



SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Cushing - Chair

Councillors:

A. Angel, C. Bishop, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, L. Jeremiah, A. Leonard, S. Skivens, C. Thomas, W. Williams.

Cabinet Member: S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Social Services).

Together with:

Officers: D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director - Children's Services), M. Jones (Financial Services Manager) (C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer), M. Afzal (Committee Services Officer), and J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer).

Users and Carer – Mrs M. Jones

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, C. Bezzina (Vice Chair), A. Gair, J. Gale, D. Harse, V. James, and J. Williams (Assistant Director - Adult Services).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors D. Cushing (Chair) and W. Williams declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – Appointment of Co-opted Member Social Services Scrutiny Committee, as they both knew one of the applicants and did not take part in discussion or voting for this item.

3. MINUTES – 15TH JUNE 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 15th June 2021 (minute nos. 1 - 9) 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 Manager introduced the report that informed the Committee of its Forward Work Programme planned for the period September 2021 to March 2022.

Following consideration and discussion the recommendation in the report be approved. It was agreed to move the Day Services report to the next meeting on 12th October and to move the Covid-19 Update to the meeting on 23rd November. By way of electronic voting and show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

A member requested a detailed briefing on the Day Services report, where questions could also be raised, prior to the meeting on 12th October. A member also sought clarification on the provision of transport to care services and whether this provision had been reduced or withdrawn. It was requested that this information be included in the briefing prior to the 12th October meeting.

The Cabinet member clarified that the members request in relation to a detailed briefing was to view the Day Services report prior to the 12th October meeting. The Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing noted that the reports are circulated 7 days prior to a scrutiny committee meeting and would need to seek advice on a separate briefing meeting prior to the scrutiny committee meeting. It was also clarified that information on the provision of transport would be included in the report. The Cabinet member invited the committee member to provide details on specific transport issues, which would be dealt with separately, outside of the meeting.

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

RESOLVED that subject to the Day Services report being moved to the 12th October meeting and the Covid-19 Update being moved to the 23rd November meeting, 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. DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT YEAR END REPORT 2020/21

The Cabinet member introduced the report which presented members with the year-end Social Services Directorate Performance Assessment which is part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. This provides information and analysis for adults and children's services for the year ending 2020/21. Members were referred to the challenges of the past year during the pandemic, but it was noted that there had still been significant achievements within the service area. The report also included three key areas for improvement and a Qtr4 update on the Well-being objective.

A member sought clarification on the actual amount of money, in relation to the 50% underspend which was going into the directorate reserves. The Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing advised that it was normal practice for any underspend to be split 50/50 into the directorate reserves and back into the corporate funds. It was confirmed to the member that the figure he requested was a total underspend of £5.1 million, of which 50% had gone into the directorate reserves and 50% back into the corporate funds.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and noted the content therein.

7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING FOR 2019/20 AND 2020/21.

The Cabinet member introduced the report and advised members that they were receiving two annual reports this year for 2019/20 and 2020/21 as the annual report for 2019/20 had been delayed due to the pandemic. Members were advised that the Care Inspectorate Wales had allowed the annual report for 2019/20 to be deferred by 12 months.

The Corporate Director of Social Services and Housing advised members that the production of the annual report is a statutory responsibility of his role. The annual report goes before the Scrutiny committee and Council, followed by the Care Inspectorate Wales, and then made available for public viewing on the Caerphilly website.

Members were referred to the 2020/21 annual report and noted thanks to all colleagues and partners in social care during unprecedented times. Reference was made to the vital redeployment of staff and the challenges faced at the start of the pandemic, in particular the issues of obtaining Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), pressures on care home staff and those working in children's and adults services who had to operate via virtual meetings online instead of face to face meetings. Reference was also made to the withdrawal of day services provisions at that time and the effect this would have had on the unpaid carers. Noted thanks to the home carers team who provided support to the unpaid carers during this difficult time and staff who were involved with the large amount of hospital discharges at the start of the pandemic. Noted gratitude to the whole workforce for their attitude and commitment during this time.

A member sought clarification on the medium-term financial plan, in relation to the enhanced grant funding from Welsh Government. Members were advised that the loss of this funding would have a significant effect on the residential provision and domiciliary care providers that had received additional funding throughout the pandemic and noted that some care providers may not be able to continue if this funding was withdrawn. Members were advised that Welsh Government have indicated the funding will remain until March 2022 and that some recovery money may be available to the social care sector in Wales but exact details on this was awaited.

A member sought clarification on staff training and whether this would be completed before the day services transportation provision was reduced. Members were advised that staff training was a priority but that the service delivery would always be the main priority.

A member asked for clarification on the number of looked after children changing schools which was 12% in 2019/20. The committee was assured that the priority is to maintain current school placements when children move into another area, but it will be reviewed at appropriate times such as end of school terms and in consultation with the child. Members were advised that often children will ask to move schools to attend the local school and be the same as other children in their community.

Clarification was sought on the number of complaints upheld and partially upheld. It was explained that the complaints can contain several issues and the complaints figures show the number of issues and not complainants. Reassurance was given that when issues are upheld that the department will look at learning from these complaints and contact the complainants to advise them what action has been taken.

Clarification was also sought on homelessness figures. Members were advised that this issue would come under the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Director of Social Services and Housing proposed to deal with the enquiry separately from this Scrutiny meeting.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and noted the content therein.

8. PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP TWO NEW RESPITE FACILITIES

The Cabinet member introduced the report which sought the views of members regarding the proposal to develop two new purpose-built respite facilities in Pontllanfraith, one for adults and one for children, prior to the report being presented to Cabinet.

A member sought clarification on how the additional funding was calculated and were advised that it is based upon the best estimate of funding required and is the type of one -off cost that is appropriate use of reserves. The scrutiny committee were assured that hopefully this is the first of several reports on these proposed respite centres, if approved by Cabinet. It was suggested by Members that there may be additional costs because of the increasing costs of building materials.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report, the proposal to develop two new respite facilities, one for adults and one for children co-located in Pontllanfraith, be considered and approved, and the recommendation to Cabinet that a further £1,001,436 be allocated to the project from Social Services reserves, be endorsed.

9. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report and reminded members that at the Scrutiny meeting on 15th June 2021, Cllrs. C. Bezzina, M. Evans and C. Bishop had been appointed to sit on the appointments sub-committee, to appoint a co-opted member. Following this meeting, interviews were held in July. Members were advised that a set procedure was followed for the interview process and it was agreed to appoint Patricia Cook to the vacant co-opted member position and for Judith Pritchard to be kept as a reserve.

Clarification was sought on the specific area of knowledge of the newly appointed co-opted member. Members were advised that Patricia Cook had been a long-term carer for a disabled adult relative.

Co-opted member, M. Jones informed the Committee that she is due to retire in December 2021 and wished to note the need for support for those families with children who needed care. The Scrutiny Manager noted that the same procedure would apply, with the Committees approval, to appoint a new co-opted member in the future.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report and as outlined at the meeting, Patricia Cook be appointed to the vacant co-opted member position (without voting rights) on the Social Services Scrutiny Committee until May 2022, subject to her acceptance of the members code of conduct, and that Judith Pritchard is retained as reserve co-opted member should the position become vacant in the future.

The meeting closed at 6.27 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 1st November 2021.

CHAIR