

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 APRIL 2018

Present: Councillor McGarry(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Asghar Ali, Jenkins, Kelloway and Lent

56 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carter and Goddard.
Councillor Jenkins advised that he would be half an hour late arriving.

57 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

58 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

59 : COMMUNITIES, HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLAN

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member – Social Care, Health & Well-Being), Councillor Lynda Thorne (Cabinet Member – Housing & Communities), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director for People and Communities), Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Housing & Communities) and Nick Blake (Business Support Manager) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Elsmore to make a statement in which she said it was great to see the work that had been done with Independent Living, particularly the focus on reducing hospital admissions, effective discharge systems with integration work with partners. Councillor Elsmore commended the work already done across preventative services.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Thorne to make a statement in which she said that these were exciting proposals that had already been well received by the Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Thorne made reference to self-assessment of performance during 2017-18 and considered that the figures particularly in relation to homelessness were remarkable and she wished to express her thanks to all staff involved, both Front Line Staff and Senior Officers.

Members were provided with a presentation on the Communities, Housing & Customer Services Directorate Business Plan after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

- Members asked how confident the Cabinet Member was in being able to deliver 1000 new council homes by 2022 and were advised that she was very confident. Officers added that they are 100% focussed on that target.

- Members made reference to rough sleepers using iconic buildings and the impression this gives to visitors. Members asked what was being done to address this. The Cabinet Member explained that there are differing views on whether rough sleepers should be moved on or not, adding that there is lots of work being done with the Police, particularly in relation to aggressive begging. Officers added that rough sleepers have a whole range of complex issues, they need tailored support, a range of accommodation options such as group accommodation and it would be interesting to see what difference the Give DIFFerently campaign has.

A discussion took place about the importance of distinguishing between rough sleepers and aggressive begging and Operation Purple Ash.

- Members noted that other local authorities have a zero tolerance approach to aggressive begging whereby people are reported and arrested and asked if this was something Cardiff would consider. The Cabinet Member explained that they work with the Police and Outreach workers on this and there was a “five step approach” being drawn up to deal with this.
- Members referred to Youth Hubs and asked for clarification on the funding. Officers advised that they have been successful in obtaining Capital Funding for Youth Hubs and also Charles Street City Centre Youth Hub and would be using existing services and putting them into the buildings.
- Members noted that the reference to the risk of welfare reform/universal credit was listed as significant and asked what was being done to mitigate that risk. Officers explained that it was a red risk as there was a huge amount of people involved. To mitigate this there were increased staffing levels, procedures to deal with rent arrears and lots of preparation work being done. However, it would remain a red risk as there were other external factors involved such as landlords dropping out of the scheme, tenants in rent difficulties etc. There needed to be a focus on Into Work services too.

AGREED – That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

60 : INFORMATION, ADVICE & ASSISTANCE

The Chairperson welcomed Barbara Kerridge, Riverside Advice Centre to the meeting. Barbara Kerridge outlined her presentation to Committee as follows:

Specialist Welfare Rights Advice Services in Cardiff for Vulnerable people Riverside Advice;-

- *Delivers a specialist Welfare Rights services and has been delivering Advice services since 1975.*
- *Has the Legal Aid Specialist Quality Mark and has this and a Legal Aid Contract for Welfare Rights Advice since 1997*

- *Receives the majority of our Welfare Rights Advice casework from referrals from Council funded services, but no funding from Cardiff Council to support this work.*

Until 2013 (when the UK Government took most of Social Welfare Legal Aid out of scope) Riverside Advice had the largest Social Welfare Legal Aid Contract in Wales. 1500 specialist cases for Welfare Benefits and Debt a year. This was a major loss of Specialist level Advice services to Cardiff and not replaced.

Riverside Advice still has a Legal Aid Contract for what is left of Social Welfare Legal Aid for Housing and Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunals casework.

Since September 2015 Riverside Advice has had no funding from Cardiff Council, when the Welfare Rights Advice funding from all Council Departments (Communities and Housing and Adult Services) was placed into the Communities and Housing single contractor Hub Advice Contract, and Children's Services Advice funding had gone into Families First Contracts.

Previously Riverside Advice had Cardiff Council funding from:-

- *Communities and Housing for Asian Language and Open Door service*
- *Communities and Housing for the City Centre service delivered from Bridge Street, (one year)*
- *Adult Services for Specialist Welfare Benefits service for Carers*
- *Children Services under Sure Start funding for Welfare Rights for Families with Children 4 and under.*

This amalgamation of Welfare Rights Advice funding for several organisations and bespoke services into essentially one funding pot has led to lack of specialist, expert and bespoke Welfare Rights Advice services in Cardiff. These type of services are particularly required for vulnerable people who often have specific access requirements, such as unable to cope with triage systems and different levels of advisors and waiting in queue with other people.

Due to the amalgamation of the Advice grants into one single contract the loss of funding contributed to closure of Cardiff Law Centre, and lead to closure of Age Concerns Welfare Rights Unit, Somali Advice closing and loss of the bespoke work delivered by these organisations and only leaving the couple of independent Welfare Rights Advice organisations left, such as Riverside Advice with high risk of a possible funding crisis and closure.

80% of Riverside Advice's Welfare Rights casework services are by referral from support workers and organisations from all sectors, particularly from Cardiff Council funded services. These are for the most vulnerable people, with high level of Mental Health illnesses and chaotic life styles, people who would not be able to cope with the Advice Hub in terms of accessing advice services there. These vulnerable people are therefore referred to Riverside Advice as the support organisations believe they are the only organisation that delivers services to meet their needs. This is stated in reference letters they have for a variety of Support organisations to demonstrate this need.

Riverside statistics demonstrate that in the last year, since Support People Contract was awarded to just 3 organisations Gwalia, United Welsh and Salvation Army that these organisations collectively referred over 200 people to Riverside Advice. This at @ £200 - £250 a case (Legal Aid costings – and often under resourced at that rate) this is £40,000 to £50,000 of specialist case work in Welfare Benefits and Debt with no specific funding for this work.

Many other organisations and services such as Llamau, Ty Canna, Advice HUB, Housing Options and internal Council Services such as Social Workers and Probation also refer there service users to Riverside Advice from Council funded services.

There is a great need to recognise this critical situation and to fund a specialist and expert Welfare Rights service which is in addition and outside what is possible within the funded City Centre Hub style service. Particularly as this Welfare Rights case work is essential to good outcomes of the work delivered by other key Council funded services for vulnerable people. Specialist and expert Welfare Rights is also key to those Cardiff Council funded services providing successful outcomes for their service users, i.e. if vulnerable peoples finances, Benefits and Debt are not sorted there is much more likely of another future crisis and spiral downwards – then requiring more assistance and costs to other Council funded services. Welfare Rights prevents poverty and is key preventative work.

Riverside Advice understand that most of the Advice services have now been removed from Families First – due to Welsh Government rules. They were told by Adult /Social Services that Welfare Rights - even though there is a direct link between poverty/ finances, health and well-being, and impacting on stability of families, - Welfare Rights is not in their remit – or ‘any of their business’.

The much needed and promised Cardiff Welfare Rights Advice Review incorporating the views of all the Advice Providers (many now shut as noted above), in existence at that time, as directed by Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee (CASSC in November 2012) did not materialise. This review was for Advice Providers to work with the Cardiff Council during 2013 to look at needs and demands in the development of futures Advice services for Cardiff. Unfortunately this Review never materialised before the Advice Single Provider Contract for Hub Advice Package was announced and finalised in October 2013 without the Review. Riverside Advice have no wish to go back over the circumstances of why this Advice Review did not happen, or why the concerns from the previous Advice Review by BDO on the potential issues related to a centralise HUB style model were not recognised, but want to move forward to establish and recognise the issues and needs now.

The Council needs to recognise that if due to cuts in any other Advice funding streams, - as always possible, and the remaining independent Welfare Rights organisations may be forced to closure. If this happens there is no capacity or other Advice services in Cardiff for the vulnerable people who are currently being referred to Riverside Advice from Council funded services to go. This is specialist casework for nearly 1000 vulnerable people a year from across Cardiff for Welfare Benefits and Debt casework and raising nearly £2,000,000 of income for them in Welfare Benefits resulting from challenges and Appeal Tribunals. Where will these vulnerable people’s specialist Welfare Benefit, Debt and Housing issues be resolved?

If vulnerable people's financial issues are not resolved this is likely to result in further costs to other Cardiff Council funded services, - such as Housing, Social Services, due to potential homelessness and family breakdown and effecting children, - all real and researched outcomes as results of financial deprivation.

We hope this Scrutiny Committee can address these real concerns. The Advice sector needs some support to not only deliver the specialist casework for vulnerable people, but importantly for infrastructure to prevent any amount of funding loss resulting in viability issues and potential closures which will result in the loss of all the other Advice funding and services that those organisations have and deliver for the people of Cardiff. The impact of this on vulnerable people will be very serious.

The Chairperson thanked Barbara Kerridge for her presentation and invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members noted the comments around advice provided by Hubs, noting that Hubs are fairly new and asked if Barbara Kerridge considered that the current provision is working or whether something needs to change so that vulnerable people can get the advice they need. Ms Kerridge considered that Hubs were fine for people who are able to identify their own problems and can cope with the triage system in Hubs, however it was very different for vulnerable people - at Riverside Advice people are able to access specialist advisor process straight away with no triage.
- Members noted that most referrals to Riverside Advice came from other organisations and Council staff in Hubs and asked what percentage of referrals were from Council staff at Hubs. Ms Kerridge advised that she could get those statistics and provide them to the Committee.
- Members noted that Riverside Advice was funded by a number of organisations and asked which one was at most risk of stopping funding. Members were advised that the British Gas Energy Trust who support Riverside Advice with a significant amount, are reviewing who they support, this was a key threat as people will tender for the reviewed funding so there was a real risk of this stopping.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member – Social Care, Health & Well-Being), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director for People and Communities), Carolyne Palmer (Operational Manager, Prevention Services) and Lisa Wood (Operational Manager Locality Services - First Contact & Assessment).

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from the above witnesses on Barbara Kerridge's presentation.

- Officers considered they could pick up on some of the points raised in Ms Kerridge's presentation, especially in relation to Council Support Services.
- Officers noted the points made with regards to Mental Health Services and considered there needed to be a joined up approach.

- Officers agreed that there may be a lack of information on what services currently exist and this would be looked into.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Elsmore to make a statement in which she said that she had visited Llandough Hospital and the service based there, she considered that the work ahead with Health colleagues will be a challenge but she feels the time is right; lots of work has already been done and it was time for a culture change to drive forward the wellbeing outcome of which, independence was key.

Members were provided with a presentation on Information, Advice and Assistance after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

- Members asked what was being done to seek out people in the community who need help but are not aware of the services available to them. Officers advised that currently the service is not advertised to the public generally but it does appear on screens in GP surgeries. Most of the people who use the service find out about it from locality based/community groups, advice centres, word of mouth and Hubs. Officers explained that they want to get a better understanding of the demand and how it will be dealt with before determining an approach to advertising it to the public.
- Members noted the references to a need for a change in culture and a reduced amount of inappropriate use of social worker time. Members asked why the Act was needed to initiate such changes. Officers stated that the Act defines the need for IAA but doesn't say how far it has to go, Cardiff is taking a considerably comprehensive approach and bringing services together, complying fully with the Act but going further than required.

Councillor Elsmore added that there had been some tough decisions to make over recent years, Cardiff had been looking at best practice and it was considered that a strengths based approach was needed, encouraging people to do lots for themselves, involving communities and community centres. Councillor Elsmore added that the current administration has a One Council approach, the Act was a driver that has some impact but decisions made by the Council and what Cardiff offers goes much further than required.

Councillor Thorne added that things needed to change, there had been issues with bed blocking and insufficient care home spaces, people staying in hospital until a correct offer became available, not necessarily a care home offer but a range of services. Councillor Thorne added that the Act and budgetary constraints had been drivers as it was necessary to do more with less in the current climate.

- Members referred to the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee 2015 Inquiry into 'Information, Advice and Assistance for Mental Health Service Users in Cardiff', and particularly Recommendations 3 and 7, asking what was being done. With reference to Recommendation 3, Officers explained that the provision is there and integration was needed from the lowest level wellbeing, there was lots of work being undertaken with the Health Board. There was now a new model to explore and develop further, Cardiff is compliant they want to be much more than that.

- With reference to Recommendation 7 and mental health first aid training for first point of contact staff, Officers advised that training is being planned currently, as it's a specialism it was important to invest time and effort into this. It was also important to look at different pathways and not just using GP's.

AGREED – That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

61 : EXTENSION OF CONTRACTS IN RELATION TO THE SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICE FOR ADULTS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member – Social Care, Health & Well-Being), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director for People and Communities) and Denise Moriarty (Strategic Lead Planning Officer, Adult Services) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Elsmore to make a statement in which she said this briefing provided Members with an opportunity to hear the circumstances around why the extension of the contract was proposed.

Members were provided with a presentation on the Extension of contracts in relation to the Supported Living Service for Adults with a Learning Disability, after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

- Members noted the cost of £16m per annum, which supported 320 people, equating to £50k per person, per year, and asked if this was considered good value for money. Officers stated that that would be an average cost per person but it was important to look at what that included. People have a wide range of support packages, some examples such as 2:1 support, 24 hour lived-in support were given. Officers considered that it was a reasonable cost for such packages and as the contract moves forward, they would be looking at its sustainability in all areas.
- Members asked if the Council has ever provided these services in house and officers advised that yes there is a current in house Supported Living Programme. Members were advised that the cost of this was £2million, over 11 schemes, supporting 30 people which equated to £90k per person. Officers could see how people may perceive this as inequitable service and that this would be considered as the contract moves forward.
- Members asked for more information on the geographical areas and were advised that a map could be provided. Officers also explained that different areas have different costs even if with the same provider. Officers will look at what needs to be reviewed, including geographical areas, as the contract moves forward.
- Members asked if there were any proposed changes to the contract and were advised that there were not.

- Members noted that only 2 complaints received from 320 people was very good.

AGREED – That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

62 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

16 May 2018 at 5.00pm