

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 8 July 2019

- PRESENT:** Councillor Aled Morris Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Lewis Davies, John Griffith, Richard Griffiths, Alun Roberts, Bryan Owen
- Portfolio Members**
- Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Social Services)
Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth) (from item 4)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive
Interim Director of Social Services/Head of Adults' Services
Head of Children and Families' Services
Head of Democratic Services
Social Services Customer Care Development and Designated Complaints Officer (SS) (for item 4)
Committee Officer (ATH)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Richard Owain Jones, Nicola Roberts, Mr Keith Roberts , Mrs Anest Frazer Mr Dyfed Wyn Jones (Co-opted Members), Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Member for Finance)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Major Projects and Economic Development) Miss Awen G. Maple (Denu Talent Assistant)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and he extended a particular welcome to Miss Awen G. Maple who was in attendance in her capacity as Denu Talent Assistant.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 3 June, 2019 were presented and were confirmed as a correct record.

3 DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES' ANNUAL REPORT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2018/19

The Director's Annual Report on the effectiveness of Social Services in 2018/19 was presented for the Committee's consideration. The report is produced in accordance with

statutory requirement and seeks to promote awareness and accountability for the performance and progress made over the past year in delivering Social Services within the Council as well as outlining the improvement priorities for the forthcoming year.

The Interim Director of Social Services and Head of Adults' Services said that he would firstly like to thank Dr Caroline Turner, his predecessor who was in post for most of 2018/19, for her work and support over the course of the past two years. The Officer said that it was pleasing to be able to report on the progress made collectively across both Children and Adults' Services in this the fourth Annual Report which Anglesey has issued under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014. The good work in Children's Services has culminated in an inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales in 2018 which showed good progress but that this must continue on order to further strengthen services and practices.

Over the last 12 months there have been a number of developments within Children's Services of which the Service is proud including the underpinning of all work by the Improving Practice Quality Framework designed to govern and guide the workforce; the formulation of a Teulu Môn Engagement Strategy as well as the Stepping Forward Service which aims to further strengthen families who no longer require statutory support but continue to need guidance. The New Offer to Foster Carers employed by the Council has been implemented which it is hoped will increase the Council's ability to recruit foster carers and assist them to offer the best support to fostered children.

Likewise, Adults' Services have been able to make progress in their goal to support adults to remain independent in their own homes reflected in the opening of the new Hafan Cefni Extra Care Unit. In partnership with BCUHB, the Service has successfully commissioned new domiciliary care provision for residents from area based providers. Mental Health Support Services have strengthened their focus on helping individuals to improve their well-being through group health and fitness sessions and through engagement in sporting activities on their path to recovery.

Looking forward, whilst 2019/20 continues to hold further challenges for both Adults' Services and Children and Families' Services, it is considered that both services are well placed to meet them. The Social Services' staff were thanked for their work throughout the year and it was acknowledged that without their commitment and dedication, the many achievements to which the annual report is testament would not have been possible.

In considering the Annual Report, the Committee was agreed that in its message it notes many successes from which the Council can take assurance and encouragement. The Committee recognised that Social Services is a complex area where the challenges of a changing demographic, growing demand and cost pressures can be felt acutely and that securing progress and improvement is therefore an ongoing commitment. In the detailed discussion, the Committee raised the following matters –

- That under Measuring Quality Standard 3 it is noted that 79% of adults and carers and 81% of children in the Citizen Survey say that they feel safe. The Committee sought clarification of what these statistics say about the remaining 21% of adults and 11% of children and whether these individuals are at risk of slipping through the net and not being properly cared for.

The Interim Director of Social Services advised that the Citizen Survey allows respondents to remain anonymous if they so wish but in cases where respondents give their names and where it is within the Service's ability to bring influence to bear on their situation then the Service will contact the individual(s) in question. It is important to note that although the Service can and does endeavour to improve the lives of individuals, there are instances where despite the input and best efforts of the Service, individuals may not feel safe 100%

of the time which in the case of an older person might be due to anxiety about falling for example. The Service will listen to comments and where the opportunity arises will provide additional support e.g. to reduce the likelihood of a fall occurring.

- In acknowledging that Social Services face many challenges, the Committee sought clarification of the main challenges facing Adults' Services specifically.

The Interim Director of Social Services advised that the main challenge comes from the demographic change brought about by an ageing population and the potential increase in the number of people requiring social care which this might lead to in future. Getting the balance right between supporting individuals through preventative services via the community and recognising that some individuals whose needs are acute must be provided for appropriately is challenging. The challenge will be met most effectively through working in partnership with the University Health Board and with the Third and Independent Sectors and this is the approach going forwards with continued development of Community Resource Teams of health and social care to support people in their own local areas.

- In acknowledging the financial pressures on Children's Services as a result of the increase in the number of children and young people needing to be looked after, the Committee was concerned that Welsh Government may be bringing pressure to bear on local authorities to set a target for reducing the need for children to enter care. The Committee sought clarification of the Council's position on this approach.

The Portfolio Member for Social Services confirmed that it is Welsh Government's intention to work with each local council to appoint a target (albeit a soft target) to reduce the number of children in care. The Portfolio Member clarified that the Authority's view was that such an approach was not helpful and could be problematic since although the Authority would prefer it if children did not have to come into care in the first place, it is committed as a corporate parent to ensuring that all children are kept safe, and that where there is a need they are provided for appropriately; imposing a target in this way could deflect from this responsibility. That the Authority would therefore not be setting such a target had been communicated in a meeting of Social Services Portfolio Holders in Cardiff last week at which the Welsh Government's Minister, and Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services were in attendance. The Portfolio Member informed the Committee however that some authorities are going down the route of setting their own targets for reducing the number of children coming into their care

The Head of Children and Families' Services explained the Authority's current arrangements for reducing the number of children in care where it is safe to do so which includes reviewing the looked after child's situation at least twice a year to see if there is an alternative option. Whilst the Authority has a clear strategy to enable children to leave care it is less able to influence the number of children who require care. At the time of the meeting with Welsh Government Officials, all the children looked after by the Authority were in care because of a court order which means they were judged to be at risk of harm.

There was consensus among the Committee's members that setting a target for reducing the number of children coming into the Authority's care was a step regarding which they had serious reservations and was not an appropriate approach to addressing the issue of the growing number of looked after children to whom the Authority has a duty of care as being among the most vulnerable individuals in society. The Committee was of the view that once a target has been set, there is a danger that achieving the target rather than the best interests of the individual then becomes the focus of attention. The Committee indicated that it was happy with and had confidence in the Service's strategy for reducing the number of children in care, and was in agreement with the Portfolio Member that imposing a target should be resisted.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Dylan Rees proposed and was seconded, that the Committee notes that it is satisfied with the Department's reduction strategy plans for looked after children and believes that the Welsh Government's attempts to introduce targets would be counter-productive. The Committee therefore supports the decision not to introduce targets. The proposal was unanimously supported by the Committee.

It was resolved –

- **That the Corporate Scrutiny Committee accepts and notes the draft Isle of Anglesey County Council's Annual Director of Social Services' Report on the Effectiveness of Social Services in 2018/19 and that further, it notes that it is satisfied with the Department's reduction strategy plans for looked after children and believes that the Welsh Government's attempts to introduce targets would be counter-productive. The Committee therefore supports the decision not to introduce targets.**
- **That the Committee is satisfied that the report –**
 - **Captures the Council's current position with regards to delivering Social Services**
 - **Accurately reflects its improvement priorities for both Adults and Children and Families Services for the forthcoming year**
 - **Reflects the Council's accountability and responsibility with regard to its Social Services.**

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS RECOMMENDED.

4 ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19: LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

The Annual Report on the operation of the Social Services' statutory Representations and Complaints Procedure for the period from April, 2018 to the end of March, 2019 /19 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

In synopsis, the report showed that –

- A total of 212 positive comments were recorded during the year – a flavour of which was provided in the report (68 for Children and Families Services and 144 for Adults' Services) – a small decrease on the total of 232 in 2017/18 but higher than the 202 received in 2016/17.
- A total of 59 negative comments/concerns were logged by the Complaints Officer during the year – 49 for Children and Families Services (up from 32 in the previous year) and 10 for Adults' Services (down from 11 in the previous year). This should be looked at in the context of a decreasing number of official complaints which suggests that more concerns are being resolved informally avoiding escalation to Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure.
- A total of 44 Stage 1 complaints were recorded (51 in 2017/18) dividing into 14 for Adults' Services and 30 for Children and Families Services) and 8 Stage 2 investigations were carried out (9 in 2017/18) - 6 in Adults' Services and 2 in Children and Families Services.
- In respect of performance in responding to Stage 1 complaints within statutory timescales, in Children and Families Services 80% of complainants were offered a discussion (24 out of 30) within timescale which is slightly down on the 82% in 2017/18 whilst 57% (17 out of 30) received a written response within timescale which is a slight increase on the 55% in 2017/18. For Adults' Services, 92% of complainants were offered a

discussion within timescale (12 out of 14) which is up from 62% in 2017/18 and 64% received a written response within timescale (9 out of 14) which is up from 31% in 2017/18.

The Portfolio Member for Social Services said that the number of compliments received is very encouraging and is reflective of the improvements overall in Social Services; however this is not to disregard the fact that there have also been negative comments about aspects of services which Social Services will look at and learn from. The Designated Complaints Officer has put in place a process for ensuring that complaints are responded to in a consistent and timely way and much investment has also been made in Stage 1 of the process in local resolution of complaints.

The Interim Director of Social Services / Head of Adults' Services said that although response times have improved particularly in Adults' Services, the Service has set an objective of achieving a 100% response within timescale which it will work towards. An Action Plan has been formed to further strengthen complaints management during 2019/20 and is attached at Appendix 2 to the annual report.

The Committee in considering the report sought clarification of whether any of the complaints were workforce related and how would any such complaints be dealt with.

The Interim Director of Social Services / Head of Adults' Services said that any such complaints are addressed mainly at Team Manager level and support is provided to staff as part of the investigation process and their views are sought. An allegation relating to conduct or safeguarding could also be dealt with under the more formal safeguarding process – the Officer confirmed that no such matter had arisen in Adults' Services nor Children and Families' Services in 2018/19.

It was resolved –

- **To note the view of service users received during 2018/19 regarding the services provided by Social Services.**
- **To note the performance of Social Services in implementing the Representations and Complaints Procedure and in dealing with complaints.**
- **To note the Action Plan for developing the arrangements for dealing effectively with representations and complaints received from service users and their representatives.**

NO FURTHER ACTION WAS RECOMMENDED.

**Councillor Aled Morris Jones
Chair**