



## **TASK AND FINISH GROUP – TACKLING POTENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES POST PANDEMIC**

**MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2021 AT 6.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor C. Bezzina - Chair

Councillors:

D. Cushing, K. Etheridge and M. Evans

Also Present:

Co-opted Member: Mrs M. Jones (Parent Network) – Vice Chair

Together with:

M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer).

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Bishop.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **3. TO APPOINT A CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR**

Nominations for Chair were received for Cllr Bezzina and Cllr Etheridge. One Member also commented on the importance of having an independent voice and asked if Mrs M. Jones would consider taking the position of Vice-Chair. Another Member suggested that both nominations for Chair gave supporting statements on why they would be a suitable appointment and this suggestion was supported by the group. Cllr Etheridge outlined his

experience for the role but explained how his position as Leader of the Independent Group ahead of Council Elections next year prohibited him from giving the role of Chair the time it deserved, and he therefore chose to withdraw his nomination. Cllr Bezzina highlighted her personal and professional experience for the role and was unanimously supported by the group. The nomination for Vice-Chair was accepted by Mrs M. Jones and she was also unanimously endorsed by the group.

#### **4. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY FOR REVIEW**

The Chair drew the group's attention to the draft scoping document which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The draft terms of reference were accepted by the group and the Chair highlighted her aim of having the final report discussed by full Council. The Scrutiny Officer advised that ultimately the group's report would be considered by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet before proceeding to Council.

One Member highlighted the challenge of completing the suggested programme of meetings and drafting a final report before next year's Council's elections. The Scrutiny Officer advised that Task and Finish inquiries tried not to be prescriptive in terms of the duration of the review, but it was generally agreed to be mindful of the possibility of personnel changes after the election. The Chair outlined her view that the aim should be to complete the process before the elections next year.

One Member made a general point about what the group hoped to achieve. He highlighted to the group that he would like the focus to be on prevention and awareness. The Chair agreed and outlined that in the future all Members should receive mental health awareness training and that a key issue should be to recognise the signs. It was agreed that communication was also key in terms of signposting people to the services and help available. It was suggested that a portfolio be developed by the Council which residents could download from the website.

One Member highlighted the importance of determining when low levels of well-being progress to serious mental health issues. The Member highlighted how the Parent Network were developing Well-being Champions who would be community-based. The Chair suggested that encouraging volunteers to become Mental Health Champions who would signpost people to services available could be explored during the review.

One Member highlighted the significance of Mental Health First-Aid training and the indicators to recognise such as sleeping patterns. It was suggested that early intervention measures could be explored with representatives from the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board at a future meeting.

The Scrutiny Officer suggested that a Social Services officer with a background in mental health should be approached to join future meetings in an advisory role. Also, that the first meeting after recess should explain how mental health services are administered within the County Borough. These suggestions were unanimously supported by the group.

One Member wished to know if there was a different process in place for children and young people.

Another Member suggested that the Mental Health Champion should be invited to a meeting so that they could give the group an update on the work which had taken place. The Chair welcomed this suggestion and outlined how she had spoken to the Deputy Leader about securing their involvement.

One Member outlined how the Parent Network had been involved with publishing a book designed to help children cope with grief, she also commented on the support available to adult men involved in cases administered by Social Services.

There was unanimous approval for the draft Terms of Reference and the Scrutiny Officer assured Members that this could be tweaked and added to as the process developed. The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would circulate a potential date for the next meeting after liaising with colleagues in Social Services. It was also unanimously agreed that Cllr Shayne Cook, as Cabinet Member for Social Services, should be invited to attend future meetings as an observer.

In thanking Members and Officers for their contributions, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.15 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 2021, they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIR