

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the extraordinary virtual meeting held on 22 September, 2020

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

Councillors John Griffith, Richard Griffiths, Richard O. Jones, Alun Roberts, John Arwel Roberts, Nicola Roberts

Portfolio Members

Councillors Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services), R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Youth, Libraries & Culture), R.G. Parry, OBE, FRAGS (Portfolio Member for Highways, Property and Waste), Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Interim Director of Social Services
Interim Head of Adults' Services
Head of Democratic Services
Scrutiny Manager (AGD)
Committee Officer (ATH)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lewis Davies, Bryan Owen

ALSO PRESENT: Bethan Roberts (Audit Wales), Mr Gareth Wyn Williams (Local Democracy Reporter), Scrutiny Officer (SR)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this extraordinary meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was made.

2 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2019/20

The draft Annual Report of the Interim Director of Social Services on the effectiveness of Social Services in 2019/20 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The purpose of the report the publication of which is a statutory requirement is to promote awareness and accountability for the performance and progress made over the past year in delivering Social Services within Anglesey County Council as well as outlining improvement priorities.

The Chair introduced the item by referring to the democratic channels through which the Annual Report would be reported culminating in its presentation for Full Council approval

prior to 31 October, 2020 and he invited the Interim Director of Social Services to present the report.

The Interim Director of Social Services reported that much of the credit for the report and for Social Services activity during the 2019/20 financial year is owing to Mr Alwyn Rhys Jones who led the work mentioned in the report as the Statutory Director of Social Services and who has since been appointed to the Statutory Director's role with Wrexham County Borough Council. The report has been prepared under the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection for Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 and as such it follows a prescribed format with performance documented under six Quality Standards for well-being outcomes with supporting evidence of progress and achievement under each standard. The report carries a wealth of information and this has been set out in as accessible and reader friendly way as possible and provides service users, elected members, the Council's partners, regulators and the general public with an insight into the achievements and progress made by Anglesey's Social Services during the past year.

Some of the key highlights include –

- The establishment of a project in collaboration with Voices from Care Cymru which is developing a participation group for looked after children and young people on Anglesey. The group will support Anglesey Council in the development of its Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and provide a platform that supports relationship building between looked after children, young people and their corporate parents in Ynys Môn.
- Work in Adults' Services on developing the Môn Community Link service in collaboration with Medrwn Môn as the overarching voluntary body.
- Increased emphasis during the past year on listening to the voice of service users as a basis for developing and shaping services.

The Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services thanked both Mr Alwyn Jones for leading the Service as Director of Social Services during 2019/20 and Mr Fôn Roberts his successor for taking up the reins as Interim Director of Social Services. She highlighted the many functions of Social Services as reflected by the annual report and referred to its reach into many people's lives in delivering help and support at times when they are vulnerable and in responding to a range of care, welfare, and safeguarding needs.

The Committee welcomed the report as providing a positive overview of Social Services' performance in Anglesey during 2019/20. In discussing the report in greater detail the Committee raised the following issues –

- The way the report has been set out and whether combined reporting on Adults' Services and Children's Services under each Quality Standard makes the report more difficult to follow than were Adults and Children's Services reported upon separately. The Interim Director of Social Services in acknowledging the point clarified that the format reflects the requirements of the Act and that further, it is also a reflection of the fact that Adults' Services and Children's Services are closely aligned in that both work with individuals and do so on a statutory basis. However, it is important that the report is easy to read and understand and the Service would be happy to consider treating the two services separately within next year's report.
- The Committee acknowledged the work undertaken under the Place Shaping Programme on Anglesey but recognised that the implementation of action plans already drawn up will have been paused and priorities and objectives in each area may well have changed as a result of the pandemic. The Committee enquired about the strategy for taking the programme forward in the current circumstances.

The Chief Executive advised that it is important that the place shaping programme planning work should continue and she congratulated those communities which had succeeded in establishing alliance structures. She confirmed that consultation has taken place with communities and resulting priorities were established back in 2017; those will now have to be re-visited in light of changes wrought by the pandemic and alternative ways of re-engaging with communities will need to be found in order to progress the planning work in partnership with Medrwn Môn. The Leader further confirmed that the issue had been raised in a meeting of the Communities Steering Group that had taken place during the emergency taking stock of the situation in terms of the formation of alliances, the bank of volunteers who had come forward, the LAC service delivered by Medrwn Môn and the nature of the support provided to communities.

- The Committee referred to the budget pressures experienced by Adults' Services in recent years due to a number of reasons including increasing demand. The Committee sought assurance that the Service has in place a plan that is sufficiently robust to be able to address demand, in particular to deliver the key service priority of promoting independent living thereby making the best use of resources. The Interim Director of Social Services confirmed that in assessing the financial position the Service is looking at ways of doing things differently including the re-configuration and/or transformation of services and it is also trying to anticipate in which areas the pressures are likely to be greatest in future being mindful of the Covid effect in potentially bringing to the Social Services' attention, individuals and families with employment or poverty issues who might not otherwise be seeking assistance. The Service continues to look at ways of promoting independence it being expected that the experience of Covid 19 may also have influenced preferences with regard to types of care resulting in more people wanting to remain in their own homes rather than moving into a residential care home setting. The Interim Head of Adults' Services referred to the Service's Community and Preventative strategies which aim to ensure individuals can remain safe and well in their own homes. Independent living can also mean financial independence for individuals and the freedom to choose how they receive care and support that best suits their needs.
- The Committee referred to many services having been paused or having ceased to operate during the pandemic including the Mencap Môn Hub in Llangefni which provides a community resource for individuals with learning disabilities. The Committee enquired about the steps taken to support people with a learning disability in the absence of the Hub provision. The Head of Adults' Services gave assurance that those individuals had been supported at home according to their needs. The Service is also very mindful of the pressure upon informal carers and has provided them with support where necessary including by proceeding to open two day care centres with precautions to ensure that the most acute learning disability needs were met in this period.
- The Committee raised concerns about safeguarding during the pandemic with the risk that problems within families may have remained hidden and unaddressed. The Committee enquired whether the Service had detected any emerging pattern of issues with the gradual lifting of lockdown restrictions. The Interim Director of Social Services in advising that it was probably too soon to identify any trends confirmed that referrals had begun to increase now that schools had re-opened but that they were not back to pre-Covid levels. He added that families who would not have traditionally approached the Service have been seeking advice about food boxes etc.
- The Committee sought assurance that the significant progress made within Social Services in recent years had not been put at risk by the pandemic and that the

momentum of improvement could be maintained. The Interim Director of Social Services confirmed that the Service has robust monitoring processes in place to identify and act on any lapse in performance as well as arrangements to support staff including investing funds in recruiting administrative support for social workers. Meetings of the Social Services Improvement Panel have resumed and regular briefings are held with the Leader who is also the Portfolio Member and with the Chief Executive.

- The Committee sought clarification of the position with regard to formal inspection and enquired whether the Social Services were due another such inspection. The Interim Director of Social Services advised that CIW's Performance Review Letter for Anglesey for 2019/20 had been issued and that it was positive in its message finding strengths in Children's and Adults' Services and recognising the continued progress made in both services. CIW now has an annual programme of thematic inspection whereby it focuses on a specific theme for review and reporting. Meetings with CIW have continued on a virtual basis during the emergency period.
- The Committee referred to domestic abuse as an often hidden problem because victims are afraid to come forward and because they are good at concealing the abuse; the Committee enquired whether the Service is satisfied that it is doing enough for individuals who are subject to domestic abuse and whether avenues of help and support are sufficiently publicised. The Interim Director of Social Services referred to the Safe Lives Charity, a UK wide charity that aims to end domestic abuse with which the Service is collaborating as well as the work on domestic abuse the Service undertakes in co-operation with Gorwel, the Learning Service and with North Wales Police. The One Front Door Project aims to improve the identification of individual family need when domestic abuse referrals are received within the Children and Families Service. The Service uses social media to disseminate information about sources of support for domestic abuse victims and during the pandemic leaflets were circulated to local shops to highlight the issue and to promote awareness in what could have been an especially difficult time for victims. Domestic abuse is everyone's business and there is always more that can be done to improve awareness. The Portfolio Member for Social Services informed the Committee about working with Medrwn Môn to provide volunteers with access to the Learning Pool to help them identify safeguarding signs of abuse and also with Gorwel to raise awareness of the less publicised area of older persons' abuse.

Following consideration of the report and a full discussion of the matters therein, the committee resolved –

- **To accept the draft Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Effectiveness of Social Services in 2019/20 on the basis that it was satisfied that the report –**
 - **Captures the Council's current position with regard to delivering Social Services;**
 - **Accurately reflects the improvement priorities for both Adults and Children's Services for the forthcoming year; and**
 - **Reflects the Council's accountability and responsibility with regard to Social Services.**
- **To recommend the draft Annual Report to the Executive for approval.**

3 SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRESS REPORT

The report of the Interim Director of Social Services updating the Committee on progress in the Social Services was presented for consideration. The report summarised recent developments within Children's and Adults' Services with reference also to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the response of Social Services during the lockdown period.

The Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services provided an overview of recent activity; the Interim Director of Social Services and the Interim Head of Adults' Services reported in greater detail on delivery in Children and Families' Services and Adults' Services respectively under the following headlines –

- Increasing the number of Local Authority Foster Carers
- Opening the first Cartef Clyd which will enable looked after children from Anglesey to receive care on the Island
- Opening a training flat for young people leaving care to support them to live independently for the first time
- Continuation of planning work for a new extra care housing provision in the south of the Island
- Developing the Shared Lives Programme to support people living with dementia and their carers as well as design a Dementia Strategy in line with Welsh Government's Dementia Plan
- Developing opportunities for people with mental health needs to participate in community based group activities
- Increasing participation levels in the community hub models by promoting and developing the hubs across the Island; working to establish 3 community resources teams in Amlwch, Ysbyty Penrhos Stanley and Llanfairpwll
- Engaging and consulting with users on the Adult Learning Disability Day Opportunity Strategy to create a greater range of high quality day opportunities for individuals in their communities.
- Delivering on all statutory duties during the Covid-19 lockdown period

Councillor Richard Griffiths, the Committee's representative on the Social Services Improvement Panel gave an update on the deliberations of the Panel from its meeting on 10 September (section 2 of the report refers) drawing attention to the Panel's recommendation that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee could refer specific areas of work to the Panel for in-depth scrutiny within the broader context of the parent committee's work programme on the Council's response to Covid-19. Councillor Griffiths further referred to the Fostering Panel which had also met recently. **The Committee noted the information and thanked Councillor Richard Griffiths for it.**

The Committee considered the update and discussed the following matters –

- The Service's plans for the medium and longer term taking into account the impact of Covid 19. The Interim Director of Social Services advised that planning ahead in any meaningful way is difficult because of the uncertainty around both how the Covid-19 crisis will continue to evolve and what its consequences will be for local government funding next year and beyond. The Leader clarified that the focus recently for local Authority Leaders in Wales has been on ensuring that pressure points are identified sooner rather than later so that Welsh Government can be lobbied promptly and also on achieving parity of treatment for Social Services with Health. A further priority has been reaching a clearer understanding of winter pressures funding for the coming winter and the availability of the Winter Pressures Grant. In the short-term the objective is to see the winter through to the end of this financial year; however it is hoped that local government's crucial role in responding to the Covid-19 emergency will be recognised leading in the long-term to fair funding for local authorities.

- Recognising the importance of early intervention for individuals with dementia and the work being done in this respect, the Committee sought clarification of the problem in accessing GP services in the first place and thereafter in seeing a specialist for timely diagnosis. The Interim Head of Adults' Services agreed that because of Covid-19 obtaining a GP appointment can now be a longer and increasingly virtual process. Diagnosis and support are provided through the Memory Clinic which is Health Board responsibility. As with other health matters the Authority does work closely with BCUHB on this issue and also has close contact and a good working relationship with support organisations for Alzheimer and independent providers who are able to pick up on the early signs of dementia.
- The planned extra care provision in the South of the Island currently on hold due to the decision to rescind the previous decision on the future of Ysgol Gynradd Beaumaris. The Committee enquired whether the location still meets the need for this type of provision, whether other locations in the South of the Island are being actively considered and whether there are risks in the medium to long-term of not proceeding. The Interim Head of Adults' Services confirmed that locations in the South of the Island are being explored whilst also considering opportunities for implementing Extra Care Light based on developing and extending existing sheltered housing provision in combination with the care available through extra care to provide community support. Alternatively, where there is sheltered housing in close proximity to a care home, care options that bridge the two provisions and allow individuals to remain within their immediate community are being looked at. Extra Care forms part of the Service's Independent Living Strategy the aim being to seek a variety of provision to be able to meet the differing needs of the Island's communities and enable individuals to safely remain at home for longer.
- The risk which a potential second lockdown poses to the realisation of the Service's improvement aspirations and plans in the short-term. The Chief Executive whilst acknowledging that there is a risk advised that planning and research work can and must continue in the background as part of the process of planning for recovery and the future shape of services within communities.
- Increased Mental Health costs in Children and Families' Services and a request for a breakdown of the costs. The Interim Director of Social Services advised that as the information was not immediately to hand he would report back to the Social Services Improvement Panel with an update to the next meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

It was resolved –

- **To confirm that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee is satisfied with the pace of progress and improvements made to date in Social Services and**
- **To recommend to the Executive that progress and pace of improvements in Social Services are adequate.**

ACTION: The Interim Director of Social Services to report back to the Social Services Improvement Panel with a breakdown of the increased Mental Health costs in Children and Families' Service and to update the Committee on the same at its next meeting.

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**

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