



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2017 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor L.J. Binding - Chair
Councillor Ms J. Gale - Vice Chair

Councillors:

C. Bezzina, D. Cushing, M. Evans, A. Gair, D.C. Harse, V. James, L. Jeremiah, B. Owen,
S. Skivens and C. Thomas

Cabinet Member: C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing)

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director - Children's Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director - Adult Services), B. Griffiths (Service Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), J. Morgan (Solicitor), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Co-opted Users and Carers: Mr C. Luke (Caerphilly People First)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors A. Angel, Miss E. Forehead, Mrs A. Leonard and J. Simmonds, together with Mrs E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection) and S. Millar (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES - 12TH SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12th September 2017 (minute nos. 1 - 10) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

The Scrutiny Committee received a verbal report from Councillor C. Cuss (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Wellbeing).

Members were informed that the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (Part 9) places a requirement on the Council to look regionally at establishing integrated commissioning and pooled funds in relation to care home placements. The pooling of budgets has been discussed by Cabinet who have expressed concerns around cross subsidisation, potential overspends in this financial climate and the level of financial risk. The Cabinet Member emphasised the Council's commitment towards collaborative working to improve outcomes for residents, explaining that that regional options will continue to be explored and that Members would be kept updated on progress.

It was noted that Councillor Cuss recently attended a WLGA Policy Forum for Social Services to examine the pressures in this particular service area. One discussion focused on improving outcomes for Looked After Children. Members were reminded of the increase and growing complexity in such cases across Caerphilly. This is also a problem at a national level and so a Ministerial Advisory Group has been established for Service Heads to highlight some of the pressures and challenges being faced across Wales.

Members were advised that a question and answer session was also held with the Minister for Social Services at the Policy Forum meeting. The implications of pooled budgets were raised and Councillor Cuss put forward his views on the proposals and his concerns over the purpose and governance of local accountability and cross subsidisation. There were also discussions about social care budgets and financial pressures.

The Cabinet Member also recently attended the 40th Anniversary celebrations for Brondeg Day Centre in Blackwood and was pleased to hear the numerous stories from service users and staff.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for his informative report. There were no questions received on its contents.

6. HEALTH SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND CO-OPTED MEMBER CANDIDATES

Mrs Cath Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) presented the report which detailed the forward work programme for the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

Members were asked to consider the work programme and to make any amendments or for additional agenda items to be included for future meetings. It was agreed that a Gwent VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) Strategy report be added for 20th March 2018 (prior to its presentation to Cabinet) and that the How Schools Engage with Healthy Living report (listed under date to be confirmed) be scheduled for 20th March 2018.

It was agreed that subject to the foregoing amendments, the final version of the Forward Work Programme be published on the Council's website.

Members were also asked to endorse two proposed candidates for appointment to the vacant co-opted positions on the Scrutiny Committee. In line with the process adopted by Council at its Annual General Meeting on 18th May 2017, a letter was circulated by GAVO (on behalf of the Council) to organisations representing users and carer groups in the county borough. The groups were invited to nominate persons for the two vacant positions and seven nominations were received.

It was explained that Mrs Michelle Jones (Caerphilly Parent Network) and Ms Jill Lawton (Caerphilly Mind) were selected for interview, which took place on 22nd September 2017. The interview panel comprised the Chair, Vice-Chair and an Independent member of the Committee, who unanimously agreed to recommend both nominees to be appointed to the Scrutiny Committee. It was explained that the co-opted members will be appointed until the end of the current council term (May 2022) when the positions will be re-advertised (although this does not preclude existing co-opted members from re-applying). The co-opted members are expected to sign up to an agreed code of conduct (which was appended to the report) and will be entitled to training and development opportunities to support their role.

Following consideration of the report, the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed the appointment of Mrs Jill Lawton (representative of Caerphilly Mind) and Ms Michelle Jones (representative of Caerphilly Parent Network) as co-opted members until May 2022 and subject to their acceptance of the co-opted member code of conduct.

7. CABINET REPORT

The Cabinet report listed on the agenda had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

8. SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTED TRANSPORT POLICY

Becky Griffiths (Service Manager) presented the report, which sought the views of Members on the proposed Assisted Transport Policy for Adult Social Services, prior to it being presented to Cabinet for consideration.

Members were advised that assisted transport is the discretionary provision of transport by Social Services to enable individuals to access the community support service for which individuals have been assessed as eligible to attend (such as day services). The policy has been drafted as a result of legislation which requires Council to change the way it works with people and to promote a focus on actively supporting people to develop lifestyles that are not reliant on statutory services.

Officers explained that the aim of the new Assisted Transport policy is to provide a clear framework for practitioners to assess and support individuals to identify methods of promoting independence when accessing transport. The policy will help identify what is available within the local community and provide a consistent approach to determining eligibility for funded transport where it has been identified as a requirement to access services commissioned by Social Services. The policy framework will also work in parallel with other Social Services policies for transport across the Gwent region.

The report proposed the implementation of the policy from 1st January 2018 for all new requests for transport made to Adult Social Services, and for it to be applied to the annual review of the care and support plan for existing service users. The key elements of the policy were outlined within the report and Members were referred to the report appendices which contained an easy read version and full version of the policy.

Clarification was sought on the criteria and assessment process for assisted transport. Officers explained that the individual's support networks would be examined in the first instance, and if they have difficulty accessing these services then the Council will consider if they are able to provide transport. Discussion took place regarding the consideration of public transport within the assessment process, and assurances were given that practitioners will examine all options available (such as whether the community support service is a safe and reasonable distance via public transport) and that all assessments would be carried out on a case by case basis. It was confirmed that the Council's Integrated Transport Unit communicates with local bus companies regarding relevant routes and that the Council will look at other options available if there are changes to these routes that may affect the individual's ability to access community support.

A Member referred to a combination of transport options already utilised by some service users and welcomed the opportunities for independence and choice arising from the new policy. Discussion took place regarding transport arrangements across other authorities and it was confirmed that the same set of principles is being applied on a region-wide basis. In response to a Member's query, it was also confirmed that arrangements are in place (via separate policies across other Council departments) for service users to access transport in order to attend college or other training.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendation be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Assisted Transport Policy as appended to the report be endorsed.

9. ROTA VISITS BY MEMBERS TO SOCIAL SERVICES ESTABLISHMENTS: 1ST APRIL 2016 – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2016 AND 1 ST OCTOBER 2016 – 31ST MARCH 2017

Jo Williams (Assistant Director - Adult Services) presented the report, which provided the Scrutiny Committee with information on rota visits completed by Members to Social Services establishments between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017, in order to enable Members to make a decision in respect of the future of rota visits.

The Scrutiny Committee were reminded of the previous reduction in the frequency of rota visits to internal CCBC residential establishments to six monthly intervals, which were put on hold in March 2017 until after the local elections. Officers outlined the significant amount of administrative time involved in co-ordinating these rota visits and referred to data within the report which outlined a low level of attendance over the past few years. It was noted that only two councillors regularly attended these visits and that the one is no longer a councillor.

Members were advised that all registered establishments are regulated and inspected by CSSIW, and monitoring visits are also undertaken by internal contract monitoring staff. Members were made aware of the other avenues available to them in order to visit these residences, including open days and attendance to these establishments on ward business.

In response to Members' queries, Officers outlined the assessments that are undertaken in relation to internal contract monitoring and CSSIW inspections and summarised the difference between the two processes. Assurances were given that internal contract monitoring is carried out on a regular basis and the frequency of monitoring visits is increased in the event

of any concerns being raised. Members suggested that any concerns or issues could also be raised directly through the local ward member or fed back through community councillors, and asked whether they would be able to visit residential establishments in their ward without prior appointment if they were in the area. They were encouraged to give advance notice to the establishment manager wherever possible in order for them to be properly accommodated during their visit.

A query was received as to whether a synopsis of the internal contract monitoring visits could be made available as a substitute for rota visits, in order to provide reassurance to the Scrutiny Committee that quality standards in relation to registered establishments are being maintained. Officers confirmed that this could be arranged as an information item for the Scrutiny Committee and placed on the Members' Portal.

Having considered the report, Members unanimously agreed that the formal councillor rota visits be discontinued and that a synopsis of the internal contract monitoring visits be scheduled as a regular information item for the Scrutiny Committee.

10. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – SERVICE PRESSURES

Gareth Jenkins (Assistant Director - Children's Services) presented the report, which provided Members with an overview of challenges being faced across Children's Services particularly in relation to Looked After Children and the increased pressure on placements.

The Scrutiny Committee were provided with a comprehensive overview of the Social Work processes relating to 'edge of care' family support services, Looked After Children (LAC) and court proceedings under the Public Law Outline (PLO), and the increased pressure on placements with the associated rise in budget spend. Until Autumn 2016, Caerphilly's LAC population was relatively stable (averaging around 276 cases) but since that time, the number of LAC has increased significantly by nearly 30% to 358 and the complexity of the children and young people being cared for has also increased. As a result, Children's Services is currently projecting an overspend of £2.75m on children's placements.

Members were reminded of the three key priorities identified within the Children's Services' Commissioning Strategy (to support families to stay together, to manage risk confidently and provide support at the 'edge of care' and to give children and young people clearly planned 'journeys through care'). It was emphasised to Members that the Council do everything to keep families together wherever it is safe to do so but ultimately has a statutory duty to protect vulnerable children from harm. Despite constant recruitment activity, Caerphilly has experienced a loss in the number of foster carers, whilst increased demand has resulted in all in-house and in-county provision being filled. As a result, the Council is reliant on out of area Independent Fostering Area (IFA) placements which have a greater cost attached than in-house services.

Caerphilly is also seeing an increase in more challenging behaviours in younger children, leading to increasing numbers of foster placements breaking down and resulting in children having to be moved to new carers or to residential care. Older children and young people can display extremely challenging behaviours that place themselves and others at risk, and so residential care is often the only viable option. In-house residential provision at Ty Ni Children's Home is consistently full, which places increased reliance on the independent sector. If children and young people experience placement breakdowns in residential care, this often leads to the need for more specialised placements at even higher cost.

Changes to legislative and judicial requirements have increased the pressures on the Council. More children are being placed under care orders as a result of the Public Law Outline (PLO) in 2014 and the resultant judicial involvement in Local Authority Care Planning. Legal proceedings in Caerphilly increased by almost 60% in 2016 and year to date trends are demonstrating even higher rates in 2017, which is representative of the situation across the

UK. Social workers and lawyers are also under increasing pressure due to the average length of court proceedings reducing to between 23 and 24 weeks. However, Members were asked to note that Caerphilly has an excellent reputation within the region, which provides a level of protection for practitioners, and it is vitally important that this position and reputation is maintained.

Members noted the details of the current profile across each placement type and associated costs as contained within the report, together with details of potential reasons for increased demand (such as austerity, societal changes, Welsh Government initiatives and changes to the judicial system). Officers outlined the Council's response to this demand, including quality assurance and decision scrutiny by senior management and investment in staff training to implement a risk assessment framework (the Risk Model), an advertising drive to recruit more foster carers, and the establishment of the Caerphilly MIST support service to specialised therapeutic foster carers.

The Scrutiny Committee were asked to be mindful of the financial pressures around Children's Services, especially in relation to 'edge of care' services. It will be critical to protect WG grant funding for these services within the Council's budget allocation, to ensure the investment in the existing service is able to continue. The Council is already committed to the investment in Caerphilly MIST which requires a ten-year commitment in order to deliver the desired outcomes. Consideration also needs to be given to investing in additional residential provision within Caerphilly (to reduce out of area placements and costs), together with those costs associated with radio foster carer recruitment campaign costs and a review of foster carer fees and allowances.

Members thanked the Officer for his comprehensive report and clarification was sought regarding the overspend to date. It was explained that the overspend will be met from existing service reserves but that there will be a need to incorporate this amount into budgets in future years (either through further investment or through reductions in other Social Services areas). Work is also ongoing to bring one looked after child back into the area, which will significantly reduce associated costs. Members discussed the need for investment in additional residential provision and of the savings that could be made with regards to out of area costs. Discussion also took place regarding the competitive nature of foster carer fees payable by other providers and it was confirmed that this matter will be raised nationally through the Ministerial Advisory Group.

In response to a Member's query, the Officer summarised the regional working approach that is being developed with other authorities and also responded to queries in respect of court costs and Officer workloads. A Member suggested that it would be useful for LAC case studies to be included in the report to demonstrate the cost of particular scenarios.

Having fully considered the report, Members noted its contents, including the pressures being experienced in Children's Services and the associated financial implications.

The meeting closed at 6.54 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR