

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Lewis Davies, Richard Griffiths, Richard Owain Jones, Alun Roberts, J. Arwel Roberts, Nicola Roberts

Portfolio Members

Councillors Llinos Medi Huws (Leader & Portfolio Member for Social Services) , R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Youth and Culture), Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Services)

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 Function (Resources) and Section 151 Officer
Head of Children and Families' Services
Head of Learning
Head of Human Resources and Transformation (CE) (for item 5)
Programme, Business Planning & Performance Manager (GM) (for item 5)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Bryan Owen, Mr Keith Roberts (The Catholic Church) (Co-opted Member) Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance), Dr Gwynne Jones (Chief Executive)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Dafydd Roberts (for item 3)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. He extended the Committee's sincerest condolences to Councillor Robin Williams on the loss of his father. He also congratulated the Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement) on becoming a grandparent.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS 4 JUNE, 2018

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on the following dates were presented and were confirmed as correct –

- 4 June, 2018
- 5 July, 2018 (extraordinary)
- 13 July, 2018 (extraordinary)
- 2 August, 2018 (call-in)
- 6 August, 2018 (call-in)

3 PROGRESS REPORT - FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

A progress update report on the work of the Finance Scrutiny Panel during the period from July to August, 2018 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillor Dafydd Roberts (Scrutiny Member on the Finance Scrutiny Panel) reported that the Authority is operating in financially challenging times with the need to reduce budgets without directly affecting services becoming an increasingly difficult task. The Finance Scrutiny Panel is acutely aware of the financial pressures on services, in particular those which are demand-led such as Children and Families' Services and elements of the Learning Service. One of the Panel's aims has been to identify and understand the underlying issues which are responsible for the recurring pressures on these services and to ensure that the overspends which have resulted therefrom are mitigated by sustained and appropriate actions. Councillor Roberts confirmed that scrutiny of the financial pressures in Children's Services and the Learning Service has therefore continued to be a key priority for the Panel in the context of budget monitoring during Quarter 1 2018/19. The Panel commissioned further information from both Heads of Service which was considered at its July meeting with specific attention being given to the areas most under pressure along with the mitigation measures proposed and/or implemented. The Panel has invited both Heads of Service to present a further update to its meeting in September, 2018.

Councillor Roberts said that the Panel has also been considering its role in the budget setting process for 2019/20 as well as scrutinising how well planned efficiencies are being delivered to date in the Learning Service, Adults' Services and Highways, Waste and Property in order to form a view on the likely percentage of efficiencies to be realised in full by year end.

The Head of Function (Finance)/Section 151 Officer said that the purpose in establishing the Finance Scrutiny Panel was to enable a small group of Members to conduct more in-depth scrutiny of service budgets than the Corporate Scrutiny Committee's work programme allows thereby helping them develop a better understanding of the budget issues affecting services leading to more meaningful challenge and suggestions for improvements. In this sense the input of the Panel is adding value to the budget setting and monitoring processes.

The Committee noted that current budget pressures in Children's Services and the Learning Service continue to be a concern for the Panel and that it has escalated this matter to the attention of the Committee. The Committee further noted that the term "overspend" can create a misleading impression of a service spending irresponsibly or without due regard for its budget when in the case of Children's Services the spending occurs because the service has to meet the needs of the increasing number of children coming into the Authority's care in order to ensure they supported appropriately. The case could be made alternatively that Children's Services are underfunded and that the Service budget has not kept pace with the growing demands upon it.

It was pointed out by the Committee that the pressures being experienced by Children's Services are not unique to Anglesey. The Committee noted that similar pressures are being felt by Local Authorities in both Wales and England with reports in the media of an increasing number of councils which are struggling to deal with the growth in demand in children's social care services alongside reduced funding.

