



## **SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES  
PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON  
TUESDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Cushing – Chair  
Councillor M. Chacon-Dawson - Vice Chair

Councillors:

C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, R. Chapman, M. Evans, T. Heron, J. A. Pritchard,

Councillor: E. Forehead. (Cabinet Member for Social Care).

Also in attendance: Cabinet Member: J. Pritchard (Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change).

Co-Opted Members: Vacant.

Together with:

Officers: G. Jenkins (Assistant Director – Children’s Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director - Adult Services), D. Street (Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

### **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 were received from Councillors K. Ethridge, D. Harse, P. Cook, L. Jeremiah, A. Leonard, D. Price, and S. Skivens,

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

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

#### **3. MINUTES – 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 9 for, 0

against and 0 abstention) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 (minute nos. 1-6) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **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**

Mark Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) introduced the report that informed the Committee of its Forward Work Programme planned for the period April 2023 to July 2023.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of electronic voting (and in noting there were 9 For 0 Against and 0 Abstention) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

#### **6. CABINET REPORTS**

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

#### **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

#### **7. EQUIPMENT AND ADAPTATIONS**

Councillor E Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care presented the report which provided members of the Social Services Scrutiny an update on the provision of equipment and adaptations to residents. Members of the Scrutiny Committee were invited to raise any queries.

Jo Williams advised that she was available to answer any questions and advised that there was a typing error on item 5.2. The report states the date and it should state data not date.

A Member thanked Officers for the report and stated that it was encouraging to see waiting times were not too bad but was disappointed that there was no data from other departments showing how they are doing and how successful they are to see the full picture.

Officers were asked if a timeframe for the installation of walk in showers could be provided? Members were advised that it is difficult to confirm exact timeframes as this varies for each case and there are several factors that need to be considered.

Members were advised that in relation to the disabled facility grants there is a significant waiting list and due the complexity of major adaptations and other issues, Housing have been struggling

with the technical resources needed. The Scrutiny Committee were advised that Officers would circulate information on timeframes following the meeting.

A Member asked if there was any data or analysis on falls, what causes falls and what role not having handrails plays in that.

Officers confirmed that the data held is from Health and this is about looking at the reasons why individuals have fallen which could be medical reason or accidents therefore this data is unreliable. In relation to handrails, the feedback was particularly good for the service and installation is completed quickly, however there was a lack of contractors and lack of materials following covid which has impacted on the wait.

The Chair raised a query on 5.6 of the report where it states that there is a grant up to £1000 which is not means tested and sought clarification as to whether individuals had to use Council Contractors or could they seek their own contractors.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that works over £1000 would be classed as major adaptations and owner/occupiers would be able to apply for a disabled facility grant, which is means tested and it would be determined if any contributions need to be made in addition to the grant.

In relation to contractors the Council has an approved list of contractors but their own contractors could be appointed if requested, however many individuals prefer to have the Council undertake the full works with their approved contractors. If the works are to be undertaken on a council property, there is no financial assessment.

Following consideration and discussion the Social Services Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

## **8. REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD – UPDATE**

Councillor E Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care presented the report which provided Members of the Social Services Scrutiny with an update of the work of the Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) following the last report presented to Scrutiny Committee in July 2022. Members of the Scrutiny Committee were invited to raise any queries.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing referred to the previous reports brought to the Scrutiny Committees and advised these reports will continue to be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee frequently. Members of the Scrutiny Committee were directed to the list provided in the report at paragraph 5.2 which illustrates the subjects that had been covered by the Board for the period concerned, whilst this was not a definitive list it gave a flavour of the topics being worked on. The Committee were advised that Officers attend numerous meetings regularly and that regional working is now playing a significant part in their daily roles.

The Scrutiny Committee were directed to the Appendix 1 which sets out the work undertaken between July 22 and December 22. Works over Winter and Autumn were also discussed, and the Director passed on his thanks to Jo Williams and the team for their work during the Winter which was the most difficult period anyone has had to deal with and stated that it is a testament to the work that Jo and her colleagues have done that we are now in a better position.

Members were drawn to item 5.26 of the report. Members had expressed concern previously with regard to Welsh Government proposals to taper grant monies received from the Regional Integration Fund. Whilst it was pleasing to see that these proposals had now been deferred

for 2023/24. It is not clear if this will be the case in 2024/25 and if not, a report will be provided to Scrutiny at a future date.

The Director advised the Committee that there were two reports that were intended to be brought to the Committee which were firstly, following the outcome of the Expert Reference Group which Welsh Government pulled together with a view to constructing a National Care Service in Wales and the second was a document called Further Faster which is the Health Minister's proposal to enhance integrated working in readiness for the Winter of 2023. However, Welsh Government advised that now is not the time for them to be brought forward as further guidance was anticipated. The Director apologised and confirmed these reports will be brought to Scrutiny as appropriate in the future.

A Member asked what is the Winter Plan as the difficulties are not just over the Winter period, it is all year around. The Director agreed that the pressure is all year round and explained that the title, The Winter Plan is what Welsh Government have named the document.

A Member sought clarification on the New Direction section and asked what SC2H meant. Officers confirmed that this stands for Step Closer 2 Home, Members were advised that the New Directions is a care agency commissioned by the Health Board dealing with patients being discharged from hospital. Members were advised this is successfully run service and is reported to Welsh Government every two weeks.

A query was raised on why there was only partial success in relation to additional winter capacity. The Officer confirmed that this was additional hours capacity which enabled officers from hospitals to work over the weekends to carry out assessments to prevent people being admitted to YYF. The assessments are completed on the same day and the service also dealt with patients seen on Fridays in order to try and get them home for the weekend. This service ended on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. The care capacity was not able to be increased so this is why it was partially successful due to insufficient carers available over the winter.

A Member referred to page 32 where it states that Caerphilly had partial success and asked when would we reach optimal resilience within the system. The Director confirmed this would be difficult to say as this will depend on ability to respond to requests for support and having the capacity and staff to deliver the service. The high numbers of those attending A & E where they can get the support required elsewhere is also a contributing factor.

A Member asked what Transformation Grant is and who does it fund. Officers confirmed that this is funded by Welsh Government and is paid to the Regional Partnership Boards across Wales to fund different schemes to try and determine which ones Welsh Government take on board and roll out consistently. This is where the two reports that were due to come to the Committee will set out what has worked. There was difficulty with the funding as this was given with short notice of receiving the funds and developing the schemes and then funding stopped on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March.

A Member had a query page 37 and asked why there were no beds available in the South. Members were advised that all care homes were contacted to see if they were interested but the take up was poor. This was also due to care homes being full of long term residents and therefore not having the beds available. The beds in the North were block booked so five beds were available for individual spot contracts. This needs to be reviewed to see whether block booking or individual spot contracts work best.

It was requested that with future reports can they not be abbreviated, and the full description or detail be provided.

A Member asked for confirmation as to which initiatives were successful and were being taken forward on point 5.5 page 24. Officers confirmed that the Step Closer 2 Home is one that is being taken forward. We are also looking at keeping the capacity in Caerphilly following the

evaluations taking place across Wales and what will be introduced across Wales will then be rolled out in Gwent.

A Member expressed concerns for families. What effect is this having on carers, are families expected to look after their relatives if we do not have the workers? Officers shared these concerns and agreed that whilst the goal is to get patients out of hospital beds there is concern for people who haven't got the support from families and friends in the community to be cared for and confirmed that they do our best to mitigate and look to deploy resources across this system and community more evenly.

A comment was made that if domiciliary care workers pay was increased would this help with recruitment? Officers confirmed that yes it would but there are more general concerns about the working conditions for carers. Social Care Wales are doing work around this to look to see how to recruit and retain staff. WG increased the real living wage but admit the amount is inadequate. The wages should be higher but this is a very complicated issue to deal with.

The group discussed incentives and it was highlighted that increasing annual leave days by five days is an example of an incentive that could work. The group also discussed the removal of the 'cottage hospitals' which was an additional step before people returned home which is what the Step Closer 2 Home is looking to replicate.

Following consideration and discussion the Social Services Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

The meeting closed at 18:15PM

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2023.

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CHAIR