although not hitting the corporate target of 80%, the outcome is encouraging in view of the fact that 7,527 requests were dealt with in 2017/18 compared to 5,700 during 2016/17.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate Services concluded by saying that the Council needs to continue the momentum of progress and will do this by services working collectively to continually drive improvement.

In respect of Children and Families' Services, the Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services highlighted that although the service's performance has improved during the period and in particular following the restructuring, the improvement is not captured by a single end of year figure but is better and more clearly evidenced by the detailed data.

The Committee considered the information presented and made the following points –

- The Committee noted comments submitted by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Dylan Rees via the Chair referencing a Local Government Association Bulletin highlighting an article in The Times about young people being let down by foster care. The article states that the Children's Commissioner has warned that young people are being moved around the care system frequently during adolescence and that almost 20% of 12 to 15 year olds are moved at least twice in a year meaning they live in 3 foster homes over a 12 month period. The Chair of the LGA's Young People Board is quoted as saying that "90 children per day entered care in the last year and councils saw the biggest annual increase in children in care since 2010. This is against a background of unprecedented cuts to local authority budgets." Councillor Dylan Rees suggests that although the article refers to the situation in England overall there is also cause for concern in Anglesey with the Quarter 4 Scorecard showing Red for PI PM32 (the percentage of looked after children who have experienced 1 or more changes of school during a period or periods of being looked after which were not transitional arrangements, in the year to 31 March) and Amber for PI PM33 (the percentage of looked after children on 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year) Councillor Rees although acknowledging that mitigating explanations are offered, believed that a more in-depth analysis is required to try to understand the reasons why children who are looked after are experiencing school instability which can prove disruptive for their education.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services said that whilst the Authority seeks to minimise all forms of instability for the children in its care, placement and school moves are sometimes unavoidable e.g. in instances where a placement has broken down or where a child/young person is put into an emergency placement whilst a more suitable placement is found. Placement changes can also be part of the care process and are instigated for the benefit of the individual e.g. in circumstances where the child/young person is in need of therapy which requires a change of placement for the duration of the therapy. The Head of Children and Families' Services said that a change of school can also happen when a child returns home to live with their family, following a period in care.

- The Committee noted that Appendix B of the report provides an update on the status of projects reporting to the two main Transformation Programme Boards. The Committee noted further that under the theme of Prevention, implementation of the Early Intervention Strategy and the Tackling Poverty Strategy has yet to start and it suggested that had progress been made with these strategies it might ease the current pressures on Children and Families' Services. The Committee noted also that the update unhelpfully provides no timescales for the delivery of the projects listed.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services confirmed that work on the Early Intervention Strategy has begun with a team having been established and a strategy created – the grant funding is at present at a transitional stage. The Head of Housing Services said that the consultation process on the Tackling Poverty Strategy is about to begin and is expected to report back to the Executive in December.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement) confirmed that information about project delivery timescales is available and that it is a matter of populating the table with this information.

- The Committee noted with respect to People Management that the performance in relation to conducting Return to Work interviews has declined both as regards interviews held within timescale (73% for 2017/18 compared to 78% for 2016/17) and as regards the total number of interviews held which at 85% is low compared to the target of 95%. The Committee sought assurance that steps will be taken to bring the performance back to an acceptable level.

The Head of Profession (Human Resources and Transformation) said that there is no single reason for the decline in performance but rather a combination of reasons which need to be examined and which will receive attention by Heads of Service.

- The Committee noted comments by the Head of Service (Highways, Waste and Property) about a lack of clarity with regard to PIs 30, 31 and 31 in relation to fly tipping incidents cleared, municipal waste collected and prepared for reuse and/or recycled, and municipal waste sent to landfill against which there are downward red and amber arrows indicative of a decline in performance although the percentage figures clearly show otherwise. The Committee sought clarification of the designations in order to avoid possible misperceptions arising.

The Performance and Business Planning Manager said that the downwards red and amber arrows indicate a decline on the previous Quarter 3 performance. The upwards green arrows to the right of the table indicate an improving year on year performance for PIs 30, 31 and 32 which is supported and reinforced by the narrative commentary at paragraph 2. 6 of the report.

The Committee noted the clarification provided but noted also that it was the Head of Service - Highways, Waste and Property's view that comparison of performance between different quarters is not especially helpful or fair in relation to services such as municipal waste collection as the volume of green waste generated varies and is less in Quarter 4, meaning that a like for like comparison with Quarter 3 performance is not possible.

Having scrutinised the Quarter 4 Scorecard and having been assured by the information presented and the explanations provided both within the report and by Officers at the meeting, the Committee resolved to note the areas which the Senior Leadership Team is managing in order to secure improvements into the future as summarised in paragraphs 1.4.1 to 1.4.5 of the report and to accept and to recommend the mitigation measures as outlined.

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

4 MONITORING PROGRESS - CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

4.1 The report of the Head of Children and Families' Services setting out the progress to date with implementing the Service Improvement Plan was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services reported that over the period since CIW's inspection of Children's Services, the Service has been involved in putting in place a series of important

changes which it is considered will better deliver in line with legislation. The main areas of change which are elaborated on in the report relate to the following –

- Restructuring the service so that the focus is on Early Intervention and prevention and intensive intervention under service managers leading on and holding the resources for each of these service areas. It has substantially increased the level of supervisory resources, management oversight, case direction, and has improved care planning with small Practice Groups led by Practice Leaders who aim to improve the quality of professional practice.
- Developing a prevention strategy with the objective of de-escalating need at all levels thereby reducing the need for intensive involvement. The Council has invested resources to establish an intensive intervention Resilient Families' Team to respond proactively to children with high level/edge of care needs and also to work with the allocated social worker to assist with returning children out of care to friends or family closer to home.
- Improving the systems in place to support intensive intervention by reviewing cases to ensure the right cases are being dealt with at this level and that the Service's processes are as effective as possible.
- Improving the quality and consistency of practice. Improved processes and guidance have been developed and additional resources have been committed to improving the Quality Assurance and Improvement function.

The Officer said that the Service recognises that the steps taken are recent in their implementation with most coming to fruition since the inspection report was published in March, 2017 and are dependent on the successful implementation of the Practice Leader role. This will take time to achieve what is expected of it but the benefits of doing so effectively will be seen in good quality practice across all Children and Families' Services. The focus of the work in the last quarter has been on consolidating recruitment and retention arrangements. Given the national shortage of experienced Social Workers the Service has implemented a contingency plan (funding for which has been approved by the Executive) which is to recruit newly qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) to vacant posts and to engage experienced agency social workers over capacity for a period of one year to provide support for the NQSWs throughout their first year in the Practice Framework. Implementing the 21 actions on the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) is also ongoing. After 12 months of work on the SIP, the service has developed a RAG rating system to measure progress – the table within the report shows that 6 areas have been completed (Green), 10 areas are almost complete (Yellow) and 5 Amber areas are ongoing pieces of work in relation to Social Work practice. There are no areas denoted as Red in which progress has not been made. The areas rated as Amber are being prioritised throughout 2018.

The increase over the past four years in the number of children who are looked after by the Authority has correspondingly increased the financial cost of Children's Services both in terms of staffing and in terms of arranging and funding foster care and/or residential placements. The report refers to the financial implications of more children and young people coming into the care system and the additional investment made in Children and Families' Services over the three years since 2016 to meet the increased demands on the service. In 2017/18 the Service overspent its budget by £1.78m because of the increase in the number of Looked After Children where individual placements can entail a significant cost. The Service is looking to reduce the number of children reaching this stage as well as increasing placement options on the Island. However, this will take time and there remains a risk that the Service will overspend again in 2018/19.

The Committee noted the information presented and made the following points –

- The Committee noted that the Council has allocated additional resources to Children's Services since 2016. The Committee sought clarification of the extent of the investment made and the uses to which it has been put.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services said that over the three years an additional £803k of permanent funding has been added to the Service's budget with a further £240k (2 year funding) for an early intervention team. In May, 2018 the Executive approved a further one-off sum of £268k to fund agency staffing costs to fill existing vacancies, to support newly qualified Social Workers and to deal with Legacy cases where the Authority may not have responded appropriately to historic cases. The additional money has also been used to meet the demand for residential placements which can cost up to £250k per young person for a specialist placement. In light of the fact that the Authority now has 14 young people in residential placements compared with 8 two years ago this increase could potentially incur additional costs in the region of £1.5m. The Service is seeking to intervene sooner so as to prevent cases from escalating to the point where a residential placement is the only option. The Service is also aiming to provide better placement choice locally e.g. Small Group Homes in order to reduce usage of out of county placements which puts an increased travel burden on children's social workers and puts added pressure on the service's budget. The service is reliant to an extent on whatever placement is available at a point in time when the need arises - whilst arrangements are made to identify an appropriate longer term placement that matches the individual's needs. These placements can be in the locality or more usually they are further afield.

- The Committee noted that out of county placements can be especially expensive and can very quickly take the Service beyond its budget. The Committee therefore sought clarification of the provision that is available locally and whether there is scope for greater collaboration on a regional basis.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services said that there are currently 140 children and young people being looked after by the Authority in Anglesey. Some of those are placed with their families mostly on Anglesey although they remain formally in the care of the Authority. The Authority has 25 of its own registered foster carers catering for different types of need and additionally it makes use of Independent sector foster carers. Two private companies provide residential placements on the Island which are mostly utilised by young people from England. Therapeutic placements are available in Gwynedd but these are short-term and are for specific trauma related care needs. Choice of placements is driven by the individual's needs but increasingly the Authority is challenging companies on the quality, value and suitability of the provision provided in order to ensure that the service obtained is the service paid for. The Officer said that it is important to bear in mind that although the number of children in the Authority's care has almost doubled over the last few years the budget for Children and Families' Services has not increased proportionately. The doubling of the number of children being looked after has also led to a doubling in the need for placements which in turn means that more Social Workers are required to manage the increased caseloads hence the need for additional investment. Most other authorities nationally, including the North Wales authorities, are facing the same challenges as Anglesey with regard to shortage of placements; however, Anglesey is leading in terms of developing alternative placement options.

- The Committee noted that there have been issues over time with the recruitment and retention of Children's Services Social Work staff. In order to help it understand the impact which an overhaul of processes including improved support, supervision and guidance has had on recruitment and retention in the past two years, the Committee requested the following information – the number of current vacancies, the number of

children's social work staff that have left the service in the past two years; the reduction in the number of agency social workers over the past two years and the number currently engaged by the Service; whether there has been a change in trend following the re-evaluation of Children's Social Worker posts as part of the Job Evaluation process and whether benchmarking against other authorities occurs.

The Head of Children's Services said that there were 7 vacancies for Children's Social Workers, 4 of which have just been filled with 3 remaining to be filled. Further interviews are to be held in the next few weeks. The four appointees are Newly Qualified Social Workers who will receive appropriate support. However, as well as focusing on filling vacancies, the Service is seeking to ensure that the persons appointed are of the right quality.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services said that although remuneration is an important consideration in recruitment, it is not the only one; other factors that are critical to the successful recruitment of Social Work staff are the existence of a safe and positive working environment; a manageable caseload and the availability of appropriate support and supervision. These elements are now in place in Anglesey and recruitment has improved as a result.

Having considered the information provided and the assurances received, the Committee resolved to confirm that it is satisfied with the steps taken to date to progress the implementation of the Children's Services Improvement Plan and the pace of progress.

ADDITIONAL ACTION PROPOSED: The Scrutiny Manager to source and to circulate to the Committee's Members information in relation to the number of children's social work staff that have left the service in the past two years; the reduction in the number of agency social workers over the past two years and the number currently engaged by the Service, whether there has been a change in trend following the re-evaluation of Children's Social worker posts as part of the Job Evaluation process and the availability of benchmarking data against other authorities.

4.2 The report of the Children's Services Improvement Panel providing an update on the work of the Panel was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Scrutiny Manager reported on the work of the Panel for the period from February, to April, 2018 during which period it gave consideration to the following matters over the course of three meetings –

- Continued oversight of the Service Improvement Plan to ensure the programme remains on target. As part of its ongoing monitoring of the SIP the Panel followed up on five specific issues as noted in the report.
- Detailed consideration was given by the Panel to two themes in the Service Improvement Plan namely Theme 4 and Theme 5.
 - Laming Visits
 - Partnership working
 - Performance Management
 - Training/awareness raising sessions

The Officer highlighted that at its last meeting, the Panel made arrangements to undertake a self-evaluation of its effectiveness and in particular the impact the Panel has had on the improvement programme in Children and Families' Services and also to enable the Panel's members to grade the RAG status of Theme 1.5 of the SIP for Children's services. This is

concerned with progress to date against two recommendations in the recent Care Inspectorate report which directly relate to the role of Members.

Having considered the information presented, the Committee resolved to note –

- **The progress made to date with the work of the Children’s Services Improvement Panel**
- **That all work streams pertaining to the Service Improvement Plan appear to be on target thus far and that this was confirmed by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) following its assessment of the Council’s self-evaluation to date.**
- **The ongoing development programme for Panel Members much of which is delivered in-house.**
- **That the Panel has escalated for the parent committee’s attention the fact that although good progress has been made on implementing the revised staffing structure, some posts remain filled by agency workers. The Committee further notes that this is being addressed by developing experienced home grown Social Workers by supporting experienced Support Workers to qualify and by recruiting Newly Qualified Social Workers.**

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

5 MONITORING PROGRESS - FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

The report of the Scrutiny Finance Panel providing an update on the work of the Panel was presented for the Committee’s consideration.

Councillor Dafydd Roberts, a member of the Panel reported on the work of the Panel in the period from March to April, 2018 with reference to the following –

- Detailed consideration has been given to Budget Monitoring for Quarter 3 2017/18 with the Panel’s approach being to scrutinise the Executive’s response to budget monitoring as being more helpful in supporting the Executive to make better decisions.
- 2017/18 financial pressures. The Panel continues to scrutinise the financial pressures in Children’s Services and the Learning Service as a key priority. To this end further information has been commissioned from both Heads of Service for consideration by the Panel at its next meeting on 28 June, 2018.
- Annual Budget setting process 2019/20. A review of the Panel’s work programme has been a catalyst for agreement on the role of the Panel in the budget setting process for next year as outlined in the report.
- The Council’s Efficiencies Strategy. The Panel has given detailed consideration to performance against each of the efficiency proposals implemented during 2017/18 in order to form a view on the percentage delivered and to identify barriers and risks and any consequent learning in moving forward.

The Panel has escalated for the Committee’s attention the current budget pressures in Children’s Services and the Learning Service.

The Committee considered the information presented and made the following points –

- The Committee noted from the Panel’s conclusions that implementation of the 2017/18 efficiencies strategy totalling £1.954k fell short by £399k which related to the 3 projects listed in the report. The Committee sought clarification of the reasons why these savings projects had not been delivered on time.

Councillor Dafydd Roberts confirmed that the Panel had received reports on the matter. The Portfolio Member for Finance and former member of the Panel said that he was confident that the Panel would continue to keep a close eye on the progress of implementing savings plans and efficiencies.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process Transformation) and Statutory Director of Social Services explained that the Garreglwyd project had taken more time than originally envisaged partly because there was a delay in employing Health staff to support the realisation of the project and partly because of CIW taking a longer than expected period to accept and to approve the implementation model. The facility is now open and receiving an increasing number of individuals and a second wing is also ready. Most of the work to develop the two wings to provide accommodation for individuals with dementia has been funded via the Welsh Government's Intermediate Care Fund.

- The Committee referred to the additional unplanned expenditure incurred by the Council as a result of the floods in November, 2017. The Committee sought clarification of the contribution made by Welsh Government towards the costs and whether this was subject to any specific conditions. The Head of Service (Highways, Waste and Property) said that the Authority had asked for the sum of £1.3m and had been awarded in the region of £500k with the only stipulation being that the funding be spent by the end of the 2017/18 financial year. Work has been done in the areas affected.

The Committee noted further that it would be helpful for it to receive a breakdown of the expenditure made in the aftermath of the flooding in terms of what was spent where including what was contributed by the Council and what was contributed by Welsh Government.

- The Committee noted that the over-expenditure in Children and Families' Services with regard to Residential Placements has a knock-on effect on the Learning Service leading to the Service incurring additional expenditure on the education provision of the individuals who are the subject of those placements. The Committee sought clarification of the cost of making this provision especially if the education provided is independent. The Portfolio Member for Education said that dependent on the individual case, the costs can be in the region of £80k young person.

Having considered the information presented, the Committee resolved to note –

- **The progress made to date with the work of the Finance Scrutiny Panel both in terms of achieving its work programme and measuring impact and added value.**
- **That processes pertaining to budget monitoring for 2017/18 appeared to be fit for purpose and on track.**
- **The ongoing financial scrutiny development programme for Panel members which is being delivered by CIPFA Wales.**
- **That the Panel has escalated for its attention its continued concern regarding budget pressures in Children's Services and the Learning Service. The Committee further notes that the Panel continues to closely monitor the situation and has arrangements in place to ensure regular dialogue with the Assistant Chief Executive and Heads of Service to provide an explanation of the financial situation in both services and the impact of mitigation measures in place to control overspends and that it will continue to report back to this Committee on its findings as the situation evolves.**

ADDITIONAL ACTION PROPOSED: The Committee to be provided with the following information –

- **A breakdown of the expenditure made in the aftermath of the floods in November, 2017 by area to include the contribution made by the Council and the contribution made by Welsh Government.**
- **Clarification of the cost of providing education provision including independent provision where that is necessary, for children/young people in residential care placements.**

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2017/18 to 2018/19 was presented for comment and review.

The Chair highlighted that the two additional meetings of the Committee referred to at the previous meeting have now been confirmed for 5 and 13 July, 2018 and will consider school modernisation proposals for the Llangefni and Seiriol areas respectively. The meeting on 5 July will also consider the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services.

It was resolved to accept the Work Programme as presented.

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

7 ITEM FOR INFORMATION - SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The report of the Head of Service (Highways, Waste and Property) and Head of Learning providing an update on implementing the recommended actions following an Internal Audit review of School transport in September, 2017 was presented for the Committee's information. The report notes that the Internal Audit follow-up review confirms that significant progress has been made towards improving School transport arrangements and addressing the issues and risks raised in the original audit review report. The Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting held on 24 April, 2018 accepted that good progress had been made and that it was not necessary for it to take further action.

It was resolved to note –

- **The significant progress made in reducing the risks identified in the Internal Audit report of September, 2017.**
- **The decision of the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting held on 24 April, 2018 to note that good progress has been made and that no further steps are required.**

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**