It was resolved to note –

- **The progress made to date with the work of the Finance Scrutiny Panel both in term of achieving its work programme and measuring impact and added value.**
- **That processes pertaining to budget monitoring for 2018/19 appear 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 the Committee's attention its continued concern regarding budget pressures in Children's Services and the Learning Service. The Committee also notes that the Panel continues to closely monitor the situation and 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 the Committee as the situation evolves.**

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

4 PROGRESS REPORT - CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- The report of the Head of Children and Families' Services on progress in implementing the Service Improvement Plan was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services highlighted some of the comments made in the final report of the Independent Support Team (IST) which were reproduced in the Officer's report. The IST at the request of the Director of Social Services, has been working with the Service to support improvement following the inspection of Children's Services in November, 2016. The IST refers to the number of encouraging and positive features that have become apparent during its work which include but are not limited to a clear leadership and management structure; efficient recruitment to vacant posts and staff training and development programmes; improved management and mentoring support for Children's Social Workers as well as a high level of political understanding of the issues being tackled by Children's Social Services. The Portfolio Member also reported on the marked improvement in Performance Indicators as shown in the table at Section 3 of the report which compares the performance in Quarter 1, 2018/19 against the cumulative performance for 2017/18. A like for like comparison with Quarter 1 2017/18 performance evidences the improvement even more noticeably. Similarly, there has been considerable improvement in relation to the performance of the Service in achieving corporate performance standards.

The Portfolio Member highlighted that the Service recently organised a Celebration Event for Foster Carers which was held in recognition of the invaluable work which the Authority's foster carers and family and friends (connected persons) foster carers do in providing care for children and young people in a safe environment when they are not able to live at home.

The Assistant Chief Executive and Statutory Director of Social Services said that significant progress has been made since the inspection by the former CSSIW (now CIW) in November, 2016 and the submission of the resulting report to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in March, 2017 which contained 14 recommendations for improvement. The Officer said that CIW has now confirmed that the Service will be re-inspected in October, 2018.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that the Service Improvement Plan has been reviewed and added to regularly since it was formulated post-inspection. In terms of the recruitment and retention of staff which was a key area for improvement and has been one of the areas on which work has been focused since the last report to the Committee, the re-structuring of the Service is now nearing completion. The Service has successfully recruited 5 newly qualified Children's Social Workers and has had some success in appointing experienced Social Workers and continues to advertise for the latter. A recent advertisement for the post of Practice Leader drew interest from outside the Authority which is a reflection of the improving reputation of the Council's Children's Services. The Service has also made progress in other ways as evidenced in improved performance against key indicators and fewer complaints against the Service. The Officer referred to the report of the Independent Support Team and welcomed it as encouraging and constructive.

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

Councillor Richard Griffiths, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee's representative on the Children's Services Improvement Panel reported that the Panel has met on 13 occasions since the summer of 2017 and in that period its members have developed a better appreciation and understanding of the complexities of Children's Services and the risks involved and are consequently better able to scrutinise effectively, hold to account, identify priorities and ensure that the work streams pertaining to the Service Improvement Plan are progressing appropriately. As part of its work programme the Panel has undertaken a self-evaluation exercise which has enabled Members to critically assess the contribution the Panel is making on the journey towards improving Children's Services.

Councillor Griffiths said that the Panel finds that good progress is being made on implementing the Service Improvement Plan. Notwithstanding, the dependency on agency staff has been reduced, the Panel again notes and brings to the Committee's attention the fact that some social worker posts continue to be filled by agency staff and that these need to be filled on a permanent basis. It is noted however that this is being addressed by appointing social workers both experienced and newly qualified and supporting experienced support workers to qualify.

The Committee considered the information presented in the two reports and raised points as follows –

- The Committee noted that the Service has implemented a restructuring programme and is making progress in relation to recruiting to vacant Social Worker posts. The Committee sought clarification of the success in recruiting bilingual Children's Social Care Workers and whether this is a challenge for the Service.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that there is a shortage nationally of experienced Children's Social Care Workers and that this is especially true of experienced bilingual Children's Social Care Workers. Despite this the Service has been able to meet the linguistic preferences of the families for whom it provides services and it advertises on a bilingual basis in accordance with the Council's Welsh Language Policy. The University of Bangor's Social Works degree is provided via both a Welsh and English medium course

and from this year there is a requirement that students are bilingual. Therefore, although there is currently a shortage of experienced bilingual Social Workers it is likely that this situation will change in future. The Officer confirmed also that the Service has been actively marketing Social Work as a profession in schools and colleges and has established Social Care Ambassadors to promote this function. The Service also supports a Social Work traineeship scheme.

