

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June, 2019

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, John Griffith, Richard Griffiths, Alun Roberts, J. Arwel Roberts
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services)
Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business)
Councillor Richard Dew (Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection)
Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth)
Councillor R.G. Parry OBE FRAgS (Portfolio Member for Highways, Property and Waste)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvement)
Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer
Interim Director of Social Services/Head of Adults' Services (for item 3)
Head of Children and Families' Services (for items 3 and 4)
Head of Housing Services (for item 3)
Head of Learning (for item 3)
Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation (for item 3)
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (for item 3)
Chief Planning Officer (for item 3)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Richard Owain Jones, Bryan Owen, Mr Keith Roberts , Mrs Anest Frazer (Co-opted Members), Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Dafydd Roberts (by invitation for item 5), Head of Democratic Services

The Chair thanked his fellow Committee members for his re-election as Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and he specifically thanked Councillor Dylan Rees, the Vice-Chair for chairing the meetings on 19 March and 17 May, 2019 in his absence.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on the dates noted below were presented and **were confirmed** as a correct record of the proceedings on those dates –

- 19 March, 2019
- 14 May, 2019
- 17 May, 2019

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD QUARTER 4 2018/19

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the Corporate Scorecard for Quarter 4 2018/19 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report portrayed the position of the Council against its operational objectives as at the end of the fourth quarter of 2018/19.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate Business provided a summary of the end of year performance outcomes highlighting those areas where performance fell short of target and were ragged RED on the scorecard – these were few compared to the majority of areas which had performed to target and were ragged GREEN on the scorecard. The report provided a very positive reflection of the Council's performance overall and in several areas represented an improvement on the 2017/18 performance which was especially gratifying to report considering the challenges this and other local authorities are facing. The Portfolio Member referred to the Performance Indicators that had underperformed against their annual targets and the reasons therefore as provided by the relevant services (paragraph 2.1.9 refers). Although the Quarter 4 performance with regard to attendance at work was better than that for Quarter 3, the cumulative score of 10.34 WDL per FTE for the year was slightly disappointing being over the target of 9.75 WDL per FTE. The Portfolio Member gave assurances that this was receiving high level attention. The report also touched on Customer Service and here again portrayed an improving picture noting also that the number of users of AppMôn and the Council's website had continued to grow which it was hoped would lead to a greater use of online forms and online contact.

The Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager said that in preparing for the year ahead it would be useful to reflect on the purpose of the Corporate Scorecard which was as a management tool to enable the Council to ensure that provision for the Island's residents is as good as possible. Assessed in this context, the Council's performance across the board was very encouraging with only 3 out of in the region of 50 Performance Management PIs falling short thereby providing Members with certainty about the robustness of the foundation that had been put in place which would also serve to facilitate further improvements going forwards.

During consideration of the report, the Committee discussed the following –

- **The steps being taken to manage sickness absence in primary schools – PI 04a showing as Red on the Scorecard.** The Head of Learning confirmed that a joint approach with Human Resources targeting the 10 primary schools where it was considered there was scope to make a difference as well as ensuring that all schools keep closely to attendance management policies were beginning to produce results over the course of two terms. One of the most challenging issues was long-term sickness absence which it was difficult to address.
- That nationally the Authority's performance with regard to sickness absence placed it in the top 10 of the 20 Councils that had to date reported on their performance figures. The lowest placed Council of the 20 had a score of 13 working days/shift lost.
- **Indicator PI 08 – the percentage of Attendance Review Meetings (ARM) held which showed as Red.** It was noted that the trend for this indicator was downwards

and that performance at 58% was quite a way short of the 80% target. The Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation updated the Committee with the latest ARM data which gave a cumulative score of 74% for the year which was up from the 69% for 2017/18 although the Quarter 4 figure was still down on the previous quarter.

- **Indicator PI 11 – the percentage of staff with DBS Certificate (if required within their role) showing as 98%.** The Committee asked for clarification of how many of the Council's 2,200 staff required a DBS Certificate. The Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation said she could not provide a precise figure without referring to the services which manage this directly but could look into it and report back. In further clarification and to allay any concerns the Committee may have had on this matter the Officer said that in circumstances where the award of the certificate may be delayed the relevant Head of Service would undertake a risk assessment to determine whether or not the individual could carry out the duties of the post. The Head of Adults' Services confirmed that this was the procedure within Adults' Service i.e. all decisions whether to allow risk assessed individuals to continue in their work in the short-term pending the award of a DBS Certificate were referred to the Head of Service without fail. In response to it being pointed out that there was no target or any other information to accompany the PI the Committee was advised that the Authority's Corporate Safeguarding Board had responsibility for such matters with an upward as well as downward flow of information to and from the Board needing to be ensured.
- **Indicator Pam/018 – the percentage of all planning applications determined in time showing as RED on the scorecard with a performance of 81% against a target of 90%.** The Committee was advised by the Chief Planning Officer that a number of factors had impacted on performance including the introduction and testing of a new administration system which meant roles and responsibilities being redefined with a knock-on effect on workflow, as well as the implementation of the new Joint Local Development Plan which had been a challenge and had led to some delays. The Service had also given time during the year to tackling the enforcement backlog. The time taken focusing on the basics would pay dividend in the future with the vacancy in the Planning Applications Team now filled and a GDPR related post created and greater focus given to managers and officers, thereby improving the Service's resilience into the future.
- **Concern about the profile of enforcement within Planning as a specialist area and the sufficiency of capacity within the Enforcement Team.** The Committee was advised by the Chief Planning Officer that there had been some gaps in the Planning Enforcement Team which are now being addressed as part of the effort to bring in high level expertise to the enforcement process and to use new systems more effectively so that Enforcement is better at being proactive.
- **Indicator PAM/025 (PM19) – the percentage of people kept in hospital while waiting for social care per 100 population aged 74+ which was Red having registered a performance of 7.78 at the end of the year against an annual target of 3.** The Head of Adults' Services advised that priority had been given in the past year through various means to strengthening provision to support people to remain in their homes instead of accessing residential care, and also to enable them to leave hospital sooner. Whilst this work had largely proved successful in terms of releasing individuals to home care within 48 hours thereby enabling the majority of individuals to be released from hospital and/or who require a community care package, there remains an issue with the coding of clients with a difference of opinion about the Delayed Transfer of Care (DETOC) figures resulting therefrom. More time needs to be dedicated to verifying the figures with BCUHB, and the Service also needs to be part of their sign-off on a monthly basis - this will receive attention in the coming months. On the whole, the Service was confident improvements had been made with the strengthening also of the re-ablement provision and team but with the caveat that residential placements remain under pressure. **The Committee asked for an update**

for its next meeting on discussions with BCUHB about improving the data coding process.

- **Concern about managing expenditure in Adults' Services because of the increase in demand.** The Committee was advised by the Head of Adults' Services that the Service had striven to work hard with those individuals where timely intervention meant that they could be provided for within the community without having to access the Service. Additionally, the Service had endeavoured to ensure that it commissions in the best way possible in order to keep down the cost of care packages. The situation can fluctuate with daily discussions taking place with BCUHB particularly with regard to Continuing Health Care (CHC) costs which can be a grey area and a source of disagreement. The approach to controlling expenditure had therefore been two pronged – managing demand at the point of entry and containing the use of expensive care packages. The Portfolio Member for Social Services cautioned that the growing number of older people coupled with increasing demand in mental health and learning disabilities have meant that managing demand and therefore costs in Adults' Services has and will continue to prove challenging.
- **Indicator PAM/012 – percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless which saw a decline from 65.2% in 2017/18 to 52.93% in 2018/19.** The Committee was advised by the Head of Housing Services that there had been three long term absences in the Housing Options Team which had had an impact on performance added to which in the last calendar year 724 people had presented themselves to the service – under homelessness legislation the Service is required to assess applicants if they are at risk of becoming homeless within a 56 day timeframe. At the end of the financial year, 87 cases remained open compared to 59 the previous year with 38 of those having been opened in March. The Officer assured the Committee that the decline in performance was considered temporary and that the situation was exceptional due to staff absences and an increase in demand; 2 of the 3 members of staff on long-term absences had since returned to work which should help improve performance.
- **The increase in the amount of borrowing undertaken – £15,563,536 actually borrowed against a budget of £5,783,000 giving a variance of 169.13%.** The Head of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer advised that the Council had in recent years implemented a strategy of using its own internal cash balances to fund capital expenditure where possible in order to minimise external borrowing and the costs that go with it. As the Council's reserves have reduced so has the cash available meaning that borrowing has been undertaken to replenish the Council's cash balances in the first place and also in order to take advantage of favourable borrowing rates offered by Welsh Government for limited periods as part of the funding of the Schools' Modernisation Programme which it was deemed a sensible step to take given that the term of the borrowing is over 50 years.

Having considered all the information presented as well as the clarifications provided by the Officers/Portfolio Members on the points raised, it was resolved that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee –

- **Notes the areas which the Senior Leadership Team is managing to secure improvements into the future as outlined in the report in relation to addressing underperforming areas, revision of 2019/20 PIs and targets, Attendance at Work, Customer Service and Complaints' Management arrangements in Children's Services, and that it**
- **Recommends the mitigation measures for those areas as set out in the report.**

FURTHER ACTION: The Committee to be updated at its next meeting on progress of discussions with BCUHB on improving the data coding process in relation to DETOC figures.

4 MONITORING IMPROVEMENT IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' SERVICES

- The report of the Head of Children and Families' Services setting out the areas which had been the focus of the work within Children and Families' Services since the previous quarterly progress report was presented for the Committee's consideration. It was noted that the Service's improvement work was now being driven by a new 3 year Service Development Plan consisting of 5 themes which had replaced the previous Service Improvement Plan.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that this latest report provided graphical evidence of the improved performance against key service performance indicators in Quarter 4 2018/19 when compared with performance against the same indicators in Quarter 4 2017/18. He guided the Committee through each of the Performance Indicators explaining the aspects of service they measured highlighting the significance of the improvement in relation to each one and collectively, as reflecting the positive changes and developments that were happening in the service as a whole. This positivity was further reinforced by the decrease in the number of Stage 1 complaints the Service had received during Quarter 4 as well as the 68 compliments received over the course of the year which showed appreciation of the professionalism of staff, the support received by families and the positive relationships formed with service users including children. In addition to focusing on performance, the Service had spent time developing policies specifically in relation to aftercare and financial matters for looked after children and had implemented the new Fostering Package which was generating renewed interest in fostering.

Referring to future arrangements, the Portfolio Member for Social Services sought the Committee's approval for the establishment of a Social Services Improvement Panel covering Adults' Services as well as Children and Families' Services. This would enable Adults' Services to have the same level of scrutiny as the Children and Families' Services have had in recent years and would also enable Elected Members to develop more detailed knowledge of the processes and challenges within Adults' Services. The proposal had been recommended by the Adults' Social Care Transformation Board and the Children's Services Improvement Panel in meetings on the 22 May, 2019 and 23 May, 2019 respectively.

The following matters were discussed during consideration of the report –

- The Committee was pleased to note the improvement in performance to which the data in the report testified and also welcomed the progress made in improving the robustness of policies, processes and procedures within the Service. The Committee was particularly keen to understand how the significant improvement in performance with regard to the number of children in school that have changed school for non-transitional reasons had been achieved considering that last year nearly a third of school aged children had to change schools for non-transitional reasons with 19 in September alone compared with 6.5% for this year. The Committee was advised that greater stability within the Children's Social Care Worker team meant that more stable and consistent relationships with individual children could be developed and that this along with the work of the Resilient Families Team and the Service being more ready to challenge when private agencies give notice of the termination of a placement in favour of discussing the issues, have all contributed to bringing performance in this regard to below target level.
- The Committee was supportive of affording Adults' Services the same level of scrutiny as Children's Services but sought more clarity about why combining scrutiny of the

two services within one panel was thought to be more effective than having two separate panels. The Portfolio Member for Social Services clarified that it was considered that the expertise and knowledge of Children's Services which Members had gained through the Children's Services Improvement Panel needed to be replicated with Adults' Services and that the best way to achieve this taking into account the limited capacity within the Council's Elected Membership would be by way of a single panel with an extended remit to include Adults' as well as Children and Families' Services. The first 6 months of the newly constituted panel would be spent in immersing/training members in aspects of Adults' Services (training and awareness raising sessions having been a feature of the current Children's Services Improvement Panel work programme) with the performance element to be then addressed via a work programme combining elements of the two services, the aim ultimately being to strengthen Members' understanding of Social Services in their entirety.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the objective was to bring Members' understanding and appreciation of the needs in Adults' Services to the same level of maturity as that acquired in relation to Children's Services so that they are able to scrutinise and challenge Adults' Services with confidence from a position of knowledge as had become the case with Children's Services.

Having considered all the information presented as well as the clarifications provided by the Officers/Portfolio Members on the points raised it was RESOLVED that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee -

- **Confirms that it is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvements made to date in Children and Families' Services and congratulates the Service thereon.**
- **Approves the establishment of a Social Services Improvement Panel to commence work with immediate effect.**

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS PROPOSED

- A report from the Children's Services Improvement Panel describing the work and output of the Panel during the period from March, 2019 to April, 2019 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillor Richard Griffiths, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee's representative on the Panel reported on the Panel's focus of work during this period which included the new Service Development Plan themes and Laming Visits. The Panel had additionally in April undertaken a self-evaluation of its impact and would report back on the outcome in the next progress report to the Committee scheduled for September, 2019. No specific issues had been escalated for the Committee's attention in this quarter and the Committee was asked to consider whether it was satisfied with the robustness of the Panel's monitoring thus far.

Having considered the report and confirmed that it was satisfied with the work and direction of the Panel, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved to note the following –

- **The progress made to date with the work of the Children's Services Improvement Panel in term of achieving its work programme.**
- **That the new Service Improvement Plan has now been adopted, with the previous Service Improvement Plan having been brought to a close.**
- **The areas of work covered during Laming Visits as a means of further strengthening accountability and the knowledge and understanding of Panel members.**

- **The ongoing development programme for Panel members much of which is delivered in-house.**

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS PROPOSED

5 MEMBERSHIP OF THE FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

The report of the Scrutiny Manager requesting the Committee to nominate one additional member to serve on the Finance Scrutiny Panel was presented for consideration.

Councillor Dafydd Roberts, Chair of the Finance Scrutiny Panel explained that as the Panel had evolved and as part of an end of year self-evaluation, it had been recommended that the Panel's current membership of 4 members (2 members from both scrutiny committees) be extended by 2 additional members – one from each of the scrutiny committees - in order to increase capacity and provide a more robust approach to financial scrutiny.

Having agreed that the Panel's membership be extended, it was RESOLVED to nominate Councillor John Griffith to serve on the Finance Scrutiny Panel.

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS PROPOSED

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's Forward Work Programme was presented and **was noted** by Members without amendment.

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**