

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September, 2019

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, John Griffith, Richard Griffiths, Alun Roberts, Nicola Roberts
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services)
Councillor Richard Dew (Portfolio Member for Planning and Public Protection) (for item 3)
Councillor Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Community Support)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Social Services
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer (for item 3)
Director of Place & Community Well-being (for item 3)
Head of Children and Families' Services
Head of Housing Services
Head of Profession (HR) & Transformation (for items 3 & 4)
Chief Planning Officer (for item 3)
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (for items 3 and 4)
IT Team Manager (MH)
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Richard Griffiths, Bryan Owen, Mr Keith Roberts, Mrs Anest Frazer, Mr Dyfed Wyn Jones (Co-opted Members), Councillors R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture & Youth) Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance), Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Portfolio Member for Corporate Services)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor G.O Jones (Chair of the Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee) (by invitation), Head of Democratic Services

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 8 July, 2019 were presented and were confirmed as a correct record.

Arising thereon –

The Committee asked whether Welsh Government had responded to the Authority's decision not to set a target for reducing the number of looked after children on the Island.

The Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services confirmed that Welsh Government which is looking to introduce a national strategy to reduce the number of children in care whereby each authority sets a reduction target, is still trying to bring pressure to bear on the 5 authorities that have resisted such a step, including the Isle of Anglesey County Council. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee's support for this stance as confirmed in its July meeting has added weight to the Authority's position in maintaining this resistance. The Authority is of the view that setting a target is unnecessary, that the Authority has a strategy for preventing children from coming into care and that CIW's most recent inspection provided no evidence that there were children in the Authority's care who did not need to be in care.

It was proposed and resolved that the Committee reiterates its support for the Leader of the Council in not setting a target for reducing the number of children whom the Authority looks after.

3 MONITORING PERFORMANCE: CORPORATE SCORECARD QUARTER 1 2019/20

The report of the Head of Profession (HR) and Transformation incorporating the first Scorecard of the 2019/20 financial year portraying the Council's position against its operational objectives at the end of Quarter 1 was presented for the Committee's consideration and scrutiny.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that a lot of work had been done over the summer months to revamp the scorecard to give it a more strategic outlook; this has been achieved by better aligning the corporate monitoring KPIs to the Council's three strategic objectives (para 2.1 refers) and by removing some KPIs deemed too operational for the scorecard. Since the 2018/19 Q4 scorecard report was discussed in June, 2019, the Public Accountability Measures (PAM) have been published by Data Cymru. Anglesey's standing nationally has showed a further improvement with the Authority having the most amount of indicators in the upper quartile throughout Wales. The Leader added that at the end of Q1 the majority of PIs are performing well against their targets but with 5 having started the year as underperforming which are designated Red or Amber on the scorecard. It is too early at Q1 however to be drawing conclusions in terms of performance trends from the picture presented by the scorecard at this point in time.

In response to questions by the Committee regarding the reported decline in aspects of performance in housing, planning and children's services during Quarter 1 and whether any additional mitigation measures are being considered to improve performance, Officers provided clarification and assurance as follows –

- With regard to improving the situation into Q2 onward in achieving the target timescale for letting lettable units of accommodation (excluding Difficult to Lets - DTLs) (21 days being the target compared to actual average performance of 25.6 days therefore showing Red on the scorecard – Indicator 34) the Head of Housing Services advised that a new streamlined process has been introduced which should result in units being let in a timelier manner. The Housing Service lets about 260 units annually of which around 20% are known as DTLs. The new streamlined process involves the Housing Solutions team contacting both the Housing Support team and the Homelessness team when identified DTLs become available to establish whether any of their registered clients match the requirements and are suitable for the units in question. As progress is made with this indicator, performance against Indicator 35 – Landlord Services: percentage of rent lost to properties being empty will also improve as the more time it takes to let lettable units of accommodation then the higher the rent lost. As an update the Officer said that performance for Indicator 34 as at 9 September had improved to 21.4 days.

- With regard to the percentage of planning enforcement cases investigated within 84 days - Indicator 43 (Red on the scorecard with a performance of 55% against a target of 80%) the Chief Planning Officer advised that an experienced Senior Manager has recently been appointed to provide the Enforcement Team with robust and focused leadership. Significant work has been undertaken over the summer months to get to grips with the historical backlog and whilst this work is ongoing the team will also be looking to deal with enforcement cases in a more timely way in future. Good progress has therefore been made with the current performance demonstrating a marked increase over every quarter in 2018/19 as new processes are embedded and work on clearing the backlog continues. It is anticipated that this improvement will continue into the year ahead. **The Committee noted that it would be helpful, should systems permit, for community councils to be kept informed of planning applications in their area or as a first step, for applications to be designated by ward.**
- With regard to the percentage of child assessments completed in time – Indicator 25 (Amber on the Scorecard with a performance of 85.32% against a target of 90%) the Portfolio Member for Social Services advised that the underperformance was due to the lack of management in one practice group which has since been rectified. A new process has been introduced where the data is collected in a different way that should lead to an improvement in Q2.
- Councillor Alun Roberts, a member of the Finance Scrutiny Panel highlighted that a digital programme is being developed that will help the Panel delve into financial matters in greater depth particularly in terms of tracking and establishing patterns of expenditure within services. **The Committee noted that it would be useful were it to receive a demonstration of the programme's capabilities once it has been implemented and is fully up and running.**

Having considered the report and the assurances provided by Officers on the issues discussed, the Committee resolved to accept the report, to note the areas which the Senior Leadership Team is managing to secure improvements into the future and to recommend the mitigation measures as outlined to the Executive.

ADDITIONAL ACTION - Information about the number of Difficult to Let (DTLs) units to be incorporated in the Quarter 2 report to the Committee.

4 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

The Annual Improvement Report for 2018/19 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report which the Authority is statutorily required to publish provided a review of the following -

- the Authority's progress in delivering against its Annual Delivery Document for 2018/19 as outlined under 3 priority objectives (para 1.3 refers)
- its overall performance including performance based on national indicators (PAM indicators and local KPIs)

The Leader reported that the report overall portrays a positive picture of the Authority's performance in 2018/19 highlighting a number of achievements under the 3 key objectives whilst also recognising that there are areas of performance where further improvement can be made. It is particularly pleasing to note that based on the published Performance Accountability Measures (PAMs) the Council's national standing has improved once again this year.

The Committee welcomed the report noting in particular those areas where a marked improvement had been made e. g. the percentage of Year 11 school leavers not in employment, education or training (NEET) which was an area that had previously been

highlighted by this Committee as a matter of concern. The Committee noted that the 2017/18 performance for this indicator resulted in Anglesey having the highest percentage of NEETs in Wales whereas the indicator is now performing well and is joint 6th in Wales. The Committee was advised that as well as verifying the original data, this indicator exemplifies how the discussion around performance has evolved within the Council with the underperformance leading to increased scrutiny of the indicator both within the Service and by Elected Members thereby prompting a change in the process to improve on the result.

The Committee further noted that although 54% of indicators either improved or maintained performance in 2018/18, 40% declined in performance when compared to performance in 2017/18; the Committee asked for clarification of accountability in terms of managing and improving performance. The Chief Executive advised that the Corporate Scorecard is discussed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and in one to one meetings between individual Heads of Service and a member of the SLT. Moreover, discussing performance, analysing data and planning for improvement have now become integral elements of Heads of Services' day to day work which means that services are in effect self-evaluating their performance on an ongoing basis.

It was resolved to recommend to the Executive that the final version of the 2018/19 Performance Report be published by the statutory end of October deadline and that Officers complete the document in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for publication as part of the 7 October, 2019 Full Council papers.

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS PROPOSED

5 MONITORING PROGRESS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENTS QUARTER 1 2019/20

The report of the Head of Children and Families' Services on the Service's latest progress in implementing the 3 year Service Development Plan was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The report referred to encouraging developments under all the 5 themes which underpin the Development Plan (which replaced the previous Service Improvement Plan) specifically in relation to the following –

- workforce planning (A Workforce Strategy is now in place for Children and Families Services)
- social work practice (internal audits identify both where positive progress has been made and where further work is needed to ensure consistency across all areas);
- quality assurance and the performance framework (reported on in detail to the Committee's June's meeting)
- provision of appropriate and timely social work intervention (internal audits continue to be conducted to ensure children and their families are offered intervention at the right time), and
- improving outcomes for children in care (several new policies are now operational which allow staff to support and improve outcomes for children in the care of the Local Authority).

The Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services also highlighted the work on other initiatives which had been the subject of focus in the period since the last report to the Committee in June which were –

- The Resilient Families Team which intervenes with families who present a high level of need to provide intensive support and interventions to support family breakdowns and to prevent children from becoming looked after.

- Voices from Care Cymru Project which aims to improve engagement with looked after children by developing a participation group for children and young people who receive care and have left care to co-produce a Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy and Corporate Parenting Charter for Anglesey.
- The Fostering Fortnight which took place in June and is an annual event which seeks to raise the profile of Foster Carers and to encourage more members of the public to sign up and become foster carers.
- Foster Care Recruitment. The recruitment campaign as strengthened by the new fostering package in January, 2019 has been successful potentially providing up to 24 new foster care beds for Anglesey looked after children by October 2019.

The Committee welcomed and noted the developments as documented. In response to questions about whether fostering recruitment is ongoing, the Committee was informed that the Authority's approach in introducing the new fostering package to boost recruitment has generated interest externally with other authorities and agencies looking to follow suit. The challenge for the Authority is to ensure that it stays at the forefront in terms of its provision and that its fostering package remains attractive and is the best it can be.

It was resolved that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee confirms that it is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvements made to date within Children and Families Services.

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS PROPOSED

6 MONITORING PROGRESS: SOCIAL SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PANEL

A progress update report on the work of the Social Services Improvement Panel (formerly the Children's Services Improvement Panel) was presented for the Committee's consideration.

Councillor G.O. Jones, a member of the Panel highlighted that the progress report covers the period from May to July, 2019 encompassing the last meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Panel and the first two meetings of the newly constituted Social Services Improvement Panel. Some of the main areas considered by the Panel during this time have included the 5 themes which make up the Service Development Plan; continuation of the Laming Visits and the draft Corporate Prevention Strategy. The Panel has also discussed the proposed national strategy to reduce the number of children in care. Following careful consideration of the matter the Panel had recommended that the response to the Welsh Government should refer to the Authority's strategy for preventing children from coming into care and that a target for reducing the number of looked after children should not be set locally.

Councillor Jones reported that additionally, members of the former Children's Services Panel undertook a self-evaluation of the Panel's impact as regards its contribution to the journey towards improving Children's Services. The outcome of the self-evaluation exercise is summarised in the report with the self-evaluation report appended in full.

It was resolved –

- **To note the following -**
 - **The progress made to date with the work of the Social Services Improvement Panel in terms of achieving its new work programme.**
 - **The areas of work covered during Laming Visits as a means of further strengthening accountability, knowledge and understanding of Panel members.**
 - **The ongoing development programme for Panel members much of which is delivered in-house.**

- That the draft Corporate Prevention Strategy will be considered by the Committee in the autumn, 2019.
- The outcomes of the recent self-evaluation to measure the impact and added value of the former Children's Services Improvement Panel.
- The need to revise the terms of reference to reflect the recent decision to extend the scope of the Improvement Panel to include both adults' services and children and families' services.
- That the Panel has escalated to the Committee's attention the slight delay in opening the first of the Authority's Cartrefi Clyd Môn as a result having to re-advertise the post of registered manager. The Committee further notes the actions taken to resolve the issue and to prepare for the next development phase of the Cartrefi Clyd Môn Service.
- To agree with the Panel's recommendations with regard to the response to Welsh Government in connection with the National LAC Reduction Strategy.
- To adopt the Panel's recommendation that the Annual Social Services Complaints Report be scrutinised by the Social Services Improvement Panel in future.

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

7 COMMON ALLOCATIONS POLICY AND LOCAL CONNECTION

The report of the Head of Housing Services on the outcome of Anglesey's Social Housing Allocation consultation undertaken in the period from 17 June, 2019 to 5 August, 2019 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Head of Housing Services reported that following Executive approval the Housing Service consulted on its Common Allocations Policy in order to identify whether community connection should be included within the policy. Housing Services are keen to contribute towards sustainable communities through ensuring that family and community connections are maintained and it proposed to review the Common Allocation Policy to see if the current policy fulfils that aim. The consultation was undertaken with key partners and stakeholders and it received 114 responses as shown in Appendix 1 to the report with 85% of respondents expressing their support for the inclusion of a community connection within the Common Allocations Policy on the basis that it would strengthen communities and make it easier to provide support to family and friends. There were however some expressions of concern around what constitutes a community connection. A good response was also received to other questions relating to the implementation of the Policy.

The Officer said that the review had also afforded Housing Services the opportunity to look at other issues as summarised in the report. In addition, consideration was given to how connection with a specific area would be defined with the conclusion being that the community and town councils catchment area would meet the local connection requirement that best matches the responses to the consultation.

Based on the consultation outcome, an amended Common Allocations Policy incorporating the following principal change with regard to local connection is provided under Appendix 2 which will be presented to the Executive for final approval:

An applicant will be assessed in accordance with connection to the Town or Community Council which they have stated they wish to live where the empty property is located. An applicant will be considered within their banding in date order. A local connection of 5 years with the Island will still be required to be eligible apart from being in urgent housing need as defined by the Housing Act.

In response to questions by the Committee, the Head of Housing Services further clarified –

- That whereas previously only transfers to smaller or larger units of accommodation were considered, like for like transfers can be considered under the amended policy;
- That the statutory definition of sheltered accommodation has changed; historically sheltered housing was housing where a warden service was provided and where the age criteria stipulated persons of 60 years of age or over. As the nature of sheltered housing has changed, an element of flexibility has been introduced with such accommodation now covering a range of criteria e.g. persons aged 55 and over, persons aged 60 and over, individuals with a registered disability etc.
- That the housing stock is most lacking in 4 bedroom accommodation with only 67 such units currently available although in recognition of the need, the Authority is developing 4 bedroom units as part of its new housing developments. The Authority has developed a strategy to encourage individuals/couples who are in housing units that are larger than their needs to downsize by also developing bungalows as part of new council housing. The Authority also recognises the need for 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation/units for single persons. The development of smaller units is potentially more problematic as these units have to have sufficient floor space to enable people live in them comfortably and for them not to be regarded as temporary accommodation.
- That in communities where there is a shortage of land for development, the Authority can utilise exempted land for developing affordable housing. The Housing Service's social housing waiting list might not fully reflect the need in smaller rural villages so where land is identified, the services of a rural housing facilitator can be procured to establish the extent of the land available in the area and whether there is a desire locally to see affordable housing being developed.

Having considered the consultation process and responses, the Committee was satisfied that the process had been sufficient and that the changes to the Common Allocations Policy were acceptable based on the responses received. It was therefore resolved to recommend the revised Common Allocations Policy for adoption by the Executive.

NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED

8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager incorporating the Committee's Forward Work Programme was presented for consideration in a format that divided the programme into the short- term covering the autumn 2019 and the long-term up to April, 2020.

It was resolved –

- **To agree the current version of the forward work programme for 2019/20 subject to further internal discussion of the format.**
- **To note progress thus far in implementing the forward work programme.**

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**