

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 19 April 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Robert Ll Jones (Chair)
Councillor Dyfed Wyn Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Geraint Bebb, Douglas M Fowlie, A M Jones, Llio A Owen, Dafydd Roberts, Keith Roberts, Sonia Williams and Arfon Wyn

Co-opted Member : Mr John Tierney (The Catholic Church)

Portfolio Members

Councillor Llinos Medi (Leader and Portfolio Member for Economic Development);

Councillor Robin Williams (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance);

Councillor Ieuan Williams (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Education and Welsh Language);

Councillor Carwyn Jones (Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience);

Councillor Gary Pritchard (Portfolio Member for Children, Youth & Housing Services);

Councillor Alun Roberts (Portfolio Member for Adult's Services and Community Safety);

Councillor Nicola Roberts (Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change);

Councillor Neville Evans (Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism and Maritime).

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive,
Director of Function (Resources)/Section 151 Officer,
Head of Profession (Human Resources) and Transformation),
Head of Democracy,
Head of Housing Services,
Interim Service Manager (Social Services) (SA),
Programme, Business Planning and Performance Manager (GM),
Scrutiny Manager (AGD),
Committee Officer (MEH).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Pip O'Neill (Member of the Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee) (in respect of Item 3).

APOLOGIES: Councillor Jackie Lewis;
Councillor Dafydd R Thomas (Portfolio Member for Highways,
Property & Waste);
Deputy Chief Executive;
Director of Social Services;
Head of Adult's Services.

The Chair welcomed the newly elected member Councillor Sonia Williams to the meeting.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the following previous meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee were confirmed as correct:-

- 28 February, 2023
- 14 March, 2023

3 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2023-28

The report of the Director of Social Services incorporating the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2028 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Portfolio Member for Children, Youth & Housing Services in presenting the report said that the role as corporate parenting is one of the most important role of an Elected Members. He noted that the corporate parenting refers to the shared responsibility across the Council to ensure that children and young people in the care or leaving care of the Council are supported to thrive. A good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child/young person in care, as a good parent would have for their own child. It is also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independently, whilst letting them know they have someone to call on for help if required. He further said that this is the first Corporate Parenting Strategy as the internal audit within the service identified the need for such strategy to be produced which will be for the next five years.

The Interim Service Manager reported that as part of the consultation process on the Corporate Parenting Strategy work was undertaken with the 'Voices from Care Cymru' who were in partnership with the Council at the time. He noted that the young people in care therefore have had input into the Strategy. He further said that a 'workshop' was undertaken in February with Elected Members and relevant Officers which enabled input into the Strategy. The Interim Service Manager further said that the Strategy sets out the aspirations of the Council for children and young people in care or leaving care.

In considering the report, the Committee discussed the following:-

- Questions raised as to how does the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy link to the Council Plan – 2023-2028? The Committee was advised that the Corporate Parenting Strategy has been produced in accordance with the priorities of the Council Plan and especially that the residence of Anglesey are healthy, prosperous and where people can thrive.
- Questions raised as to what are the resource implications of implementing the proposed Strategy and how affordable is this in the current climate? The Committee was advised that currently 150 children and young people are in care of the Authority with 70 young people to be leaving care. However, if there was a significant increase in the number of children and young people coming into care this would have an effect on the staffing of the service. The Interim Service Manager said that at present the number of children and young people in care is stable and this was reflected within the Care Inspectorate Wales inspection recently. The Portfolio Member for Children, Youth & Housing Services said that the Strategy strengthens that children and young people in care receive the same opportunities and able to thrive as other children and young people.
- Questions raised as to the risks faced by the Authority and what mitigation measures are proposed to minimise impact on the looked after children and young people? The Committee were advised that the increase in the number of children and young people into care would have an effect on the resources of the service. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is a tool to set out the aspirations of the service to improve the positive outcomes for the children and young people in care together with care leavers.
- Questions raised as to what impact will the strategy have upon the people of the Island? The Committee were advised that it will have a limited impact upon the people of the Island as it is primarily focused on the children and young people who are in care. The Interim Service Manager said that whilst outcomes are improving for young people, they are more likely to engage within the communities and economy of the Island.
- Reference was made as to the difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff within the care sector. Questions were raised as to how the challenges in recruiting and retention staff have an effect on the local authority to fully realise the Strategy. The Committee were advised that the recruitment and retention of staff within the care sector is one of the national challenges faced by local authorities in delivering services for children, young people and adults. The development, training and investment in the staff within the Social Services department has seen an increase in Qualified Social Workers. However, staffing within care sector is more of a challenge and work is currently being undertaken to address the issue to make a career in the care sector more attractive. The Portfolio Member for Children, Youth & Housing Services said that the Social Services Department is actively promoting career opportunities within the care sector with attending schools and video presentations to encourage young people to consider job opportunities within the care sector.

- Questions were raised as to whether children in care are performing as well in their education. The Committee was advised that historically, children in care tended not to perform as well academically as their peer. The Authority aims to reverse that trend; the Isle of Anglesey County Council has been identified as one of six pilot authorities which enables to offer a 'virtual school' to improve educational attainment and participation of the looked after children and this is having a positive impact. A Support Officer has been recently recruited to support young people to achieve to their best of their ability. It is also important to measure individual progress for children and young people who may not have had 'good enough' access to educational opportunities in the past.
- Reference made that the Corporate Parenting Strategy highlights 11 priorities, as shown within the report, Corporate Parents should be aware of a responsible parents. Questions were raised as to how these priorities can be achieved as especially priorities 2 and 3. The Committee was advised that the membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel entails Elected Members, Officers together with Officers from partnership organisations. It was noted that it is essential that the members of the Panel needs to be aware of the needs of children and young people in the care of the local authority and to have an understanding of the issues that they face on a daily basis. The Corporate Parenting Panel meet on a quarterly basis and received reports for scrutiny on educational attainment, fostering service and from the independent reviewing officers. Members of the Panel are able to requests reports on any themed issue they consider relevant for discussion.
- Questions were raised as to the provision for young people when they leave care? The Committee was advised that the Leaving Care Act 2000 identified the vulnerability of young people leaving care post 18 and sets out a host of responsibilities on local authorities to ensure that they receive support to become independent adults. Support is given to young people up to 25, however, support can be provided thereafter by the Adult's Services within local authorities. The Children & Families Service works in partnership with Adult Services in respect of some young people to promote smooth transition into adulthood.
- Questions were raised as to how the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Strategy will be monitored? The Committee was advised that the Corporate Parenting Panel will be monitoring the effectiveness of the Strategy.
- Reference was made to the Universal Basic Income pilot scheme in Wales. Questions were raised as to the entitlement of the Universal Basic Income for young people leaving care. The Committee was advised that the pilot scheme has worked well on Anglesey with young people being able to pay for educational courses and accommodation. However, the scheme will come to an end in June 2023 and it is anticipated that national discussions will be undertaken to evaluate the success of the scheme.

It was RESOLVED:-

- To confirm that the Committee is satisfied with the contents of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2028;
- To recommend to the Executive that the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2028 be approved.

4 SELF-ASSESSMENT IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS 2022

The report of the Head of Profession (Human Resources and Transformation incorporating the Self-Assessment Improvement Actions 2022 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Portfolio Member for Corporate Business and Customer Experience said that this is the first report of its kind recognising accomplishments against the self-assessment improvement actions for 2022. It provides an update against the relevant improvement actions agreed by the County Council at its meeting in October 2022. He noted that 2022 has been a challenging year with the Council having a new administration, a new leadership team and a new Strategic Plan for 2023-2028. Despite all the changes and development over the past 12 months, the Council continues to perform consistently, is meeting its expectations against the majority of the 2022 self-assessment improvement actions and is fulfilling its duties under the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. He noted that the indicators within the Corporate Scorecard are also performing well. Staff compliance with the Authority's policies have improved together with e-learning training and the annual appraisal have been undertaken with staff. The Corporate Safeguarding Board has received the outcomes of the service reviews and expected improvements. The main meetings of the Council are now hybrid meetings which are webcasted on the Council's website. The Portfolio Member further said that the work streams noted in the report at 1.4 will be considered by the Executive and should be included in the Corporate Self-Assessment for 2023.

In considering the report, the Committee discussed the following:-

- Questions raised as what role does the self-assessment play as part of the governance arrangements? The Committee was advised that the Self-Assessment fills its duties under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and states that public bodies should continuously reviews its performance effectively. The expectations of the Act is that an annual Self-Assessment report is created which addresses the matters that need to be improved. It was noted that over the last twelve months work has been undertaken to develop the Self-Assessment by submitting the document to the full Council on 30 September 2022 before inviting further comments by the Governance and Audit Committee on 20 October, 2022 and the final version was adopted by the County Council at its meeting held in October 2022.
- Questions raised as to whether amendments will need to be made by the Council to the Quarterly Monitoring Performance Scorecard to ensure it is aligned with the Self-Assessment? The Committee was advised that it is important that the Corporate Scorecard is developed continuously and a plan is in place to revise the Scorecard and comments will be sought from the Senior Leadership Team and Elected Members through the Group Leaders' meetings together with Elected Members Briefing Sessions. It was noted that there will be

a need to identify the requirements for self-assessment and it is important to recognise that the Scorecard will need to include how the Council is meeting its expectations which arises from the Act.

- Reference was made that the self-assessment referred to a number of areas that need to be further developed. Questions raised as to how will these streams be prioritised? The Committee was advised that the performance streams are monitored on a quarterly basis through the Programme Boards, Senior Leadership Team and the Executive. It was noted that this Committee has also a scrutiny role in measuring continuous performance within the work streams identified.

It was RESOLVED that the work streams at 1.4.1 – 1.4.8 within the report are still valid and should be included in the Corporate Self-Assessment for 2023.

5 NOMINATION TO THE SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

The report of the Scrutiny Manager was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Scrutiny Manager reported that one vacancy has arisen on the Social Services Scrutiny Panel/Corporate Parenting Panel as a result of Councillor Neville Evans recent appointment to the Executive.

It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Sonia Williams to serve on the Social Services Scrutiny Panel/Corporate Parenting Panel.

**COUNCILLOR ROBERT LLEWELYN JONES
CHAIR**