

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MAY 2015

Present: County Councillor Groves(Chairperson)
County Councillors Goddard, Lomax, McGarry, Sanders and
Graham Thomas

99 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Carter.

100 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from:

Councillor Groves – he and his wife are in receipt of Domiciliary Care through Direct Payments and traditional method.

Councillor Lomax – he lives in sheltered accommodation provided by Cardiff Council

Councillor Sanders – manages a family member's Domiciliary Care via Direct Payments

101 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

102 : PROGRESS REPORT RE GYPSY & TRAVELLER INQUIRY

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Ramesh Patel (Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Sustainability), Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing), Sarah McGill (Director for Communities, Housing & Customer Service), Stuart Williams (Group Leader, Policy) and Ian Ephraim (Supported Accommodation and Outreach Manager).

The purpose of this report was to update the Committee on progress with implementing the agreed recommendations of the previous Committee's report 'The Provision of Accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller Households in Cardiff'.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Members to make a statement. They advised the Committee that their portfolios were working jointly on this matter. Councillor Elsmore has visited the Rover Way and Shirenewton sites to gain an understanding of issues on the ground and a 'one Council' approach is being taken.

The Group Leader gave a presentation, following which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from the Committee.

The Committee asked for clarification on the number of pitches that are needed in the short term. The Committee was advised that a needs assessment was completed in April 2013 and found a need for an additional 108 permanent gypsy and traveller

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pitches and a regional M4 corridor related need for ten transit pitches up to 2026. Forty-three pitches are needed in the short term. The Council commissioned a company to carry out a needs assessment. The second part of this study involved the identification of potential sites. This was completed in July 2013 and a number of potential sites were identified. It was proposed to create a new gypsy and traveller site of sixty-five pitches at Seawall Road near the existing Rover Way site, which is becoming unsustainable due to the significant and costly improvements that are required in terms of the provision of flooding and coastal erosion defence. Significant improvements are also needed to the transport related infrastructure, to ensure a safe environment for residents / visitors within the site and to provide good connections to the surrounding transport network. Members asked for an explanation as to why the recommended footpath for Rover Way had not scored highly enough to be prioritised. Officers explained the Council's scoring process included looking at accident rates and near misses and that, using the scoring criteria, a footpath at Rover Way was not prioritised for Highways Improvements funding. Councillor Patel stressed that officers are looking for other sources of funding. With regard to the proposed Seawall Road site, it was later determined that it is located in a high flood risk zone. The Planning Inspectorate has allowed the local authority two years to find a site that does meet the required standard. It has been decided to keep the process for the identification of new sites in-house rather than put the work out to contract. Contracting out the work could lead to some concerns over a contractor's lack of awareness of the area. The Director is to chair the board that will move the process forward and there will be community consultation during the process.

The Committee asked whether the removal of the Seawall Road site as option will cause difficulties in providing enough pitches to meet the current need and was advised that demand changes; some families move into permanent housing and this may reduce demand, but demand can increase due to family growth.

The Committee asked whether it would not be possible to consider using one of the other sites that had been short-listed, rather than beginning a completely new process to identify new sites, and asked whether the local authority is expecting to find potential sites that had not been identified in the original study. The Committee was advised that it is felt that the fullest range of options had not been initially considered. The local authority is prepared to consider any option, not just publicly-owned spaces, and will also be looking at the original shortlisted sites as well.

Members asked how many pitches would be provided by the possible new site mentioned in the presentation and were informed it could provide 6-7 pitches.

The Committee asked how long the Rover Way site will remain viable and was advised that the local authority is looking at the possibility of grant eligibility for the site. One of the problems is that there are differences of opinion about coastal erosion. The local authority is waiting for the outcome of a report and has to be very sure about the long-term position regarding that site and its sustainability.

The Committee asked what is being done regarding equalising health outcomes and educational opportunities for adults and children living on the Rover Way and Shirenewton sites. The Committee was advised that the key thing is the life

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expectancy of the Rover Way site. If there was more certainty on that then it may be possible to access funding to make improvements to the site. There are a lot of significant planning issues to be taken into account but it should always be borne in mind that there is a community on the Rover Way site right now, a community with needs. The Shirenewton site is of a much better standard, with good quality pitches and 'streets' and community facilities, such as a nursery. Improvements to Rover Way may make only a small difference to the site. The important message is that an alternative site will be found, using in-house expertise. The Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Sustainability agreed to share with the Committee any feedback that is received from the Local Development Plan Examination inspectors regarding the Council's submitted position statement detailing the proposed way forward with identifying and selecting sites for Gypsy & Traveller accommodation for inclusion in the LDP.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Members and officers for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED – That a letter be sent by the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Members to convey the observations made by the Committee during discussion of the way forward – see attached.

103 : QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing), Sarah McGill (Director for Communities, Housing & Customer Service) and Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Communities, Housing & Customer Service).

The Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising performance across the Health & Social Care and Communities & Housing Directorates in order to facilitate challenge and public discussion and drive improvement. The report set the context for Quarter Four performance for 2014-15 and provided the Committee with the performance management report.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member Councillor Susan Elsmore to make a statement. The Cabinet Member advised the Committee that it is hoped that a line can be drawn under previous performance that has been inadequate, particularly in relation to Health and Social Care. The Director for Communities, Housing & Customer Service has been asked take charge of the situation so that an understanding of the weaknesses in performance can be gained, to understand why they were there and what can be done to rectify them. This is not about quick fixes but about system changes. It is hoped that the Committee will begin to see improvements in quarters one and two of 2015/16. Changes to ways of reporting are also being considered, with reports perhaps being based on themes.

The Director advised the Committee that for a transitional period she will be looking after the Directorate for Health & Social Care Directorate. A key thing is to gain an understanding of why these performance areas are so challenging and what to do about it. The intention is to make sure that the Committee has a clear understanding

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of why things are as they are. It is also key to bring together services for people who need our help, to align services appropriately, building on the ICF and first point of contact work to date.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members and suggested that questioning be divided into two parts, one on communities and housing and the other on health and social care.

Communities and Housing

The Committee asked how sickness levels, levels of compliance on Personal Performance and Development Reviews (PPDRs) and agency costs compare with last year, given the reduction in staffing levels required by the agreed savings. The Committee was advised that PPDR compliance is at 95% and is the highest it has ever been. On sickness absence, the target of nine days was not achieved and the rate was 10.4 days. All procedures, such as acting on trigger points and carrying out return-to-work interviews, are being followed. One area that is being explored is whether there is any correlation between disciplinary action and short-term sickness. Every case of long-term sickness is discussed at management meetings, to ensure that everything necessary is being done. Jobs in the Directorate can involve a lot of physical work and this has an effect on sickness rates. It is important that sickness absence is managed effectively as it can sap the morale of team members whose attendance is good.

The Committee asked whether staff reductions have led to increased levels of sickness absence for remaining workers. The Committee was advised that where there are issues of staff stress this is more usually to do with the introduction of new ways of working.

Regarding agency costs, the Committee was advised that even when agency staff are engaged the Directorate has to operate within its budget for staffing. There are times when it is appropriate to use agency staff and allow overtime.

The Committee asked why there is a backlog in the cases of homelessness that have to be dealt with. The Committee also suggested that, with the introduction of the new housing allocations policy, housing officers will have to spend time with those who are unhappy about the decisions that have been made in relation to their cases. The Committee was advised that there have been a lot of cases of homelessness coming through, that there has been a concerted effort to clear older cases from temporary accommodation but that some people have remained in temporary accommodation because they have been excluded from the waiting list and need to wait for the exclusion period to expire.

The Committee was advised that Welfare Reform has led to an increase in the number of void properties. People refusing or not responding to housing offers is a problem. From now on, applicants will only be allowed two refusals. The local authority is doing a number of things in relation to voids, including allowing those who have been allocated a property to go in and do their own decorating. The Committee asked whether part of the problem is to do with void properties not being in a lettable

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condition and was advised that all void properties are inspected after work has been completed and work is referred back to the contractors if it is not up to standard.

Health and Social Care

The Committee noted that in Health and Social Care compliance on PPDRs is at only 86.2% and suggested that if this was addressed then overall performance might be improved. The Committee was advised that the Director agreed and that the joint management team is looking at the reasons for this figure. The most important thing is that people are clear about what it is they are being asked to do, why they are being asked to do it and how they will know when they have achieved it, as well as ensuring what is being asked is achievable. As well as compliance, the quality of PPDRs is important.

In relation to Health and Social Care performance, the Committee asked if there are any fresh perspectives on what the issues are and what can be done to address them. The Committee was advised that one of the Quarter 4 challenges that has been identified is to improve performance in relation to Delayed Transfers of Care (DTOCs). Meetings have been held with colleagues in Health and in the Vale of Glamorgan local authority. It is apparent that a lot of activity around DTOCs only takes place as soon as the problem is identified. It is important to learn more about what could have been done at an earlier stage to prevent the DTOC. The local authority has to make it easier for colleagues in Health to advise the local authority on what the problem is, on what is preventing discharge. There should be just one point of contact as at the moment there are too many. The local authority and its partners are for the first time seeing a real shared ownership of the issue.

The Committee noted that the report refers to the need for system revision and redesign and asked what this would involve. The Committee was advised that the local authority has started by looking at preventative systems, at having a single point of contact and a single assessment process. Input from hospital wards is important. It is not always social care that is needed. It may be a housing issue, such as the need for someone's home to be 'de-cluttered'. It is important to make sure that those who are discharged from hospital are getting the income they are entitled to and that their home has any adaptations that they need. The Committee was advised that the re-shaping of such a large area of service provision is something that will need to be brought back to the Committee in its constituent parts.

The Committee noted that the report states that the budget overspend has 'reflected continued growth in the number of residential placements for people with learning disabilities, particularly college placements; significant cost inflation in relation to nursing placements for older people; growth in the number of care hours delivered via Direct Payments' and suggested that growth of this kind is something that is completely predictable. The Director agreed with this point and added that most of those who access the services provided by the Learning Disabilities Team live in Cardiff so this too was an area where growth in demand should be very predictable.

The Committee pointed out that the driver behind a lot of domiciliary work is the care plan and asked why targets in relation to care plans have not been met and what will be done to ensure the timely review of care plans. The Committee was advised that

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there has to be clarity on what is causing the delays. If reviews should be carried out every twelve months and that is not happening, then it is a management problem. It is necessary to move away from just responding to crises and achieve a more managed approach.

The Committee noted that from 2011 to now there has been an acceleration in the use of Direct Payments and asked whether officers are confident that the target set for the uptake is achievable. The Committee was advised that the local authority will have to recommission on Direct Payments and this could take at least eighteen months. In the interim the local authority will have to have direct award arrangements. Although there can be no guarantees, every effort will be made to achieve targets on the uptake of Direct Payments.

The Committee noted that, across Wales, Cardiff is in the median or lower quartile for every national performance indicator for Health and Social Care and asked what work was planned to move service delivery and performance into the upper quartiles. The Director explained she intended to look into the root causes for poor performance and address these.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Members and officers for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED – That a letter be sent by the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member to convey the observations made by the Committee during discussion of the way forward – see attached.

104 : ANNUAL REPORT

This report was presented by Angela Holt, Principal Scrutiny Officer.

The Cardiff Council Constitution requires all scrutiny committees to 'report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate'. The purpose of this item was to provide the Committee with the current draft of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee's draft Annual Report 2014-15

The Principal Scrutiny Officer briefed the Committee on the annual report and invited comments on the draft.

AGREED – That the report be amended to include additional examples of the impact of performance monitoring scrutiny.

105 : CORRESPONDENCE

This report was presented by Angela Holt, Principal Scrutiny Officer.

Following most Committee meetings the Chair writes a letter to the relevant Cabinet Member or officer, summing up the Committee's comments and recommendations regarding the issues considered during that meeting. This report provided the

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Committee with the latest update on correspondence. The Committee received copies of correspondence sent and received in relation to matters previously scrutinised by this Committee.

AGREED – That the report be noted.

106 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 3 June 2015 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall.