



SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 2ND FEBRUARY 2020 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Binding - Chair
Councillor C. Bezzina - Vice Chair

Councillors:

A. Angel, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Gair, J. Gale, V. James, L. Jeremiah, A. Leonard, S. Skivens and W. Williams.

Cabinet Member: S. Cook (Social Care).

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), J. Williams (Assistant Director – Adult Services), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director – Children’s Services), M. Jones (Interim Financial Services Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer – Technical Support), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Users and Carer – Mrs M. Jones and C. Luke.

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](#). He advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J. Bevan, D. Cushing, D. Harse and C. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 1ST DECEMBER 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 1st December 2020 (minute nos. 1 - 10) 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 February 2021 to March 2021.

The Committee discussed the Forward Work Programme at length and requested questions which were put forward by Cllr Vincent James, and circulated to Officers outside of the meeting be used to guide future reports that have been requested on the provision of Social Services during the pandemic.

In addition, several concerns were raised around Mental Health, and the impacts the ongoing Pandemic has had on this sector. Following debate, it was agreed that a motion be put to Council in which a cross-party Task and Finish Group be established in order to focus on Mental Health.

Following consideration and discussion, and subject to the changes proposed, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that, subject to an additional recommendation in that the Scrutiny Committee recommend a Motion to Council for the setup of a Cross Party Task and Finish Group in order to focus on Mental Health Issues, the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. TRANSFORMATION OF ADULT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - PRESENTATION

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed Mr Ian Thomas from the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board who provided a complex presentation on the Transformation of Adult Mental Health Services, which included the introduction of a proposed whole system pathway, introducing tiers from Foundation to Tier 4, of support services.

The presentation detailed significant plans to transform the sector and outlined the processes and support services at each of the Tiers, maintaining a service that is right for the individual.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked Mr Thomas for the detailed presentation and discussed at length. Members raised a number of queries in relation to the mapping exercise and ensuring there are sufficient resources in place, in particular as a result of the ongoing pandemic and ensuring that the message can be disseminated to all users. It was noted that there is a section of society that are not able to engage online, and therefore ensuring that resources and support can be provided to this group is vital. Discussions took place around links with other organisations such as community and third sector organisations in order to provide additional support and discussions took place around the impact poor or insufficient housing can have on mental health. The Health Board and Officers provided the Committee with assurances that work is being undertaken to ensure that resources are available where

needed, with printed information available if required and links are made with other support organisations.

Following consideration and discussion, the presentation was noted.

7. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT MONTH 9.

The report informed Members of the projected revenue expenditure for the Social Services Directorate and the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon the Directorate for the 2020/21 financial year.

The report identified the reasons behind a projected underspend of £2,210k for Social Services in 2020/21, inclusive of transport costs and identified the funding made available to Social Services during the 2020/21 financial year through the Welsh Government Covid-19 Hardship Fund.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussed the report at length, seeking clarification on underspends, querying decisions around vacancies and redeployment and seeking assurances around aids and adaptations. Officers assured the Committee that in relation to vacancies, decisions have been made not to employ staff as there has been a hold on developments of a property for people with Learning Difficulties and therefore staff are not required at this time. In relation to other vacancies, due to the nature of the pandemic and the service provision at this time, recruitment and services have changed, and it is imperative that the right staff are provided where there is need. Members were also assured that the budget allocation for works of adaptation not be reduced in 2021/22 and options would be discussed with the Section 151 Officer to provide funding to tackle any backlog that may have accrued.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the detailed report and the prudent budget setting processes in place, as well as the efforts to secure grant funding where possible, which has enabled a strong financial position.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By show of hands this was unanimously agreed

RESOLVED that for the reason's contained in the Officer's report:

- i) the budget virement into the Social Services budget during the current financial year in response to the 2020/21 local government pay award be noted;
- ii) the projected underspend of £2,210k against the Social Services budget for 2020/21, inclusive of transport costs be noted;
- iii) the delegated decision posted by the Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing on 16th December 2020 be noted;
- iv) the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon Social Services in 2020/21 be noted.

8. INTERIM REPORT FROM TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON NON-RESIDENTIAL CARE CHARGES

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Task and Finish Group inquiry into charging for non-residential social care within the county borough. The inquiry is being undertaken by a sub-group of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and the initial meeting of the group was undertaken on 25th September 2020.

The report also sought Committee endorsement for a recommendation to Cabinet to extend the current rate increases for the 2021/22 financial year, in order to allow the Task and Finish Group to continue their inquiry and to draft recommendations for Cabinet consideration on the future charging for non-residential care from 2022/23 onwards.

The report provided a brief summary of information received by Members of the Task Group thus far and outlined how disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in final recommendations not yet being reached and therefore cannot be applied to the rates for the 2021/22 financial year.

The report also provided a synopsis on the background to the current Task and Finish inquiry into charging for non-residential care within the county borough.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussions took place around the charging provided in other Local Authorities, for which the information was provided. The Scrutiny Committee were assured that the Task and Finish Group will reconvene shortly and will take a number of factors into account before making a recommendation on charges for 2022/23.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the content therein be agreed.

The meeting closed at 7.46pm

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 16th March 2021.

CHAIR