The Assistant Chief Executive/Statutory Director of Social Services said that some of the Service's agency Social Workers are professionals returning to work in the area who need encouragement to re-engage with the Welsh language – they are being provided with the support to do so. In relation to recruitment in general the Service has working for it support workers and engagement officers who are keen to undertake support work before deciding on embarking on formal Social Work training; this is good way of helping them to decide whether they wish to pursue this avenue and to prepare them for the commitment.

- The Committee noted that a reduction in the complaints received is considered a corollary of the improvements being made in Children and Families' Services. The Committee sought clarification of whether this reduction is quantifiable.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said that 5 Stage 1 complaints were recoded for Quarter 1 2018/19 with no Stage 2 complaints compared with 15 Stage 1 complaints for the same period last year which suggests that individuals are happier with the service they have received. Listening to children and their families and improving participation is an area which the Service has also been focusing on. However, the nature of the service and the vulnerability of the children, young people and families with whom the Service comes into contact and is involved with makes complaints more likely.

The Head of Children and Families Services said that learning from complaints is an essential part of improving services. Quarterly monitoring reports are presented to the Children and Family Services Management Team which evaluates the number of complaints and compliments received against each service under each stage of the procedure along with the lessons learnt from them.

- The Committee noted that staff retention has been an issue in the past. The Committee sought clarification of the ways in which the Service is strengthening the support it provides for staff.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that newly recruited staff go through a corporate as well as a service induction programme to help them settle into their jobs. The Practice Leaders' roles introduced as part of the Service restructure are responsible for a much smaller team of Social Workers thereby providing accessible and consistent support. Staff conferences are also held on a regular basis. One of the most important elements of staff support is supervision which is an aspect of practice the Service has been focusing on developing and which can now be evidenced as happening consistently.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said that the recruitment of Children's Social Care Workers is a problem nationally. Nevertheless, the work which the Service has accomplished thus far as part of the Improvement Programme and the restructuring which has taken place has led to success in recruitment, particularly at manager level thereby enhancing the Service's reputation as a desirable place to work. As this message spreads, it is likely to help recruitment efforts in future.

- The Committee noted that the Service is reducing its dependency on agency staff and it sought clarification of the projected position in a year's time in terms of the ratio of permanent staff to agency staff.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said that whilst the Service is actively seeking to reduce its reliance on agency staff, this does not mean that it will not employ agency social workers in future. Agency staff enable the Service to be flexible at times when it requires additional input e.g. for time limited projects such as addressing legacy cases when recruiting might otherwise be difficult or during periods of staff absences. Agency staff can also fulfil an important supporting role in sharing expertise and experience with newly qualified social workers.

- The Committee noted that although the feedback provided by the Independent Support Team at the conclusion of its work with the Service is encouraging, the IST comments that despite there being some signs of improvement in the quality of practice there remain concerns about the extent to which this is consistently the case. The Committee sought assurance that the issue of the quality and standard of practice is continuing to be addressed.

The Statutory Director of Social Services acknowledged that the quality of practice is an important factor, hence the introduction since June, 2017 of Practice Standards across the Service. The Officer said that although there is room for further improvement as the IST recognises, the quality of practice within the Service has improved significantly in the past year.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that the establishment of a Quality Assurance Framework is also part of the process of improving practice across all areas of the Service.

The Portfolio Member for Social Services highlighted that at a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel earlier in the week, the Independent Reviewing Officer in a report by the Quality and Safeguarding Unit had noted that from a random review of 10 cases each one was found to have up to date records and that there was evidence of positive progress in this regard.

- The Committee sought clarification of whether the 3 year timeframe for the completion of the Service Improvement Plan is realistic and allows the Service to fulfil all of its objectives.

The Statutory Director of Social Services said that the 14 recommendations made by CIW as a result of its inspection of the Authority's Children's Services were translated into 21 actions in the Service Improvement Plan. Approximately, half of those actions have now been completed and a further 8 are in progress and on track. Whilst three areas in the Improvement Plan are denoted Amber and relate to consistency issues no areas are denoted Red. As with any programme of improvement, implementing changes and ensuring they become embedded in practice and are applied consistently take time; it is considered that the Service is three quarters of the way to achieving the changes that need to be made.

It was resolved –

- **To confirm that the Committee is satisfied with the steps taken to progress the implementation of the Service Improvement Plan and with the pace of progress and improvements made to date within the Children and Families' Service, and that the Committee -**
- **Notes the progress made to date with the work of the Children's Services Improvement Plan in terms of achieving its work programme.**

- **Notes that all work-streams pertaining to the Service Improvement Plan appear to be on target thus far.**
- **Notes the outcome of the Children's Services Improvement Panel's recent self-evaluation work stream to measure the impact and added value of the Panel.**
- **Notes the ongoing development programme for the Panel's members much of which is delivered in-house.**
- **Notes also that the Panel has escalated for the 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 appointing Social Workers (experienced and newly qualified) and supporting experienced Support Workers to qualify.**

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED.

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING: CORPORATE SCORECARD QUARTER 1 2018/19

The report of the Head of Transformation and Human Resources incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 1 2018/19 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate Services reported that the Scorecard reflects the position of the Council against its operational objectives as agreed collaboratively between the Senior Leadership Team, the Executive and the Shadow Executive in a workshop held on 2 July, 2018. The position at the end of Quarter 1 is encouraging and compares favourably with the position at Quarter 1 2017/18 with the majority of indicators performing well against their targets. However, 2 indicators have started the year as underperforming against their annual target for the year – these are in Children and Families' Services and in Adults' Services. The indicator in both cases involves a small number of individuals meaning that any fluctuation can affect performance; the indicators will continue to be monitored. The remaining indicators reported for Quarter 1 for performance management are all ragged Green or Yellow. Additionally, of the total number of indicators which were highlighted as Red or Amber at the end of 2017/18, it is pleasing to note that of those that can be tracked during Quarter 1 of the current year, 5 of the 6 have improved in performance and only one is currently underperforming.

The Portfolio Member said that with regard to People Management the performance in relation to sickness absence at the end of Quarter 1 has declined slightly when compared to the same period last year with a sickness rate of 2.69 days per FTE as opposed to 2.23 days per FTE for Quarter 1 2017/18. On a service level, Adults' Services and the Learning Service are underperforming which in the case of the former can be appropriated to a number of long term sickness cases in the Provider Unit and in the case of the latter to long term sickness and high sickness levels in primary schools. The number of Return to Work Interviews – which is an important sickness management tool - held within timescales has increased for the Quarter.

With regard to Customer Service the use of App Môn technology to contact the Council continues to increase. In respect of Customer Complaints management, at the end of Quarter 1, 12 complaints were received compared to 20 for Quarter 1 2017/18. This is an improvement on the Council's service provision especially when noting that all of the complaints that required a response by the end of the quarter (12) have received a response within timescale. Within Social Services, 56% of complaints received a response within timescale with 4 late responses. The percentage of FOI requests responded to within timescale performed at 80% - up from 78% at the end of 2017/18.

For Financial Management, at the end of Quarter 1 a total overspend of £1.744m is projected for the year ending 31 March, 2019. The services that were experiencing

significant budgetary pressures in 2017/18 - Children and Families' Services and the Learning Service – are still feeling those pressures in the new financial year. The position is being closely monitored.

The Committee considered the information presented and raised points as follows –

- The Committee noted that Adults' Services and the Learning Service have underperformed in Quarter 1 in relation to sickness levels with long-term sickness cases in the Provider Unit resulting in a total of 634 days lost to sickness in Quarter 1 and primary schools accounting for 69% of the sickness levels in the Learning Service in the same Quarter. The Committee sought clarification of the measures that will be introduced to mitigate the sickness levels in schools and in adults' services.

The Head of Learning said that the Service has established an action plan collaboratively with Human Resources to address sickness levels in the primary sector. This has several elements to it including targeting specific schools where the issue is most acute and involving school governors more closely in challenging sickness levels. The Learning Service is working with the Human Resources Service and Head Teachers to implement the Action Plan and to instigate improvement.

The Head of Human Resources and Transformation said that sickness absence levels are higher in the primary sector due in part to the fact that actions have been targeted on the secondary sector where the sickness levels have reduced as a result. Ensuring that schools conduct Return to Work interviews is part of the Action Plan referred to above and they will be provided with the support to enable this to happen.

In relation to Adults' Services, the Assistant Chief Executive/Statutory Director of Social Service said that high sickness levels are connected to the Provider Unit which has 450 staff who work with vulnerable adults via home care and /or residential care provision. The Officer said that 49% of the total days lost to sickness for the service during the period were as a result of a few cases of long-term sickness absence with the remainder being due to short-term sickness absence. In order to address the matter, there will be increased focus on conducting timely Return to Work interviews and where appropriate, specific cases will be referred to the Service's Sickness Absence Panel. Last year, the Service's sickness absence levels were affected by a high number of influenza cases which due to the nature of the work meant that staff could not come into contact with the vulnerable individuals for whom they provide care. Staff are being encouraged to receive flu jabs. The Officer also said where previously there have been references in the quarterly corporate performance monitoring report to sickness levels within Children and Families' Services, there is no mention of the same in the report under consideration; this is because sickness absence levels within the Service have reduced significantly as a result of the service restructure, a review of caseloads and improved supervision.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that the Service has made Return to Work Interviews as much the responsibility of staff as it is of managers with staff being asked to prompt and/or remind their managers if the RTW has not been completed within the required timeframe.

- The Committee sought clarification of progress with developing Extra Care provision both in relation to the facility under construction in Llangefni and to the intended provision in the Amlwch area. With regard to the Llangefni Extra Care facility, the Committee questioned whether any slippage will mean additional costs for the Council and also whether not being able to achieve full occupancy is a risk.

The Portfolio Member for Social Services said that the Llangefni facility is being developed with Pennaf Housing Group. Any slippage on the timeframe for completing the facility is a

matter between Pennaf and the construction company. The aim is to ensure the facility is up and running by the winter time. The Portfolio Member said that a large percentage of the apartments have been allocated and that the interest remains strong. It is important that the Authority ensures that the apartments are occupied by individuals for whom extra care is the most appropriate provision. With regard to the Amlwch area, the Authority's Housing Service is currently looking at housing needs more widely within the area to include Extra Care housing.

The Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer said with regard to the Hafan Cefni development that the Authority's contract with Pennaf specifies that if after 3 months apartments remain vacant at Hafan Cefni, then the rental costs of those units will be borne by the Council. However, it is more prudent that the Council should take time to ensure that the individuals coming to live in Hafan Cefni are those whose needs can be met by Extra Care housing, or else it is likely to incur greater costs later on if it is found that the facility is occupied by people for whom this form of provision is unsuitable.

- The Committee noted that it would like to see the inclusion within the Corporate Scorecard of a Performance Indicator for planning enforcement when the indicators are reviewed for the following year on the grounds that this is an area that is managed by a small team operating under pressure.

It was resolved –

- **To accept the report, to note the areas which the Senior Leadership Team is managing to secure improvements into the future as summarised in paragraphs 3.1.1. to 3.1.5 and to accept the mitigation measures outlined therein.**
- **To recommend that when Performance Indicators are next reviewed for inclusion within the Corporate Scorecard for 2019/20, the SLT, the Executive and the Shadow Executive consider including an indicator for Planning Enforcement.**

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's current Forward Work Programme for 2017/18 to 2019/20 was presented for the Committee's comment and review.

It was noted that the Committee's meeting to consider the initial budget proposals for the 2019/20 budget will be able to go ahead on 24 October, 2018 as the announcement of the Welsh Government's provisional local government settlement is expected in early October.

It was resolved to accept the Forward Work Programme without further comment.

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

7 ITEM FOR INFORMATION - ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18 : LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

The Annual Report on the operation in 2017/18 of the Social Services' Representations and Complaints Procedure was presented for the Committee's information. The report set out the way the Procedure was implemented within Children and Families' Services and Adults' Services during the period from April, 2017 to the end of March, 2018.

It was resolved to note the Social Services' Representations and Complaints Procedure Annual Report for 2017/18 which included the following –

- **The views of service users received during 2017/18 regarding the services provided by Social Services.**
- **Information about the performance of Social Services in implementing the Representations and Complaints Procedure and dealing with complaints.**
- **An Action Plan for developing the arrangements for dealing effectively with representations and complaints received from service users and their representatives.**

**Councillor Aled M. Jones
Chair**