



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY 2014 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Ackerman - Chairman

Councillors:

A.P. Angel, Mrs G. Bevan, Mrs P. Cook, Mrs E.J. Gale, N. George, C. Gordon,
Mrs P.A. Griffiths, G.J. Hughes, J.A. Pritchard.

Cabinet Member: Councillor R. Woodyatt, Cabinet Member for Social Services.

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director Children Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), S. Harris (Acting Head of Corporate Finance), I. Richards (Performance Development Officer), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

Users & Carers: Mr C. Luke and Mrs M. Veater.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs E.M. Aldworth, Mrs B.A. Jones and S. Morgan, Mrs B. Bolt and Mrs S. Crane (ABHB).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G. J. Hughes sought clarification on whether he should declare an interest in agenda item 7(4). He was advised that the report relates to foster carers employed by the Local Authority and was not therefore applicable to his circumstances.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman: -

1. Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2013 (minute nos. 1-14; page nos. 1-5).
2. Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 11th December 2013 (minute nos. 1-3; page nos. 1-5).

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

Councillor Robin Woodyatt, Cabinet Member for Social Services, expressed his appreciation of the support and understanding that had been shown to him and his family during their recent very sad loss.

Since the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee Jo Williams had been appointed as Assistant Director for Adult Services and Members and Officers congratulated Jo on her appointment and wished her well for the future.

Councillor Woodyatt advised that this evening's meeting would primarily focus on performance as well as providing Members with an update on the Directorate's financial position and highlighting two significant issues for Children's Services.

A number of key inspections will be taking place in the near future. In March this year, CSSIW will be undertaking an inspection on services for Looked After Children in the Authority and this will be followed by a Wales Audit Office (WAO) inspection into Safeguarding Children. In the last week WAO had also notified the Authority that an inspection on financial planning would be undertaken in Social Services. The final reports on the inspections would be brought before the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation and invited questions from Members. Arising from a query raised by a Member in relation to the proposed increase in the charge for meals provided by the Meals on Wheels service, the Cabinet Member explained that all the proposals are subject to ongoing discussions and a report will be presented to Council in February.

6. CABINET REPORTS

There had been no requests for the Cabinet report "Recruitment of Approved Mental Health Professionals - Payment of Market Supplement" to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

SCRUTINY REPORTS

Consideration was given to the following.

7. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - PRESENTATION

The Corporate Director Social Services referred to the performance information, which had been emailed to Members in advance of the meeting. The Assistant Director Adult Services and the Assistant Director Children's Services presented an overview of the information contained therein.

With regard to Adult Services, Members were informed that the improvement in the figures for the national performance indicators SCA/001 and SCA/002a was attributed to the impact of

the Frailty programme. In terms of the local performance indicator ASPI 02, it was noted that the preliminary result for January shows that this had reduced to 89. The figure for ASPI 03 had also reduced. As far as ASPI 17 and 18 were concerned, officers advised that there had been a significant improvement in both of these and the result for ASPI 42 was also very positive.

With regard to Children's Services, Members' attention was drawn to the following: SCC/002 - The percentage of LAC with one or more changes of school. It was reported that this figure had only increased by one in the last three months and SCC/004 - Percentage of LAC who have never had more than 3 placements during the year - had stabilised since the end of December. In terms of SCC/011b - Percentage assessments - child seen alone by Social Worker - it was explained that the reason for a child not being seen on their own was generally because of their age. With regard to SCC/033e - Percentage of former LAC in suitable accommodation - the figure for January was 100%. SCC/033f - percentage of former LAC in education/training/employment at 19 - Members were advised that the figure for this was unlikely to improve before the year end and that therefore the target that had been set would not be achieved. SCC/043b - The average time taken to complete core assessments that took longer than 35 days - it was noted that a very small number of these had not been completed due to information awaited from other sources. Overall, progress had been made against many of the targets set and performance had exceeded the Welsh average once again.

During the course of the ensuing discussion, a Member sought further information on the results for ASPI 02 - Number of adults waiting for an assessment outside of the timescale of 28 days. The Assistant Director Adult Services advised that the vast majority of people waiting for an assessment were waiting for a specialist assessment eg. by an occupational health therapist rather than a social worker.

Members congratulated officers on progress made against targets.

8. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 1 - PROGRESS UPDATE

The report updated Members on progress against Improvement Objective 1 - Ensuring children and young people who are Looked After are supported to achieve their full potential. Officers drew Members' attention to the 4 key objectives set out in the appendix, which provides a six-month update on the identified actions for Improvement Objective IO 1.

Members were advised that the target for the recruitment of new foster carers in a year was currently 25. Officers felt that this figure was extremely ambitious and should be reviewed. Despite recruitment campaigns, the Council is dependant upon applications being made by the public.

During the last six months the Directorate had launched the new 16 Plus Service and implemented the revised Homeless Protocol for 16/17 year olds in partnership with Housing and the Third Sector. It had confirmed its commitment to the development of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS), which will now become fully operational in 2014. In addition, performance had improved in respect of completion of Personal Education Plans (PEP's) for Looked After Children, 86% compared to 76% for the same period last year, which is well above the Welsh average.

In terms of SCC/033f - Percentage of former LAC in education/training /employment at age 19. Five of the 10 young people that this indicator relates to are unable to engage for various reasons. The Directorate is in regular contact with these young people offering support and advice to assist them to get back into education/training or employment. For the year to date performance for Caerphilly compared favourably with the Welsh Average for 2012/13 .

The Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made against the Improvement Objective and considered the evidence provided as satisfactory subject to the target for the recruitment of foster carers being 25 over a three year period.

9. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (MONTH 9)

The Acting Head of Corporate Finance informed Members of projected revenue expenditure for the Directorate for the 2013/14 financial year.

The 2013/14 month 9 position is a projected Directorate underspend of £1,935k as summarised in paragraph 4.1 of the report. Officers had been mindful of the significant cuts in funding for future years as set out in the 2014/15 Local Government Financial Settlement and expenditure had been curtailed in a number of areas to support MTFP savings requirements. This had resulted in projected underspends being higher than would normally be the case.

The projected position for the Children's Services Division is summarised in paragraph 4.4.1. An underspend of £663k is projected in Management, Fieldwork and Administration. As at month 9 the vacancy level stands at 8.73% against a budgeted level of 2.67%. Current projections assume that vacancies will remain at 8.73% for the remainder of the financial year.

Members were informed that some vacant posts within Children's Services totalling £230k have been identified as savings in advance for the 2014/15 financial year. There will also be a need to redeploy staff whose posts are being removed as part of other savings proposals for the Division. This will require a detailed review of all vacant posts to identify potential redeployment opportunities. Arising from a request by a Member, it was agreed that details of these posts would be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that External Residential Care is a highly volatile budget area and significant variations against budget often occur due to changes in demand and the high cost of some placements. The projected underspend of £167k reflects current committed placements and is net of financial contributions from Health and Education. The projected underspend of £114k in Fostering and Adoption reflects current commitments but is also due to professional fees being projected to underspend by £59k, which is reversing the trend of overspends in this area in recent years.

The Adult Services Division is currently projected to underspend by £676k as summarised in paragraph 4.5.1. The most significant variations against budget are in Management, Fieldwork and Administration, Own Residential Care, External Residential Care, Own Day Care and Other Costs. Full details are provided in the report.

Service Strategy and Business Support is currently projected to underspend by £166k as summarised in the report. The projected underspend of £81k in Management and Administration is due to a small number of vacancies in Business Support Teams. The projected underspend of £93k in Other Costs is due in the main to the Directorate successfully securing Association of Directors for Social Services (ADSS) one-off funding in 2013/14 for the costs incurred in 2012/13 on the proposed integration project with Blaenau Gwent.

The Authority needs to identify further savings of circa £13m for 2015/16 and 2016/17. Social Services will be required to identify additional savings to help meet this target and reports outlining further proposals will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee during the coming months.

Arising from the ensuing discussion, it was agreed that details of vacant posts within the Directorate would be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

10. FOSTER CARER RETAINER PAYMENTS

The report informed Members of the proposed changes to the Foster Carer Retainer Payments Policy.

The current rates of payment for vacant placements are set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report. The proposed policy will introduce a system, where the criteria for retainer payments is more equitable for all carers and will ensure that the Authority is comparative with other local authorities and with the independent foster care agencies.

The policy proposes a new retainer payment rate of £110 for Career Carers per week – a reduction of £66 per week – and £55 rate per week for all other carers with no distinction made between Mainstream and Probationary Carers. These rates have been compared to the rates paid by neighbouring local authorities and independent foster care agencies and are competitive.

Full consultation on the proposals contained in the report had taken place and as a result of the responses received, the recommended retainer payment rate was increased to £110 for Career Carers and £56 for all other Carers.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved, by a show of hands this was unanimously endorsed.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report and supported the implementation of the policy from 1st April 2014.

11. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH EAST WALES ADOPTION SERVICE (SEWAS)

The report updated Members on the development of the regional South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) hosted by Blaenau Gwent CBC on behalf of Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen Local Authorities.

Members were informed that the Service Manager for the new service has now been appointed and the intention from Welsh Government was for all regional services to be operational from 1st April 2014.

The total cost of the new service is £1,372,851. Based on an agreed funding formula Caerphilly's contribution will be £324,969. This includes the additional accommodation costs and has been budgeted for in 2014/15.

During the course of the debate Members sought further information on the personnel and financial implications. The Gwent Directors of Social Services had agreed the resource levels for the new service and had ensured that it can be delivered within existing budgets. The only additional costs incurred by all five local authorities had been the need to find accommodation for the new service, which had been secured at Mamhilad.

A firm business case had been prepared and consultations with staff and the trade unions commenced in January 2014. Decisions regarding secondment or TUPE transfer of staff would form part of the formal consultation process with all staff affected. It was pointed out that social workers employed by Blaenau Gwent CBC receive a higher salary than those employed by Caerphilly CBC. Officers confirmed that the new service would be costed on Blaenau Gwent's rates.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the report and progress made to date in implementing the new South East Wales Adoption Service.

12. REQUESTS FOR ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

Having regard to the comments contained in the WAO report on Collaboration, Caerphilly Caerphilly County Borough Council, which was presented to the Audit Committee on 5th February 2014, in relation to the Gwent Wide Integrated Community Equipment Service (GWICES), Councillor J.A. Pritchard requested that a report be prepared evaluating whether the partnership provides a 'value for money' service for the Authority.

13. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items were reported and noted: -

1. Summary of Members' Attendance - Quarter 3 - 1st October 2013 to 31st December 2013.
2. Forward Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2014.

CHAIRMAN