



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday,
5 October 2022 at 5.00 pm

County Borough Councillors - Community Services Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor G E Williams Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor R Davis Councillor N H Morgan
Councillor D Parkin Councillor A Roberts
Councillor G Stacey

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr N Elliott, Director of Adult Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Mrs T Watson, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors J Bonetto, A J Ellis, D Evans, H Gronow, D Owen-Jones, and T Williams, from the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care, County Borough Councillor G Caple and the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager, J Thomas.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

3 CONSULTATION LINKS

Members acknowledged the information provided through the consultation links in respect of open consultations, Welsh Government consultations and those matters being consulted upon by the local authority.

4 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23 AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented his report which sought Members' approval on the Committee's draft Work Programme for the 2022/23 Municipal Year, which identified a number of initial items from discussions with the Chair/Vice Chair and Officers, along with the Terms of Reference for the Committee, as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for noting. In response to a greater emphasis contained within the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) (2021) Members were advised, there was a requirement for key or strategic decisions of the Cabinet to be scrutinised, with a number of items identified from the Cabinet Work Programme. Additionally, because of the changes to the Terms of References, for scrutiny

committees, there was a need to provide flexibility and capacity to scrutinise matters which may be identified, either in terms of service deliver, or performance, from the considerations undertaken, by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members had the opportunity to identify subject matters themselves, in line with the Terms of Reference for the committee and to promote public participation in scrutiny, members were also advised to provide sufficient capacity within the work programme to accommodate matters identified for scrutiny by the public. A Public Participation Strategy would be developed, which would provide a mechanism for stronger participation by the public and residents, following determination by Council.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications finished his presentation by advising Members that it was important to note that in the context of the subject matter contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan, that there would inevitably be the need to necessitate additional meetings to consider business being presented to Cabinet, where appropriate, and therefore a need to factor in additional committee meetings to accommodate that business.

Following consideration by the Committee it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree the issues for inclusion on the Community Services Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for the 2022/23 Municipal Year as set out in Appendix A;
2. Request that the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications notifies the appropriate Cabinet Member and responsible Officer, of the matters identified for pre-scrutiny in advance of Cabinet consideration;
3. Agree that the Work Programme be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure the items identified for inclusion are relevant and that any additional referrals are incorporated;
4. Consider and determine any other matter that Members may wish to scrutinise over this period;
5. Note the draft Terms of Reference as attached at Appendix B to the report.
6. Agree the addition of Libraries to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this Committee.

5 DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 (DRAFT)

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services began by thanking Members for the opportunity to bring the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2021/22 to Scrutiny, advising that he would briefly go through some of the key points, and highlight the purpose of the report and advised that he was joined by Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Services, and between them would answer Members questions or observations members may have, that could be fed into the Cabinet process, before being formally published.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services continued that it was a statutory requirement that an annual report was published, following the end of each financial year that set out how the Council had delivered its social services functions during the previous year, including an evaluation of performance, and identified priorities going forward. The Group Director, Community and Children's Services acknowledged that this covered a period where service delivery continued to be dominated by the pandemic, with the impact on services being significant and noting the ongoing extraordinary efforts of staff, in their response to the challenge of supporting and protecting some of the most vulnerable people during those difficult circumstances.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services continued that it was not his intention to go through the whole report, but would pick up some of the key points, which he then presented to Members including:-

- How are people shaping services;
- Performance against key measures;
- Key achievements for Children's Services;
- Key achievements for Adult Services;
- Community Hubs;
- Supporting Carers;
- Workforce support;
- Future priorities;
- Growing pressures.

Members felt it was important to recognise how much work had been undertaken throughout the service and this was evident in the report and wished to thank staff for their hard work and commitment to the service.

A Member recognised that many of the services were only known about, if people had access to them, therefore, felt that more could be done to raise awareness and promote access to available services which in turn could relieve pressure on other services, if enhanced signposting was in place.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services thanked the Member for the comments about staff efforts and felt it was important to acknowledge the work that staff had done to respond. He acknowledged that the Service was always open to doing more to raise awareness of the services being providing, particularly around areas where there was the opportunity to intervene, as early as possible. Members then heard from the Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Services on what they were specifically doing in their areas to promote those early interventions. The Group Director, Community and Children's Services advised that he would be interested to hear from Members about any thoughts they may have, about awareness raising, and acknowledged this was an important point.

A Member acknowledged that the report highlighted the ongoing effects of the pandemic but was concerned about the financial impact the cost-of-living crises was having on families, which could lead to a higher demand for services and asked for updated figures to be reported back to the Committee in 6 months' time.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services acknowledged that the

pandemic had reset the baseline, and the difficulty was trying to determine whether the increases in demand were likely to continue and whether there was a deferred need, that was now coming through the system. So, felt it was absolutely important to revisit this. Members were reminded of the performance framework in place, which monitored delivery against key objectives. The Group Director, Community and Children's Services acknowledged the financial constraints that the Council, residents, and families were experiencing, which could potentially lead to even more demand for services, particularly over the winter months and shared members concerns about the impact the cost-of-living crises, particularly in the context of the ongoing pressures on health and social care.

A Member noted the reduction in the rate of children becoming looked after but acknowledged that the service was yet to see the full impact the pandemic had on vulnerable families, this together with the financial impact of the UK cost of living crises members remained concerned at how this would impact on the current figures and asked officers to keep the Committee informed of any significant changes in the figures.

Members heard from the Director of Children's Services with regard to children's services and safeguarding services, remaining business as usual, during the pandemic. What was seen in the report, was an increased demand, linked to small babies being born in the period, who hadn't had the same opportunities for socialisation and the impact of that for their development. The Director of Children's Services then provided Members with an explanation around the regular performance management and benchmarking done, acknowledging this was a very demanding area of work with the safeguarding duty coming first. The looked after children prevention strategy, was approved by Cabinet in January 2022, with targeted work being carried out. This was a well-connected strategy, in terms of policy and law, which would continue to be monitored closely.

A Member felt it was important, both in terms of management of resources and in terms of service users, for the need to accelerate the integration of adult social care and health care and demonstrate how this would take place and what the likelihood of success would be.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services began by acknowledging this was a demand and capacity question, with pressures at all different points in the system across health and social care in Adult Services, and it was fair to say, a solution to that, hadn't been found yet, despite considerable efforts. Members were informed that work was done through a regional partnership board, with the strategic focus around integration of health and social care. There were a range of projects that attempted to address some of the system pressures, e.g., future solutions around integrated community services, and delivery of joint services in hospitals and through into social care, to improve that system, but it was hugely challenging.

Members then heard from the Director of Adult Services who acknowledged that whilst there was a need to accelerate the integration with health and social care, they already worked well together, with several joint services and teams, which supported each other, to provide care and support to people, whether they were in the hospital settings or the community. The Director of Adult Services then provided Members with a number of examples including the joint regional Stay Well @ Home Services to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and ensure timely discharge for those people that require admission to hospital and the

Integrated Intermediate Care and Rehabilitation Service to enable people to remain at home safely and independently. The Director also referred to the joint work of the Specialist Dementia Intervention Team and joint Community Mental Health Teams. Members were also informed about the importance of developing integrated primary care and community services to make better use of resources across the health and system to better support people within their community and to remain at home.

The Director of Adult Services also acknowledged the importance of developing more regional approaches to improve the sustainability of the health and social care system, particularly around development specialist services. The Director informed Members that the changes required would result in significant change to health and social care system and the way services will be delivered in future, and whilst may be seen by some as negative, they were needed and need to be considered as positive developments to improve the care and support of Rhondda Cynon Taf residents.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services acknowledged that the Director of Adult Services had described a lot of really good work going on, with a lot of teams and activity already delivered in an integrated way, but the pressures were not easing. What was once winter pressures, was now a pressure throughout the year. So, it remained a priority with further work that needed to be progressed and a move away from reacting to the crises that occurred sometimes in the hospital and acute settings, towards delivering more sustainable solutions, that would address some of these challenges, in the longer term.

Following consideration by the Committee it was **RESOLVED** to note the draft Rhondda Cynon Taf Director of Social Services Annual Report and provide recommendations to Cabinet.

6 SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES ANNUAL REPORT

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services presented the Social Services representations, compliments, and complaints procedures annual report to Members and explained this was very much part of the governance arrangements within social services. It was explained to Members that the Council had a statutory requirement to operate a complaints procedure in respect of social services and the report included details of complaints, representations and compliments received, during that period. This was a 2-stage process, the first instance, about trying to resolve things with the complainant informally and if that proved to be impossible, progressing to a more formal stage, involving the appointment of an independent investigator, outside the local authority. It was explained that some investigations could be complex and involved, with those reports individually signed off by the Group Director himself, when completed.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services then highlighted to the Committee, a number of key areas, included in the report, in respect of the number of complaints, the current difficulty in determining a trend, the relatively low number of complaints across both services, with the number of compliments received continuing to be higher than the number of complaints, the majority of complaints being successfully resolved at stage 1 with no ombudsman investigations, and engagement with service users to capture any learning.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services finished by thanking the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager, and her team, for maintaining robust procedures and ensuring that the voice of service users was heard.

A Member congratulated staff on the work they were doing, highlighting the fact that there were more compliments than complaints, however there was a need to focus, a little bit, on the complaints, and particularly on the lessons learnt. The Member referred to page 9, of the Appendix, areas where improvements had been identified, noting the first referred to improving the quality of complaint response, at stage 1, presuming this was about the time taken to give a response. A Member wondered what the barriers were, in respect of quicker responses and meeting the target.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services acknowledge that this was simply about the pressures on services, in terms of the increased demand, with Officers having less time to be able to respond as quickly as they would like to. Members were advised it was an area that the service was aware of and trying to improve.

Additionally, Members heard from the Director of Children's Services and Director of Adults Services. Members were advised that for Children's services when a complaint happened, what was wanted was to resolve that at the right level, as quickly as possible. It was felt in Children's Services, what needed to be done was to tighten up monitoring around timescales, which had been done, with improvements seen in most areas of timeliness, acknowledging that some complaints were complex and required a lot of additional manager administration time.

Similarly, for Adult Services, timescales had been an issue and Members were advised that the service was working together, particularly with the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints team, to ensure quicker responses, and where timescales slipped, to keep communication in place and keep people informed. In terms of this particular case, there was lessons to be learnt, in terms of the detail and the involvement undertaken, as part of that particular complaint.

Following consideration by the Committee it was **RESOLVED** to note the work undertaken by the Social Services Complaints Team, contained within the annual report.

7 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

The Chair thanked Members for their attendance and contributions, and Officers for answer questions and reminded Members that the next meeting of this Committee would be held on Monday 24 October 2022, at 5pm.

8 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

This meeting closed at 5.54 pm

Cllr G Williams