

JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2016

Present: County Councillor (Chairperson)
County Councillors Boyle, Richard Cook, Lomax, Magill,
McGarry, Dianne Rees, Sanders and Lynda Thorne

1 : CHAIRPERSON

AGREED – That Councillor McGarry be appointed as Chairperson of the Joint Committee.

2 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Ahmed, Carter, Chaundy, Ralph Cook, Davis, Gordon, Joyce and Murphy and from the Co-optees Patricia Arlotte, Carol Cobert and Hayley Smith.

3 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillors Lomax and Sanders.

4 : DRAFT DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The Committee received the draft Director of Social Services Annual Report 2015/16. Members were advised that the Annual Report has been structured differently – with outcomes being used to shape the structure of the report – in response to feedback received from Scrutiny Committees following the 2014/15 Annual Report, and in preparation for the new National Outcomes Framework. An overview for the structure of the Annual Report was provided.

The Annual Report included feedback from service users and detailed the process used to seek those views. The Annual Report also included an overview of comparative performance via national indicators. With regards to performance, the report states:

‘Whilst performance against a proportion of indicators was below target and behind performance across Wales and in the benchmarking group (Swansea, Newport, Caerphilly, Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen), it is encouraging to see that when compared to the 2014/15 outturn, 30 performance indicators (PIs) evidenced improvement in 2015/16. That said, it is not yet as good as it needs to be and the Social Services Directorate will need to build on this platform to ensure much stronger performance in 2016/17 and for the future.’

The Annual Report contained statements on services for Vulnerable Adults and Childrens Services, which remained top priority policy objectives for the Council. The challenges facing both Adults and Childrens Service during 2016/17 were identified in Appendix A. These were compared with the challenges for 2015/16 in Appendix B.

The Committee was advised that following the publication of the annual report, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) review the report; drawing on the findings of the relevant audits and inspection; the CSSIW use the report to inform their judgements on key strengths and areas for development and improvement. In 2014/5, the CSSIW identified the following areas of improvement:

- Providing leadership, governance and direction
 - to maintain a sustainable management structure
 - appoint to the posts of Assistant Director

- Areas for improvement Adult Services
 - timeliness of completing reviews of older peoples' care needs
 - implementation of a quality element in commissioning of residential care
 - increase in the delivery of domiciliary care
 - improved performance in reducing delayed transfer of care

- Areas for Improvement in Childrens Services
 - continue to increase the uptake of direct payments
 - continue to increase numbers of permanent social workers
 - improve performance in completing Personal Education Plans
 - recruitment of personal advisers
 - completion of initial and core assessments

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent, Cabinet Member for Childrens Services and Deputy Leader; Councillor Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing; and Tony Young, Corporate Director, Amanda Phillips Assistant Director of Adult Services and Kim Brown Performance Manager to the meeting. Councillors Lent and Elsmore were invited to make brief statements.

Councillor Lent stated that the Annual Report attempts to address concerns expressed previously by the Scrutiny Committee, particularly in relation to the inclusion of outcomes and whether these have been achieved. Childrens Services are in transition currently with the introduction of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy, the Fostering Strategy and positive inspections.

Councillor Elsmore stated that the report contained clear statements that political leadership was providing direction and strength. The newly merged directorate would also bring greater strength. Councillor Elsmore paid credit to the joint working arrangements and the wider management group. Members were also asked to note the progress of the 'More Than Words' Welsh Language Strategy.

Tony Young was invited to deliver a brief presentation on the Annual Report. He commented that the report presentation had been improved, with more dense content in the appendices. The report was structured by outcomes to make it more readable and accessible; an Executive Summary would be produced after the report had been through scrutiny and Council, for public consumption. He stressed that there was a better team approach across the Directorate's Senior Management Team and a good foundation to build on, with strong inspection outcomes recently.

Members were asked to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

Overarching Issues – Children Services and Adult Services

- A Member asked whether the directorate was able to achieve all its priorities or whether some 'priorities' were more important than others. The Corporate Director advised that most priorities are statutory duties. The Work Programme and/or Delivery Plan address these. The report sets out the challenges facing the directorate on Page 15. These are the issues to focus on and it was necessary to strike a balance between them. Members advised that they often encounter staff who are dealing with conflicting priorities and the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes is diminished. The Corporate Director agreed and stated that the challenge for management was to enable staff to address priorities in an orderly and effective manner. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services considered that priorities were often interlinked.
- The Committee welcomed the new outcome based approach to the Annual Report and the additional detail contained within the Appendices. Members asked why it seemed that Children's Services had more performance outcome information than Adult Services. Officers stated that, historically, Children's Services is more scrutinised and has more Performance Indicators. Children's Services are subject to greater inspection and greater scrutiny. A Member stated that it could be argued there was less scrutiny in Adult Services and asked officers what could be done to reassure Members that Adult Services is performing as it should. The Corporate Director considered that the report addressed the same fundamental questions in both Children and Adult Services and work was in progress to make this level of detail more transparent. He highlighted that the new performance framework for social services provides closer scrutiny of Adult Services.
- The Committee expressed their disappointment that Core Cities benchmarking data was not included within the report. Members considered that some data could have been included, notwithstanding the pending introduction of new Performance Indicators. Officers considered this to be a fair point but stated that benchmarking on a national basis was a complex task. An undertaking was given to address this point in the 2016/17 iteration of Annual Report.
- A Member queried why 2014/15 data was used in benchmarking and was informed by an officer that it was because the 2015/16 data had not yet been released. A Member queried why details of the declining performance indicators was not included this year; the Corporate Director responded that it was because officers were trying to reduce the length of the report but the information was available if Members would like it.
- Members asked whether the authority has been engaged by the Welsh Government to help shape the development of Performance Indicators relating to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act Framework. The Corporate Director stated that Cardiff was engaged during the consultation phase prior to the release of the draft guidelines. The Corporate Director offered to hold a workshop on the Social Services and Wellbeing Act Framework to the Members of both the Community and Adult Services and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committees.

The Cabinet Members advised that the Framework was on the agenda for the first bi-lateral meeting between the WLGA and Welsh Government minister. Amanda Phillips added that they had recently been instructed by Welsh Government to continue to keep counting the previous National Strategic Indicators as well as preparing for the new outcomes framework.

- The Committee noted that there was still a gap between the allocated budgets and overspends. Members asked what more the Council could do to better align Adult Services budgets. The Corporate Director considered that it was clear the impact of prevention and early intervention were based on best practice and sound principles and, therefore, there was a reasonable chance of success, albeit that there is a long lead in time for these approaches to deliver savings. The Cabinet Member for Childrens Services stated that initiatives in the field of looked after children will uncover more need and figures were likely to climb before reducing. Also, if the authority offered more services then more contacts were anticipated. The Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing believed further savings could be extracted as a result of joint working arrangements. Officers asked Members to note the risks associated with delaying interventions. Operational budgets within the directorate balanced; the overspend relates to unachieved savings proposals from 2014/15 which were carried over.
- Member expressed their surprise that the turnover rate for Social Workers in Children Services was 5%, as assurances were given that removing the market supplement would not affect the turnover rate. Officers stated that staff turnover was not related to the removal of the supplement. The authority was currently attracting staff and the mood of staff was said to be 'buoyant and positive'. The Corporate Director indicated that secondment opportunities for staff would be expanded and negotiations with HR were ongoing regarding a traineeship scheme.
- Members noted that the performance indicator '*Percentage of statutory visits to looked after children due in the year that took place in accordance with regulations*' had declined during the year. Members asked officers to explain the reasons behind the decline. The Corporate Director was unable to provide an answer but suggested that Team Managers in the Looked After Children Service would be acutely aware of the reasons and he was happy to provide reports on this.
- Members noted that the performance indicator '*Percentage of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact, who are known to be in suitable, non-emergency accommodation at the age of 19*' was also declining. Officers were asked to provide details of the options give to young people leaving care through the Gateway Service. Officers advised that the reasons for this decline were set out in the report. Members were asked to note that four care leavers were in custody. The Gateway Service was based on best practice and the reality was that care leavers are making their own choices. The Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing offered to share a presentation on the Gateway Service with Members of the Committee in the future.
- A Member considered that the Annual Report would benefit from looking at the work of bodies outside the council that help the Director be assured regarding service delivery, such as the Regional Board and the Local Safeguarding Boards,

and how the decision made by the Boards impact on services - and how this links to decision-making. The Corporate Director agreed and stated that he would be happy to include such information. However, the Regional Board was not in existence during the period of this report.

Childrens Services

- Members noted that the performance indicator '*Percentage of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact, who are known to be engaged in education, training or employment (EET) at the age of 19*' was declining. Member asked what was being done to address this and when officer envisaged the PI target would be met. Members also asked whether the targets were realistic or did officers consider they may need readjusting. The Corporate Director stated that the Traineeship Scheme was operating well. Those young people taking part in the scheme bring their own deficits and efforts were concentrating on their emotional stability – which can be difficult. The Corporate Director stated that the target did not necessarily reflect the achievements made by the scheme, given the deficit some young people arrive with. The Cabinet Member for Childrens Services stated that the indicator related to a relatively small number of individuals, a target of 58% was not unrealistic. The Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing stated that this issue remains a high priority issue for the Cabinet.

Members of the Committee suggested that the total number of individuals involved should be set out in the report. The Corporate Director agreed.

- A Member was concerned that the recommendations of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Group were not clear in the report and therefore elements Members need to focus on may be missed. It was also suggested that the case studies in the report could include an example of a case study where things didn't quite go right or could look at providing a fuller picture of what it was like to be a looked after child in Cardiff. The Corporate Director suggested that the Workshop could work together to explore these points.
- The Committee considered that in terms of priority improvement actions it would help to expand these to include reference to CAMHS. The Corporate Director agreed to include reference to CAMHS.
- Members noted that the outcomes achieved were listed in the Annual Report. The Committee suggested that the Annual Report would also benefit from clear indication of those outcomes not achieved. The Corporate Director stated that this was a fair point and consideration would be given to including such information in future Annual Reports, with a short diagnostic on strengths and weaknesses re each outcome.

Adult Services

- A Member suggested that there should be some discussion in the report regarding the linkages between Adult Services and adult safeguarding and also links to the Cabinet's work on adult exploitation. The Corporate Director stated that the Local Safeguarding Adult Board was going 'back to the drawing board' as the previous arrangements were considered to be weak. It was anticipated that

the Social Services and Well Being Act would go some way to strengthening the position. Vulnerable adults were also exposed to other forms of abuse and it was important to state that in the Annual Report and to be clear on the authority's responsibilities

- The Committee considered that there were linkages between domestic violence, deprivation of liberty, adult safeguarding and older people. It was therefore important to get governance arrangement correct to ensure the sharing of information. The Corporate Director stated that there were capacity issues to consider. Members felt that these pressures should be reflected in the report so that a policy view could be taken.
- In terms of Adults at Risk, Members sought assurances and more detail regarding how adults are protected. Officers advised that an audit action plan has been completed and this could be shared with Members of the Committee.
- Referring to the redesign of services, mobile working and commissioning as set out in Outcome 6 – Members asked whether the March 2017 date for completion was realistic, given the capacity issues referred to during the meeting. The Corporate Director considered that the March 2017 date was ambitious and challenging but reasonable.
- A Member noted that there was no reference made in the report to some of the areas for improvement highlighted by the CSSIW. It was suggested that these areas for improvement should be listed to make it explicit, along with the work to tackle them. Officers accepted the point made. Members requested that the CSSIW report on domiciliary care be provided to the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, which was agreed to by the Corporate Director.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes on the Committee's behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations.