



SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 8TH MARCH 2022 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Cushing –Chair

Councillors:

A. Angel, C. Bezzina (Vice Chair), D. Cushing (Chair), M. Evans, A. Gair, A. Leonard, C. Thomas, W. Williams.

Cabinet Member: S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Housing).

Together with:

Officers: D. Street (Corporate Director- Social Services and Housing), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director–Children’s Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director- Adult Services), S. Issacs (Rents Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), S. Jones (Supporting People Manager), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), I. Richards (Business Improvement Officer), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), M. Harris (Committee Support Officer), J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer).

Users and Carer: C. Luke, J. Pritchard

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council’s website – [Click Here To View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J. Bevan, K. Etheridge, V. James, L. Jeremiah, J. Stone, C Bishop, D. Harse, S. Skivens and Co- Opted Member P. Cook.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 25TH JANUARY 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 25th January 2022 (minute nos. 1-6) be approved and signed

as a correct record.

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. SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer introduced the report that informed the Committee of its Forward Work Programme planned for the period April 2022 to June 2022.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

6. CABINET REPORT

There had been no requests for the Cabinet report to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SIX MONTH UPDATE

The Cabinet Member introduced the report which informed Members the Performance Assessment is the Directorate's self-assessment and forms part of the Council's overall self-assessment activity. It provides information and analysis for the 6-month period April – September 2021.

A Co-Opted Member expressed their concerns regarding the number of people who were waiting provision of a care packages. Clarification was sought on the types of care packages that are currently not being provided.

The Corporate Director advised the Members, staff resources are limited, therefore all referrals are risk assessed and prioritised. Therefore, lower-level support needs and users that have family support are the areas that are currently being affected due to lack of capacity.

The Assistant Director of Adult Services expanded on the points raised by the Corporate Director in order to provide greater clarity to the Scrutiny Committee. It was explained the numbers of users awaiting care packages changes on a regular basis with 80% being in the community and 20% in hospitals. Officers recognised the impact on those families that are currently supporting individuals on the waiting list and assurances were given that work is being carried out to address these issues. Members were asked to note that the allocation of packages can only be provided in the geographical area that the hours become available. Members were advised that the domiciliary care sector as a whole was struggling with limited resources and that this was a national issue. Officers explained that this is a very difficult and challenging time and work is underway with the independent sector.

Further information was sought by the Chair on whether the private sector was experiencing the same recruitment issues. It was confirmed this was the case and with the added issue regarding the rise in fuel prices this was causing a greater problem.

Discussion took place and queries raised by Members on the impact the pandemic has had on children and young people being referred to Children's Services. Members also discussed staff absence figures and whether it was area of concern for the service area.

The Assistant Director of Children Services advised Members that no packages within Children Services were not being given. However, the complexity needs of the children that the service is being presented with and the challenges that they're presenting have increased significantly. As a result, the costs of their care are increasing. The impact on young people during the pandemic has had a negative effect on them, as they have lost the social networks around them.

The Corporate Director advised Members in relation to staff sickness absence the issue is being monitored closely. Short term sickness absence is lower than long term sickness absence. Members were assured Managers are working closely with affected staff to support them and get them back into the work environment. The Council work closely with the Care First programme and staff are encouraged to use this service along with their unions.

Following consideration and discussion the report was noted.

8. HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMME STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member introduced the report which informed the Scrutiny Committee Members of the current Housing Support Programme Strategy for the period 2022-2026 as required by Welsh Government to outline the single strategic view of Caerphilly's approach to Homelessness Prevention and Housing Support Services. The purpose of the report was to seek Scrutiny Members views prior to Cabinet. Members were requested to consider the strategy and agree with its single strategic direction for housing related support and homelessness prevention.

The Supporting People Manager Shelly Jones provided the Members with an in-depth presentation on the Housing Support Programme Strategy. The Members were given information on the history of Supporting People and Housing Support explaining there are on average 4000 people being supported at any one time. Members were informed there were 247 units currently in place. These are broken down into 7 different types of units which are, Temporary/Supported Accommodation, Mental Health, Substance and/or alcohol abuse, Refuge provision, young people, a property for larger families fleeing domestic abuse and Emergency Accommodation.

Members were advised the 4 principles of the programme are:

1. Access to support services is swift and transparent and partners will work to prevent homelessness where possible.
2. Working to ensure everyone has access to fair suitable accommodation that is affordable sustainable and energy efficient.
3. Access to advice and assistance is readily available across a number of platforms for people to be able to understand what Housing related rights they have and what support services are available to allow them to have access to good quality housing and related support.
4. Relevant pathways for signposting are in place to allow access to information so people are empowered to, where viable, support themselves.

The presentation also covered the Strategic Priorities which Members were informed are:

1. Adopt a Rapid Rehousing Approach
2. End Rough Sleeping
3. Increase Early Intervention and Targeted Prevention
4. Invest in workforce Development.

Members were advised feedback from Stakeholders identified there is a lack of accommodation in several areas including housing stock, specifically one and two bed properties and supported accommodation for people in various areas. There is also a lack of gender specific supported accommodation for women with multi trauma including exploitation. The Stakeholder feedback also identified there was an issue with staffing due to it becoming increasingly more difficult to attract and retain staff in the area of support.

The presentation also highlighted up to the end of 2021 the service has helped to reduce debt within our communities by £302,374 and increased income by £2,065,424. These figures show the hard work that the service providers put in with individuals to help them maintain their homes and to prevent homelessness.

Members noted there has been a total of 4872 outcomes reported for the period July-December 2022, which was an increase of 160 outcomes for the same period in 2019. Following analysis, it has been identified there are increases in support to several client groups. Two of these groups included families with support needs has increased from 167 to 183 and people with chronic illness has increased from 79 to 94. The analysis had also identified reductions in several areas of client groups such as people with learning disabilities and people with substance misuse issues – Drugs and Alcohol.

The Chair thanked the Officer, and the presentation was noted.

Discussion took place regarding methods of modular constructions. A Co-opted Member asked whether they had been considered as solution to the issue of the lack of one and two bed accommodation. Members were advised there are currently 4 units within the land of one of the emergency and supported accommodation developments. More of these types of units are currently being considered for the future.

A Member sought clarification and further information on a section of the report which read;

‘Caerphilly has an above average proportion of Lower Super Output Areas with three wards in the top 7 (increased crisis and geographical support workers)’.

The Officer stated a lot of this information was pulled from a wider data source. Therefore, would forward the information on following the meeting.

Mr C. Luke wanted to thank the team for all the work hard work they are undertaking.

Members requested the presentation be circulated following the meeting.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report, Members consider the strategy and agreed with its single strategic direction for housing related support and homelessness prevention.

9. CAERPHILLY CARES YEAR ONE EVALUATION

The Cabinet Member introduced the report which provided the Scrutiny Committee Members with an update on progress and a first-year evaluation of the Caerphilly Cares Service as a follow up to the report received by Scrutiny Committee on the 2nd February 2021.

The Community Regeneration Manager Tina McMahon provided the Members with a presentation which gave Members a brief outline on Caerphilly Cares advising Members the primary purpose of the programme is engaging with residents to provide help and support. Since being launched in April 2021 there have been several processes established to promote the service such as Member's seminars, a community services directory has been created and a 'What Matters' briefing session has been developed for staff.

The Members noted the purpose of Caerphilly Cares being in place and how it has evolved into three key interconnected areas which are:

- Caerphilly Cares Gateway – Direct Support for Vulnerable People
- Strengthening communities – where approaches involve building on community capacities to take action together
- Volunteering, including corporate volunteering

Members noted Caerphilly Cares Gateway has received over 1200 calls and 500 emails asking for help. The team has made 330 referrals to the appropriate partners and services. Over 850 of the calls received have been direct from residents who would not have normally contact the Council and have learned about the Service over the past several months. This is important as it shows the message of Caerphilly Cares is getting out into the communities. There have been several key themes identified over the past year from the people who have been supported such as financial insecurity, mental health, bereavement, drug and alcohol dependencies, fibromyalgia, obesity, isolation and domestic abuse.

Members were advised to date the focus has predominately been within the Housing and Social Services area. This is due to the pandemic and the issues that have been presented since January 2021. The Housing Team have supported 788 eligible residents in gaining additional income in-excess of £3,000,000. The Rents Manager Mrs Sandra Isaacs advised Members the Service operates a proactive approach to maximise income. The Service providers have access to several systems which can identify people that are not claiming all they are entitled to. The additional income that residents do not realise they are entitled to can be life changing and prevent them moving into a crisis situation.

Members were advised Caerphilly Cares works closely with the Community Connectors, IAA Duty Team, Mental Health Multi- Disciplinary Teams and Customer Service Team to ensure that people receive the appropriate support at the appropriate time.

Caerphilly Cares also supports all the volunteering agenda such as the Buddy Scheme which was set up at the beginning of that pandemic this has now been handed over to Caerphilly Cares to transfer into a volunteering programme which has progressed into a successful programme with both staff and community volunteers.

Members were advised if Caerphilly Cares had not been implemented the pressure on Council Services is likely to have been far greater. Over 1700 people are likely to have 'slipped through the net', 788 people would not have had their income maximised and over 2000 people would not have had food.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the presentation. Discussion ensued.

Discussions took place around the work being carried out by Caerphilly Cares traditionally being carried out by voluntary organisations such as GAVO and organisations such as the

Citizen Advice Bureau. A Co-opted Member sought clarification on whether Caerphilly Cares were now carrying out those roles and examples of what services are provided. Members were advised Caerphilly Cares do not directly provide the service they are in place to ensure all the Services are aware of each other. When developing the Service, it identified people at numerous interventions across the Council and Partner Organisations each not being aware of the services that were being provided to an individual from the other which can be very confusing to the individual. Caerphilly Cares is essentially a single point of contact to look at the holistic support.

The Service will maintain contact with an individual who is referred to either a voluntary sector or possibly the Citizens Advice Bureau to ensure they have engaged with the service they have been referred. Members were advised GAVO are a key partner who have a part funded post with Caerphilly Cares.

Discussion also took place regarding food banks and whether there were any located in the Upper Rhymney Valley area. Members were advised there are a considerable number of food banks or fareshare distribution centres. There are also social supermarkets across the County Borough. In the North of the Borough there is the Rhymney food bank, White Rose Centre and there's also the fareshare in St Gladys Church, Bargoed.

Members were also informed, at the beginning of the pandemic they found it helpful to have a link to all the food banks. Therefore, there is now an Officer in post through funding from the Food Security Grant from Welsh Government to bring all the food projects together.

Following consideration and discussion the report and presentation were noted.

Members were advised that the Chair had lost connectivity and in the absence of the Vice Chair, nominations were sought for a presiding Chair to formally close the meeting, it was moved and seconded that Councillor W. Williams act as Chair and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

Councillor Williams declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 7.19 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 14th June 2022.

CHAIR