



SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 14TH JUNE 2022 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Cushing –Chair

Councillors:

C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Petitt, M. Chacon-Dawson (Vice-Chair), R. Chapman, P. Cook, K. Ethridge, M. Evans, D. Harse, T. Heron, L. Jeremiah, D. Preece, J. A. Pritchard, S. Skivens.

Cabinet Member: Councillor E. Forehead, S. Cook, J. Simmonds, J. Pritchard, C. Andrews.

Together with:

Officers: D. Street (Corporate Director- Social Services and Housing), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director–Children’s Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director- Adult Services), M. Jones (Financial Services Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer).

Users and Carer: Vacant

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council’s website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors D. Price and J. Rao.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 8TH MARCH 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 8th March 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

Cath Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report that informed the Committee of its Forward Work Programme planned for the period April 2022 to March 2023. The Scrutiny Manager referred to a request made by Councillor K. Etheridge to add additional items to the Social Services Forward Work Plan. Councillor K. Etheridge addressed the Scrutiny Committee requesting a presentation from the Consultant carrying out the consultation in relation to Operation of Day Centres in the next Scrutiny Committee meeting being held on the 26th July, 2022 which would outline the status of the review. The Councillor also requested that the Council consider issuing an email in relation to the timetable. The Councillor also requested the Scrutiny Committee Members support for a report on an update in relation to the Delayed Discharges of Care from Hospitals, which would include the cost on resources, time scales, the mechanisms in place for assessments, communication and any improvement plans to be presented in the September Scrutiny meeting. It was also requested that the Scrutiny Committee consider having a Member of the Health Board present to talk to the subject in the future.

A Member sought information on whether Day Care Service provision has increased the hours available to services users since the relaxation in COVID restrictions from Welsh Government. The Corporate Director for Social Services & Housing, Dave Street confirmed every opportunity to increase capacity is always taken. However, there hasn't been any significant increases, this is not due to restrictions it is primarily due to the work force issues. The Members were reminded COVID has not gone away, and the service area is still sizably impacted by staff self-isolating.

Dave Street agreed to the additional items requested from Councillor K. Etheridge be added to the Forward Work Programme.

Following consideration of the report, and subject to the additional reports proposed, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

Subject to the inclusion of additional reports highlighted at the meeting, it was 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. ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2021-2022

Councillor E. Forehead, the Cabinet Member for Social Care, introduced the report which provided Members with the 2021-2022 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Board Report and the Forward Work Programme. The Committee were advised that Audit Wales had undertaken a follow up review of the Corporate Safeguarding arrangements in Caerphilly and in response the Corporate Safeguarding Board developed an Action Plan, which addressed both the strategic recommendations and the areas of good practice for consideration which Audit Wales identified in the review. The Scrutiny Committee were informed this Action Plan was completed during 2021 and agreement had been given for it to be replaced by a Forward Work Programme.

The Assistant Director - Head of Children's Services Gareth Jenkins, advised Members of the Scrutiny Committee that it was important to note that Corporate Safeguarding and Operational Safeguarding are two totally separate arrangements and only the Corporate Safeguarding had been reviewed by Audit Wales. There were no concerns with the way in which Operational Safeguarding is currently operating.

The Officer advised all Members of the Scrutiny Committee to familiarise themselves with the Corporate Safeguarding Policy which can be found on the Councils Website. [Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#)

A Member referred the Committee and Officers to section 5.3 and 5.4 of Appendix 1 which referred to agreed recommendations to continue the positive work into 2021/22 and overall progress to date. Clarification was sought on whether the recommendation included had been carried out and if so whether the basic awareness video had been made available. The Officer assured the Scrutiny Committee this had been completed in the Summer of 2021 and had been made available in September 2021. The Scrutiny Committee were advised there was a link to this on the Corporate Safeguarding page on the Councils Website. Members were also advised that the Annual Safeguarding Report would be made available on the Website once it has been approved.

The Chair raised a query in relation to 5.6.C of Appendix 1 which referred to a recommendation on work to acquire a Learning Management System (LMS). The query raised was how the consortium of the four Local Authorities had been formed and it was explained that grant funding had been made available from Welsh Government. To access the grant funding there had to be a consortium of 2 or more Local Authorities. There is already a link between Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly as we currently share a Work Force Development Team so this was the first obvious choice. Caerphilly also offered all the neighbouring Local Authorities the opportunity and Merthyr Tydfil wanted to take part. Carmarthenshire heard about the work and requested to be part of the Pilot. The Officer advised the Scrutiny Committee the system has the potential to develop into a national system and other Authorities can join at any time in the future.

The Officer provided an update to the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the current consultation in relation to the National Safeguarding Framework which is due to close in June. The Local and Regional Safeguarding Leads are involved with consulting with Staff to produce the Framework. Robust feedback will be given once the consultation is complete. The Framework is expected to be implemented from November. A Member raised a query as to whether the training would be tested for effectiveness before it is implemented. The Officer assured Members as part of the development process of the online training it has to be tested, therefore by the time the version of the training is ready for Local Authorities to consider there has to be confidence that it has gone through a robust development process. There are concerns that the online training that has been already developed by Caerphilly will be better in terms of being able to make local connections in the way that national frameworks may not be able to do.

In response to The Chair's requested for an update on Corporate Safeguarding on a Regional Basis. The Scrutiny Committee were advised the overall aim is that the five Gwent Local

Authorities work together, to have consistency. Corporate Safeguarding is one area where the learning can be shared. The Local Authorities are responsible to a Regional Safeguarding Board, which is a Statutory Board therefore, aligning as many processes as possible with the five Local Authorities is beneficial. This is an on growing process and a further update will be given in the next Annual Report.

Having fully considered the report, the Social Services Scrutiny Committee noted the contents.

8. ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED UNDER THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS POLICY DURING 2021/2022

Councillor E Forehead the Cabinet Member for Social Care introduced the report which provided the Scrutiny Committee Members with information and analysis on the operation of the Social Services Directorate's Representations and Complaints procedure from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report also includes a summary of the compliments received in the same period. The Members were informed representations and complaints relating to Social Services are dealt with by the Directorate's Complaints and Information Team, who also record compliments received.

Councillor E. Forehead was pleased to note that the vast majority of complaints were resolved at stage 1 of the process with a very small number progressing to stage 2.

A Member referred the Committee and Officers to 5.31 of the report which referred to a survey which took place in 2021 which sought feedback on their experience of the Supporting Family Change (SFC) Team. The Member sought further information on how the survey was carried out. The Member also requested a brief explanation of what Supporting Family Change is. The Officer advised the Scrutiny Committee the survey was carried out via Snap, which can be accessed through a variety of means. The Officer did not have all the details to hand but would provide the Scrutiny Committee with the information at a later date. The Officer explained to the Members that Supporting Family Change is an early intervention and prevention team, which is funded through the Families First Grant. To access the grant funding, Welsh Government require the Local Authority to have a Team around the Family Team (TAF). Within Caerphilly, the TAF is called Supporting Family Change. It is a team dedicated to working on family needs such as parenting skills and behavioural support, for families who are on the cusp of requiring Local Authority Services, such as Care and Support, Child Protection or Accommodation. The team is in place to work with lower- level requirements, trying to prevent the requirement for statutory services.

Following consideration and discussion the report was noted.

9. 2022/23 SOCIAL SERVICES REVENUE BUDGET

Councillor E. Forehead the Cabinet Member for Social Care introduced the report which provided the Scrutiny Committee Members with details of the 2022-2023 revenue budget for service areas within Social Services and also outlined the reasons for movements in the revenue budget since 2021-2022. The Members were also provided with an overview of the corporate context within which the 2022/23 revenue budget has been set and the considerations on how the budget has been shaped by the Directorate's financial performance in 2021/22. It also gave the Members the Welsh Government's response to the financial pressures faced within the social care sector across Wales.

In response to a Member's query, the Scrutiny Committee were advised that a standard Contract Policy is in place for external care providers who have received contracts from the Local Authority. When any external site is visited, an Officer has to be shown evidence the staff are being paid appropriately. Dave Street confirmed that the 4% increase will not be

enough and there will be no further monies made available. Further information will be provided on the Integrated Care Fund at the next Scrutiny Meeting following discussions with the Regional Boards.

The Assistant Director Adult Services, Jo Williams, responded to the query regarding Frailty Resources, which is now called Community Resource Team (CRT's). The team is primarily in place to try to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions. There are various projects on going, such as direct access from GP's, hot clinics, which allow Consultants to make medical appointments which links to the rapid response medical care at home. The Officer advised there will be a report submitted in the September Scrutiny Committee Meeting covering off these items.

A Member queried whether the uplift in Children Services would be sufficient following the negative affect on children during the pandemic as this is such a vast area of concern. The Financial Services Manager advised Members within the Corporate Budget there is still £1.9million being held in a contingency fund in case of further increases in demand across social care, which can be used if required.

Following a query from a Scrutiny Member Dave Street advised the Scrutiny Committee, money given to the Local Authority from Welsh Government was passed to agencies and private providers as a way of uplifting fees. Therefore, the hourly rates the external employers charged Caerphilly Borough Council increased to allow them to pay more money to their staff. Welsh Government have very clear expectations that the Local Authority will ensure the external employers comply. The Officer explained that the Local Authority have a responsibility that when they are in those private settings, they request evidence that staff are receiving a real living wage. The Officer also recognised that even though £9.90 per hour is a step in the right direction, the hourly rate would need to be increased dramatically in the near future to retain staff.

The Officer responded to a question's raised by Members of the Scrutiny as to what strategies are currently in place to retain staff. It was explained that the Authority have a range of strategies over and above what the staff are paid, with an extensive terms and conditions package. However, staff recruitment and retention is an issue. The Office advised there will be a report brought to the Scrutiny Committee in the future, regarding the pressures across the services. The Scrutiny Committee Members noted the Corporate Director for Social Services & Housing's concerns regarding members of staff potentially looking for alternative employment due to the increase in fuel costs. The Officer advised the Members they are currently working with the Chief Executive and the HR on a solution to this issue. Jo Williams advised Member's that there is a significant amount of work currently being undertaken with secondary schools, colleges and universities. Videos were produced during COVID from staff currently working within the care setting to educate pupils on the career opportunities within care. Colleges have also been approached to obtain casual workers, who have capacity to cover in the summer holidays. Work is also being carried with universities regarding the content of their courses.

Following consideration and discussion the report was noted.

The meeting closed at 6.51 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th July 2022.

CHAIR